

Questions & Answers

Mt. Ellis Academy, MT - Sophomore Class – Bible II

By Pastor Ed Anderson

Sophomore Student Q.1:

What do you do if you feel like reading God is hard and it's hard to read your Bible and hard to not fall to temptation?

You're not alone in feeling this way. Many people, even the most faithful, go through seasons where reading the Bible feels difficult, God feels distant, and resisting temptation feels overwhelming. Here are some practical and spiritual steps you can take:

1. Be Honest with God

Tell Him exactly how you feel. Pray something simple like, *"Lord, I want to know You more, but reading the Bible feels hard right now. Strengthen me and help me hunger for Your Word."* God already knows your struggles, and He wants you to come to Him honestly.

2. Change How You Read the Bible

Sometimes, a fresh approach can reignite your passion for Scripture:

- **Read a different translation** – Try the NLT, ESV, or The Message to get a fresh perspective.
- **Listen to an audio Bible** – Hearing Scripture can make it come alive.
- **Start with small portions** – Instead of reading large sections, focus on one verse or short passage and meditate on it.
- **Use a devotional** – A structured guide can help, especially devotionals centered on overcoming struggles.

3. Find an Accountability Partner

Having someone to encourage you and pray with you can help keep you grounded. Maybe a friend, mentor, or small group can walk with you through this season.

4. Recognize Spiritual Warfare

Struggling to read God's Word and fighting temptation isn't just a personal problem—it's often a spiritual battle. The enemy knows that the more disconnected you are from Scripture, the easier it is to fall into temptation. Ephesians 6:10-18 reminds us to put on the full armor of God. Pray specifically for strength against these attacks.

5. Keep Showing Up

Even if Bible reading feels dry, don't stop. It's like working out—you won't always feel like doing it, but discipline leads to growth. Set a time, even just five minutes a day, and ask God to give you understanding.

6. Replace Temptation with Worship

When temptation is strong, shift your focus:

- Play worship music.
- Speak Scripture out loud (like Matthew 4:4).
- Change your environment—walk away, go outside, or call someone who will encourage you.

7. Remember Grace

God is not disappointed in you for struggling—He's drawing you closer. Keep pressing on, and He will meet you where you are. *James 4:8 says, "Draw near to God, and He will draw near to you."*

Sophomore Student Q.2:

Where does God's work stop and yours begin?

These are deep and powerful questions that get to the heart of faith, free will, and our relationship with God.

1. Where does God's work stop and yours begin?

God's work never truly "stops"—He is always at work in the world and in us (Philippians 1:6, *"He who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion."*). However, He has designed life so that we have a role to play in our spiritual growth, obedience, and decisions.

A good way to think about this is:

- **God provides the power, grace, and direction** (John 15:5 – *"Apart from me, you can do nothing."*).
- **You must choose to respond and take action** (James 2:17 – *"Faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead."*).

For example, God gives you the strength to resist temptation, but you have to choose to flee from it. He gives wisdom, but you have to decide to seek it. He opens doors, but you have to step through them.

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2. Where does your work stop and God's begin?

Your work stops where human effort cannot change the outcome. There are times when you've done all you can—prayed, worked hard, sought wisdom—and you must trust God to handle what you cannot.

- **You plant the seeds, but God makes them grow** (1 Corinthians 3:6-7).
- **You fight temptation, but God gives the victory** (1 Corinthians 10:13).
- **You make plans, but God directs your steps** (Proverbs 16:9).

This is where faith comes in. When you've prayed, obeyed, and acted in faith, but still don't see results, that's where God's work begins in ways you can't control. It's in the waiting, the impossible, and the miraculous.

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The Balance: Partnership with God

God doesn't want us to sit back and do nothing, but He also doesn't want us to live as if everything depends on us. The Christian life is a partnership:

- We **pray** like it depends on God,
- We **act** like it depends on us,
- And we **trust** in the areas beyond our control.

A great prayer to summarize this is the *Serenity Prayer*:

*"God, grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change,
Courage to change the things I can,
And wisdom to know the difference."*

Would you say you're struggling more with knowing when to act or when to trust?

Sophomore Student Q.3:

Can it be proved beyond a shadow of doubt that God is real?

The question of whether God's existence can be proved *beyond a shadow of a doubt* depends on what kind of proof you're looking for. If you mean absolute, scientific proof that forces every person to acknowledge God's existence, then no—because faith, by its nature, requires an element of trust beyond pure logic or physical evidence (Hebrews 11:6). However, if you're asking whether there is **strong evidence**—philosophical, scientific, historical, and experiential—that points to God's reality, then yes, there is compelling evidence.

