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FOUR QUESTIONS

There are four questions that everyone has about life. They may be unstated, but they are the universal questions that mankind has always had:

1. Where did we come from?
2. What is the purpose of life?
3. How can we understand evil and suffering?
4. What happens when we die?

Does your worldview answer those questions? A worldview is the set of conscious or unconscious assumptions that a person or a culture holds about reality. It is a philosophy to try to explain the way things are.

In America, our worldview is Naturalism and Secularism. This philosophy permeates our education system (from kindergarten to graduate school), media, entertainment, government, and folk wisdom. This worldview, in which we are all saturated, declares that: “The material universe is all that exists; there is no God and no supernatural; man is just a physical body composed of chemicals and electrical circuits; there is no soul and no spirit; our existence is an accident; we are the product of evolution; there is no meaning or purpose to existence; there are no universal moral values; morals are just socially useful behaviors; faith is just what a person believes and is not connected to reality.”

May I tell you that that summary of what most Americans believe about reality is a lie and a deception. There is not one part of it that is true and honest. Already, scientists themselves are acknowledging that when they use electron microscopes and get down to the sub-atomic level of quarks and hadrons and examine matter, that it appears to be a thought or an idea in “someone’s” mind.

In the book A Curious Discovery, John Hendricks told about an episode that appeared on Discovery Channel with “the world’s most preeminent scientist, Stephen Hawking.” He said that Hawking addressed the most profound question of humanity: Did God create the universe? Hendricks says: “I knew this would be a highly controversial topic. Hawking argued that invoking God isn’t necessary to explain the origin of the universe, that the Big Bang is a consequence of the laws of physics and nothing more. His explanation is that: *The universe could have spontaneously arisen from probabilistic quantum fluctuations acting to bring the negative energy of empty space – nothingness – into balance.*”

When I read that profound statement of “the world’s most preeminent scientist,” I couldn’t help laughing out loud. When people refuse to acknowledge the obvious, they end up believing utter nonsense. Other theories about the beginning say that we came from aliens, or that we came through worm holes in the fabric of space. None of these brilliant theories explain where the “stuff” originally came from.

It is either: *In the beginning, God.....or Once upon a time.....* It is either God or a fairy tale.

The inspired Word of God answers every one of those questions:

(1) **Where did we come from?**

(a) **Genesis 1:1 (NLT)** – *In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.*

(b) **John 1:1-3 (NLT)** – *In the beginning the Word already existed. The Word was with God, and the Word was God. He existed in the beginning with God. God created everything through Him, and nothing was created except through Him.*

(c) **Colossians 1:15-17 (NLT)** – *Christ is the visible image of the invisible God. He existed before anything was created and is supreme over all creation, for through Him God created everything in the heavenly realms and on earth. He made the things we can see and the things we can't seeHe existed before anything else, and He holds all creation together.* (Christ is the invisible power that causes all things to cohere, that sustains the sub-atomic stuff.)

(d) **Hebrews 1:10-12 (NLT)** – *He also says to the Son, "In the beginning, Lord, you laid the foundation of the earth and made the heavens with your hands. They will perish, but you remain forever"*

Wow! As you read those words, do you feel something moving way down inside? The Bible says, *Deep calls to deep.* Open your Bible and read those passages again and let God's Spirit speak to the deep in your heart.

(2) **What is the purpose of life?**

Without God, there is no purpose to life. Make all the money you can, distract yourself and try to be happy, and then you die and turn back to dirt. That is the game plan and expectation of life without God.

(a) **John 1:4-5, 18** – *The Word gave life to everything that was created, and his life brought light to everyone. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness can never extinguish it.....No one has ever seen God, but the unique one, who is himself God, is near to the Father's heart. He has revealed God to us.*

(b) **Colossians 1:12-14** – *He has enabled you to share in the inheritance that belongs to his people, who live in the light. For he has rescued us from the kingdom of darkness and transferred us into the Kingdom of his dear son, who purchased our freedom and forgave our sins.*

(c) **Hebrews 1:3** – *The Son radiates God's own glory and expresses the very character of God, and he sustains everything by the mighty power of his command.*

Many books, videos, and seminars tell you to discover life's meaning by looking within yourself. That cannot work. You didn't create yourself, and there is no way you can tell yourself what you were created for. You and I simply can't work out the answers to these deep questions.

