

HARD QUESTIONS GOOD ANSWERS



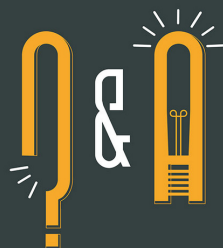
WHY, WHY?

Why ask questions?

When a kid asks his parent how taxes work, we don't expect him to be able to understand the complexities of the US Tax Code. But good parents happily answer kids' questions at a level they understand; it's a good opportunity for conversation, increased understanding, and deepening relationship.

In the same way, we may not understand many things about God. But asking questions will lead to growing understanding and greater trust.

Asking questions in an attitude of trust leads to deeper relationship.



QUESTION WHOM?

We want to ask good questions about God. God is the vehicle of our hope; the subject matter of our faith.

But let's not just question God. Our faith is a bit of a two-way street. Let's also question ourselves! If we question ourselves, we learn more about our personal faith, uncover things in our relationship with God, and discover who we are as children of God.

Good questions as we question:

- Why does this matter to me?
- What do I need from God in this?
- What am I hoping to find out?
- How would different answers change me/my life?

For example, a kid may ask his parent exasperating questions about an upcoming trip, when really all she wants to know is that she will be safe and cared for on the journey.

As you ask questions, explore your motivation and, *please*, ask God for the reassurance, peace, hope, or guidance you need from him!



Can I ask that??

Good questions lead
to good answers.



HARD QUESTION: GOD'S ANGER

Can God be angry?
Can I be wrong?

My daughter, after an unfortunate incident, accused me of being angry. I told her she was right. I said, "Honey, you are allowed to make mistakes! I am allowed to be angry. We'll work through it together."

Jesus looked at his disciple Peter and said, "Get behind me Satan."

Ouch.

Even though Peter had left behind his boat and his nets, he had been unable to leave behind his old nature.

Thankfully, he kept growing! Peter owned his actions, repented, kept following Christ, and became a great saint of the church.

Don't forget: two men denied Jesus. Only one repented. Be a Peter, not a Judas.

God gives us free will to make mistakes. That means God will probably be angry with us also.

The door is always open.

WORST STORY

In Judges 11, we read about Jephthah who prayed and told God that if God would give him victory in battle, after the battle he would sacrifice whatever he saw first at home to the Lord. He wins the battle, goes home, and his daughter first comes out to greet him.

Many people point to a story like this as an example as to why the Bible can't be trusted. And we should be horrified at this story.

This is an all-too common example of religious fanaticism.

But let's read what it says: Did God tell him to do this? **no!**
He made wild promises to God in an attempt to buy God's help.
And that is horribly misguided.

When we read the whole Bible:

- God makes promises to us (starting in Genesis 1!)
- God sacrifices *for* us (that's his ultimate plan.)

In all human stories in the Bible, we should ask: is this prescriptive (the way things should be) or descriptive (the way things are)?

The Bible doesn't white-wash religious fanaticism. It shows us the ugly reality of it. And again and again, it shows us the reality of God's love and mercy. However often humans have gotten it wrong, there is no need to bribe God.

GOOD QUESTION - GREATER MYSTERY

Asking questions is good! We will, obviously, never know all the answers. God is a mystery, existing as One being, yet Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Jesus is a mystery; he is fully God and fully human.

Mystery keeps us humble and God mighty.

Mystery can expand and grow with us; mystery is strong and flexible enough to hold our greatest desires and our deepest doubts.

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For now we see only a reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known.

~1 Corinthians 13:12

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