1. Philosophical Evidence

- **The Cosmological Argument (First Cause)**

Everything that begins to exist has a cause. The universe had a beginning (Big Bang theory confirms this). Something outside of time, space, and matter must have caused it. That "First Cause" is what we call God (Genesis 1:1).

- **The Fine-Tuning Argument**

The universe is precisely calibrated for life. Even minor changes in fundamental forces (gravity, electromagnetism) would make life impossible. This suggests an intelligent designer.

- **The Moral Argument**

Objective morality (the belief that things like murder and love have universal meanings) implies a moral lawgiver beyond human opinion (Romans 2:14-15).

2. Scientific Evidence

- **Intelligent Design in DNA**

DNA is a complex code—far more intricate than any human-written language. Codes require a coder. This suggests an intelligent mind behind life.

- **The Anthropic Principle**

Earth is uniquely positioned for life in a way that is astronomically improbable by chance.

- **Irreducible Complexity**

Some biological systems (like the human eye or bacterial flagellum) are too complex to have evolved in small, gradual steps, suggesting design.

3. Historical Evidence

- **Jesus Christ's Life, Death, and Resurrection**

Jesus' existence is historically undeniable. His resurrection has compelling evidence:

- Empty tomb (no body was ever found).
- Over 500 witnesses of His resurrection (1 Corinthians 15:6).
- The radical transformation of His disciples (from cowards to martyrs).

4. Experiential Evidence

- **Changed Lives**

Millions throughout history have had radical life transformations after encountering God (former atheists, criminals, addicts, etc.).

- **Miracles**

Documented cases of healings, visions, and supernatural events continue worldwide.

- **Personal Encounters**

Many testify to hearing God, feeling His presence, and experiencing His guidance.

5. Logical Counterpoint

If God *did not* exist:

- Where did everything come from?
- Why is the universe so precisely ordered?
- Where does human consciousness and morality originate?
- Why do billions of people across history and cultures believe in a higher power?

Conclusion: Can It Be Proved?

While God's existence isn't *scientifically* provable in a lab, the overwhelming **cumulative evidence**—from philosophy, science, history, and personal experience—strongly supports His reality. The question isn't just about evidence; it's about interpretation. Many reject God not because of lack of evidence, but because of the implications of His existence on their lives (John 3:19-20).

If you're looking for certainty, faith plays a role—but it's not blind faith. It's reasonable, built on strong evidence. The real question is: *Are you willing to see the evidence for what it is?*

Sophomore Student Q.4:

Why is Christianity the right religion?

Christianity stands apart from all other religions for several key reasons, making it uniquely compelling. If we're asking *why Christianity is the right religion*, we must consider its foundation, message, historical credibility, and how it addresses life's biggest questions.

1. Jesus Christ: The Centerpiece of Christianity

Unlike other religious founders who claim to *show the way*, Jesus claimed **to be the way** (John 14:6).

- He didn't just teach truth—He **claimed to be the Truth**.
- He didn't just point to God—He **claimed to be God** (John 8:58).
- His resurrection from the dead is unparalleled in religious history.

If Jesus really rose from the dead, then Christianity is not just *one* religion among many—it is **the truth**.

2. Grace vs. Works: Christianity's Unique Message

All other religions teach some form of salvation by *works*—people must earn their way to God through good deeds, rituals, or enlightenment.

Christianity alone teaches grace:

- **Salvation is a free gift from God** (Ephesians 2:8-9).
- **We are saved by faith in Christ, not by our own efforts.**
- Instead of humans trying to reach God, Christianity teaches that **God came down to us** (John 1:14).

This message of **grace over works** is radically different from every other religion.

3. The Resurrection: Christianity's Greatest Proof

The resurrection of Jesus is the foundation of Christianity (1 Corinthians 15:17). If it's true, Christianity is true. The evidence includes:

- **The empty tomb** – No one ever produced Jesus' body.
- **Eyewitnesses** – Over 500 people saw Him alive (1 Corinthians 15:6).

- **The disciples' transformation** – They went from cowards to bold preachers willing to die for their faith.

No other religious leader—Buddha, Muhammad, Confucius—rose from the dead.

4. Christianity Best Explains Reality

Christianity answers life's deepest questions better than any other worldview:

- **Origin** – Where did we come from? (Genesis 1:1 – God created us.)
- **Meaning** – Why are we here? (To know and love God – Matthew 22:37.)
- **Morality** – What is right and wrong? (God's unchanging moral law – Romans 2:15.)
- **Destiny** – What happens after death? (Eternal life with God or separation from Him – John 3:16.)

Atheism struggles to provide meaning. Eastern religions teach reincarnation without justice. Islam lacks assurance of salvation. Only Christianity offers a clear, compelling answer to all these.

5. Supernatural Evidence: Changed Lives & Miracles

Christianity isn't just intellectually or historically sound—it's **experientially** real.