You exist only because God willed for you to exist. You were made by God and for God. Until you understand that life will never make sense.

The Bible says: *For everything, absolutely everything, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, got started by Him and finds its purpose in Him.*

The Bible says: *You saw me before I was born, and you scheduled each day of my life before I began to breathe.* (Ps. 139)

You were designed with purpose - - by a Being with an intellect far beyond our comprehension. His purpose for you is good. He loves you!

(3) **What about evil and suffering?**

If God is loving, as the Bible says He is, how can He allow the terrible evil in the world? He can He allow the suffering even of the innocent and helpless? There is not space to unpack a doctrine explaining these things even if I had the capacity to do so, but the Bible is very clear: **There is evil, there is a devil!** Most people, even church members, don't believe that. It goes without saying that people of the world, those steeped in naturalism, regard the devil as a cartoon, mythology and ignorance. What is surprising is that polls show that over 50% of church people reject Biblical teaching on this subject.

Consider the following: If Jesus is God, Immanuel (*God with us*), as He clearly claimed to be (*When you have seen me, you have seen the Father*); and if the Bible is an inspired, trustworthy record; then we see that Jesus taught more about the devil than anyone else. Is it reasonable for us to assume that Jesus (*God with us*) was mistaken about the nature of reality? Perhaps we are the ones who are deceived and blinded about reality.

The Bible not only states unequivocally that there is a devil, it also declares that: , . **Mankind is fallen.** It states not only that the first man and woman fell, but that you and I are individually fallen. We have fallen away from the light and into darkness - - - because we chose the darkness.

This is indeed bad news, but the coming of Christ was good news. He came to rescue us from the darkness and to change our very desires. When we humbly surrender our lives to Christ, we then have this promise: *For God is working in you, giving you the desire and the power to do what pleases him.* (Phil. 2:13 NLT)

And regarding suffering: The Bible shows that not everything that happens on the earth is God's will. When people sin it is certainly not God's will and it causes great suffering, but a Sovereign God can use even that suffering to build Christian character in His people. *For our present troubles are small and won't last very long. Yet they produce for us a glory that vastly outweighs them and will last forever.*

While on ministry trips to Guadalajara, our team stayed in the home of Jose a number of times and grew to love him and his family. Jose owned a jewelry store in a large commercial center. He was a silversmith and goldsmith and made his own jewelry. We visited his warehouse and saw him working at the furnace where he melted the precious metals and skimmed off the dross. He told us that as he did this work tears would run down his face, for he understood that God was performing the same work on his soul because of his exceedingly sinful lifestyle before coming to Christ. Purpose, and suffering!

Luke 13 recounts the story of *a woman who had been bound by Satan, or crippled by an evil spirit for eighteen years.* Note: her suffering had been caused by Satan, not by God. Jesus healed her and set her free from the power of Satan by His love and power. That is an awesome story, but is it an event in history not to be repeated in our era?

When I was a pastor in Loveland, a lady in our church named Phyllis Kekar was bent over with severe osteoporosis so that she was in pain and bedridden much of the time. I was learning about healing at that time and asked Phyllis if our prayer group could visit and pray for her. She readily agreed. On a Thursday evening my wife and I and five or six others gathered around Phyllis' bed and prayed with her for almost two hours. She seemed somewhat better so we asked if we could repeat the process on the following Thursday. On that night we learned that her condition had deteriorated about six years before when her husband left her for a younger woman. Since we had learned that unforgiveness seems to block healing, we led her to forgive her husband and the woman, and she immediately felt better and was able to sit up and talk with us. We came back for a third visit on the next Thursday. She met us at the door and we sat in a semi-circle in her living room. As we prayed quietly, suddenly we could all hear the bones in Phyllis' neck and back start cracking and popping, and much to our amazement her back straightened up....and she stood up praising and thanking God! I thought, "Oh, my gosh! It really works!" Of course, "it" didn't work, God works, and He works through our faith and prayers. Do things like that happen every time we pray? No, but they happen sometimes, for which we thank God.

(4) What happens when we die?

One day your heart will stop beating. That will be the end of your body and your time on earth, but it will not be the end of you. Your earthly body is just the temporary residence for your spirit. The Bible calls your earthly body a "tent," but refers to your future body as a "house." *When this tent we live in, our body on earth, is torn down, God will have a house in heaven for us to live in, a home he himself has made, which will last forever.* (1 Cor. 4:16)

The Bible uses terms for us like: *alien, pilgrim, stranger, foreigner, visitor* - - to describe our brief time on earth. God is saying to us: This world is not your home, . . . so don't make yourself too comfortable here. Rick Warren says that none of us ever feel completely contented and satisfied in this life - - because we are not supposed to. Earth isn't our final home; we were created for something much better.

Finally, a story from the last century about a missionary who was coming home to America on a ship. He had served more than 40 years in a very hard place, he was worn out and sick, and he was coming home alone since his wife had died. It so happened that the president of the United States was coming back from a trip on the same ship. As the ship pulled into harbor, a cheering crowd, military band, and reporters were there to welcome the president home, but no one was greeting the missionary. He started feeling sorry for himself and began complaining to God. Then God gently reminded him, "But, my son, you are not home yet."

You won't be dead two seconds before you cry out, Why did I spend so much time and energy on things that were so temporary? When life gets tough and you're overwhelmed with doubt, when you wonder if living for Christ is worth the effort, remember that you are not home yet. At death you won't leave home, you will go home.

BAD FRUIT AND BAD ROOTS

Some examples:

- **Pre-Natal**

1. Ministered on one occasion to a man who said he constantly woke up suffocating. In prayer, the Holy Spirit showed him that he was born with the umbilical cord around his neck. Cast out a spirit of death, led in forgiveness to his mother who did not want to have a baby, and he was set free.
2. In many cases a difficult delivery indicates that the baby did not want to be born, usually because he knew he was not welcomed, or maybe because of abandonment by his father, or his father and mother were always arguing and fighting, etc.
3. Prayed one time in Mexico for a newborn baby who was suffering from colic. The Holy Spirit reminded the mother that when she was 8 months pregnant she fell under a bus and was almost crushed. Fear apparently came into the infant at that time. We cast out a spirit of fear and death, etc. The baby quieted down and seemed to be healed.
4. Dr. Thomas Verny, in his book, The Secret Life of the Unborn Child, reports that when a pregnant mother even thinks about smoking a cigarette, her baby starts having an increased heart rate. Nicotine causes a level of oxygen starvation for the placenta, and the baby feels threatened.

Chronic Fatigue - - Art Mathias says this is a performance disorder. In striving to keep others happy, win their approval and God's approval, our bodies wear out and give up.

Ex.: Melissa had a father who had a great personality, was loving and successful, and she had an older sister who was just like their father. She always thought, "I can't measure up!" Note that this happened in spite of the fact that her family was Christian and loving. She reflected her negative thoughts onto God and was certain she could never please Him. The pressure and stress were destroying her health. Many pastors and Christian leaders are caught in this same trap!

PMS - - Art Mathias says that PMS is rooted in resentment and fear of being a female and reaction against the body that God created to function in order to cleanse itself and reproduce.

Ex.: Laura – had suffered with PMS since puberty and was unable to conceive. He led her through forgiveness of her father, who wanted a boy and not a girl, repentance for rejecting herself as a woman, etc. She was healed of the PMS and later conceived and had a little girl. Ex.: In Mexico I ministered to a 17 year-old girl who was thin, had never developed as a woman, and looked about 10 or 11 years-old. Her family had been abandoned by their father, almost starved, and her mother worked like a slave to try to feed them. She decided that if that is what it means to be woman, she didn't want it, and rejected herself as a woman. Led her through forgiveness of her father and repentance for her inner vows, and she was transformed. The next day she looked so completely different and vibrant that I did not recognize her when she came in the church. I am sure God started the healing process.