- **Radically transformed lives** – From murderers to missionaries, addicts to preachers, millions have been changed by Jesus.
- **Miracles & supernatural encounters** – Healings, visions, and divine interventions happen worldwide.

No other religion has the same ongoing supernatural evidence.

6. Fulfilled Prophecy

The Bible contains **hundreds of fulfilled prophecies**, proving divine authorship.

- The Old Testament predicted Jesus' birth, death, and resurrection **centuries** before He came.
- Israel's history and return to the land (Ezekiel 37) happened exactly as prophesied.
- No other religious book has this level of **verifiable prophecy**.

7. Christianity Offers a Personal Relationship with God

Most religions teach **rules and rituals**—Christianity offers a **relationship**.

- **God is not distant; He is personal.**
- **We are not slaves; we are His children.** (Romans 8:15)
- **He dwells within believers through the Holy Spirit.** (John 14:16-17)

Other religions have prophets and teachers—only Christianity has **a living Savior** who walks with His people daily.

Conclusion: Christianity is More Than Just “A” Religion—It’s the Truth

Christianity stands out because:

1. **Jesus Christ’s resurrection is historically supported.**
2. **It teaches salvation by grace, not human effort.**
3. **It best explains life’s biggest questions.**
4. **It has supernatural confirmation—miracles and transformed lives.**
5. **It offers a real, personal relationship with God.**

If Christianity is true, then Jesus is **the only way** to God (John 14:6). No other religion can make that claim with such overwhelming evidence.

Sophomore Student Q.5:

Why would an all loving God allow pain?

This is one of the deepest and most difficult questions people wrestle with. If God is all-loving and all-powerful, why does He allow pain, suffering, and evil? While no single answer can fully remove the emotional weight of suffering, Christianity offers a compelling explanation that aligns with both Scripture and human experience.

1. Free Will: Love Requires Choice

- God created humans with **free will** because real love cannot be forced.
- If we didn't have the ability to choose between good and evil, we would be robots, not beings capable of love.
- Much of the suffering in the world is a direct result of human choices (wars, crime, abuse, greed, neglect).

Example: If a parent loves their child, they allow them to make choices, even if some choices lead to pain.

Biblical support: *Deuteronomy 30:19* – “I have set before you life and death, blessings and curses. Now choose life.”

2. The Reality of a Broken World

- When Adam and Eve sinned, they brought **sin, death, and brokenness** into the world (Genesis 3).
- The world is now fallen, meaning disease, natural disasters, and suffering exist because we live in a world **damaged by sin**.
- Evil was not God's design—it is the result of humanity turning away from Him.

Romans 8:22: *“We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time.”*

3. Suffering Can Bring Good

God doesn't always remove suffering, but He **redeems it**—using it for a greater purpose:

- **Suffering produces character** – (Romans 5:3-4) *“Suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope.”*
- **Pain can bring people to God** – Many only seek God in hardship (Psalm 119:67).

- **It can inspire compassion** – Many who suffer become the greatest helpers of others.

Example: Joseph was sold into slavery and suffered greatly, yet later said to his brothers in Genesis 50:20: *“You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good.”*

4. God Knows Our Pain and Suffers With Us

- Christianity is unique because God Himself entered suffering.
- Jesus was beaten, betrayed, and crucified—He understands human pain (Isaiah 53:3).
- We do not serve a distant God, but a **God who suffers with us** and walks through pain with us (Hebrews 4:15).

John 11:35: *“Jesus wept.”* – He felt deep sorrow for the suffering of others.

5. Evil and Suffering Are Temporary

- This world is not the end—God promises a future without pain (Revelation 21:4).
- Evil will be **judged and removed** in God’s perfect time.
- Heaven will make suffering seem small compared to the glory to come (Romans 8:18).

Example: A mother endures intense pain in childbirth, but the joy of holding her child makes it worth it.

6. The Greatest Answer to Suffering: Jesus’ Sacrifice

- Instead of staying distant, God **entered our suffering** through Jesus.
- Jesus **died for our sins**, ensuring that pain and evil **don’t have the final say**.
- The cross proves God’s love—He was willing to suffer to save us (John 3:16).

The ultimate promise: God is working *all* things for good for those who love Him (Romans 8:28).

Conclusion: God Allows Pain, But He Also Redeems It

1. **Free will makes love possible**—but also makes suffering possible.
2. **The world is broken because of sin**, not because God is unloving.
3. **God brings good out of suffering**—it builds character and draws people to Him.

4. **Jesus knows and shares in our pain**—we do not suffer alone.
5. **Suffering is temporary**—God will end all pain in eternity.
6. **God proved His love through the cross**—He suffered to save us.

Even when we don't understand why, we can trust *who*—a God who loves us and is working even in our pain.