Inner Vows - - The two women in the examples above made inner vows. When people say, "I will never forgive myself!" "I will never overcome this problem!" "I was ruined by what happened and will never get over it!" "I will never get well, I will always be sick!" "I'll always be alone!" "My father died young, and I will die young!" "I reject myself as a woman or a man." - - you are cursing yourself, and the enemy is listening and has the legal right to bring this curse on you. Forgive and repent!

Ex.: Clayton Gollither told me the sad story of how his pastor had destroyed his ministry. He was a humble man and a great pastor but would never admit to making a mistake or doing wrong. Eventually the church fired him. Clayton prayed with him and learned that when he was 12 years-old he pushed his little sister one day and caused her to get a bad splinter in her hand. He admitted what he had done to his father. His father went into a rage and broke both of his arms over his knee! Outrageous! The boy was in a double cast all summer and made a vow: "I will never admit to doing wrong!" A heartbreaking story.

Anger - -

Ex.: A successful businessman and committed Christian had a problem with anger that was messing up his life. Whenever he felt confronted in any way, he would explode. He had much prayer and ministry but could not get past this. Finally a counselor led him to ask the Holy Spirit to show him the root and a picture came to his mind. He saw himself when he was a helpless little 8 year-old boy being beaten almost to death by his grandmother. In a rage, she was beating him with a 2x4. The counselor invited Jesus to come into that memory, and the man saw Jesus with His arms

wrapped around him, shielding him and taking the force of the blows on His own body. The man realized that was what had actually happened since none of his ribs had been broken by that beating. The man forgave his grandmother, wept in gratitude, and was healed.

Yoga - - This is somewhat out of context but may speak to someone's problem: Yoga means light, and is connected to a major Hindu god, Nirvana, the "god of light." Each of the 12 classic Yoga positions is a station of the 12 gods or spirits connected to Nirvana. I don't think there is a problem with the stretching exercises (but you should ask God about it), but if you have been getting into the position with mantras or chanting, or into emptying your mind and inviting the "spirit of light" or whatever to come into you, you should repent and renounce idolatry and break curses.

Karate - -

Ex.: Harold Dewberry tells about ministering to a man who was a black-belt and champion of Karate. He was having many spiritual/emotional problems. When Harold led him to break and renounce the spiritual connections to idolatrous gods, he was healed, but he lost his kick!

GOOD NIGHT OR GOOD BYE?

Dr. Landale of New York tells of a Christian businessman who was struck by an auto, taken to a hospital, and informed by doctors that he had about two hours to live. His family was hurriedly called to his bedside.

He said to his wife: "You have been the dearest woman in the world to me. Many times I have seen the Spirit of God shining in your face. Good night, my dear. I'll see you in the morning. Good night."

He said to his oldest daughter: "Mary, you were our first born. What a joy you have been to your mother and me. What a fine Christian you are. Good night, Mary dear, good night."

To his oldest son: "Will, your coming into our home has been such a blessing. You love and serve the God of your father. I love you so much. Good night, Will, good night."

He then called Charlie to his side. "Charlie, you were a promising boy, but you know that you have broken our hearts. You have hurt so many people by your bitterness and rebellion. But I love you, Charlie, God only knows how much I love you. Good bye, Charlie, good bye." Charlie seized his father's hand and with tears said, "Father, why have you said good night to the others and good bye to me?" "Son, I will meet the others of the family in the morning because of the promises in the Word of God, but by those same statements of God's Word I have no hope of seeing you over there. It is good bye, Charlie."

Charlie fell on his knees by the bedside. He cried out in agony of soul, praying that God would forgive his sins and make him a new man. "Do you mean it, Charlie? Are you sincere, Charlie?" "God knows I am," said the broken-hearted young man between sobs. "Then God has heard you and saved you and it will not be good bye. So good night, my son, good night." And in a moment's time, the father was gone. Today Charlie is a faithful servant of the Lord.

When the shadow falls and you go to "sleep" will it be to those who love you and pray for you just a short "good night," or will it be "good bye" forever?

God Bless

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