



“Ask, and it shall be given you”
10 Tough Questions
Answered

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Part One: Jesus and His Message

Question 1 - Who is Jesus?

Historically, there's no doubt that Jesus existed. The Bible and many other documents record His life. But people still dispute about who He actually was. Is Jesus God?

Maybe the question we should be asking is, "Who is Jesus to you?"

Who do You Say Jesus Is?

Jesus asked His disciples this question in three of the four gospels (the books of the Bible which tell the story of Jesus's life). When Jesus first started His ministry, people disagreed about who He was. Everyone had an opinion.

In Matthew, Jesus asked His disciples, "Who do men say that I, the Son of Man, am?" So they said, 'Some say John the Baptist, some Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets.' He said to them, 'But who do you say that I am?' Simon Peter answered and said, 'You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.' Jesus answered and said to him, 'Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but My Father who is in heaven.'

Jesus was going from town to town preaching the good news of the Kingdom of God to the Jewish people. He was healing the sick, delivering the possessed from demons and even raising dead people.

People thought he was just a good teacher or maybe a prophet. Some considered He may be the long-awaited Messiah, but He sure didn't seem like the Messiah they were expecting.

Jesus knew that people's opinions of Him were varied, but what mattered to Him most was what His own disciples thought of Him. Did they really know who He was?

Peter boldly declared who he thought Jesus was: the Christ, the Son of the living God. In fact, Jesus put the "Christ" in Christianity, and if you consider yourself a Christian, then who Jesus is to you matters a lot.

When we declare who Jesus is in our personal lives by faith we can affect the very course of our life. So who does Jesus say He is?

Jesus Is the Resurrection and the Life

In John 11, Martha (a devout follower of Jesus) was distressed because her brother Lazarus had died; she was upset with Jesus for not coming sooner to help Lazarus.

By the time Jesus arrived, Lazarus had been in the tomb for four days, yet Jesus said to Martha, “I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live.” Jesus then called Lazarus to come out of the tomb, and he did!

In the same way, Jesus is the resurrection and the life for us; He can bring the dead things in us to life. If we need hope or peace or joy, He can bring that to life in us!

Jesus is the Bread of Life

In John, Jesus declared, “I am the bread of life. He who comes to Me shall never hunger, and he who believes in Me shall never thirst.”

Much like today, in Jesus’s time, bread was a staple, something people ate every day. Jesus was giving His listeners a word picture that if they depended on Him daily like they did physical bread, then they would hunger no more.

Jesus was promising that He could spiritually satisfy them in a way that no worldly thing could. Many times we want things in life, and after we get them, we realize that we are still not satisfied or fulfilled. When we let Jesus be our Bread of Life, we find deep fulfillment and satisfaction like we’ve never experienced before, and emptiness subsides.

Jesus is the Way, the Truth, the Life

Have you ever lost your way or felt lost in this journey called life? Have you ever wondered what’s really true, and what’s not? What’s right, and what’s wrong? Or what is the true meaning of life?

Jesus gave His disciples the answer to these questions: “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.”

When Jesus is our truth, our way, our life, everything else falls into place. There’s no need to wander or try to figure things out because He is the answer – every time.

Jesus is the Good Shepherd

Most people are familiar with the twenty-third Psalm which begins, “The Lord is my Shepherd; I shall not want....” A shepherd’s job was to protect and provide for his sheep. He fought off predators, rescued stray or weak sheep and even laid down his life to save his flock.

In John Jesus said, “I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd gives His life for the sheep.” Jesus was explaining to His disciples that He could be counted on to protect, rescue and save them just as a shepherd does for his sheep.

In what ways do you need provision, protection or rescue? Jesus is our good shepherd, providing for our needs, leading us to safety, protecting us from physical or spiritual enemies, and taking care of us when we are hurt.

Jesus is the Light of the World

“Then Jesus spoke to them again, saying, ‘I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life.’”

Twice Jesus described Himself as the Light of the World: once just before he applied saliva-moistened mud to a blind man’s eyes (healing him), and once after he prevented an adulterous woman from being stoned to death by pointing out to her accusers that they too were not without sin.

As the Light of the World, Jesus brings healing to the sick and hope to those in darkness. In which dark places do you need the Light of the World to shine?

Back to the Question

Who do you say Jesus is? This isn’t a question just for Jesus’s disciples 2000 years ago but also for us today. Jesus is the Christ, the Messiah and Son of the living God. When we say He is our Bread of Life, we declare that He’s the One who satisfies us. When we proclaim he’s the Resurrection and the Life, we invite Him to bring the dead things to life in us. When we say He’s the Way, the Truth, and the Life, we assert that His way is right. As the Good Shepherd we can rest knowing He’s taking care of us. And when we declare He’s the Light of our World, He shines His glory into every dark place in us.

Question 2 – Why Is Jesus Called the “Son of Man”?

What’s in a name? Why, out of all of the words God could use to describe Himself, did He choose to be referred to as the Son of Man?

For us, the word “son” suggests someone who submits to an authority, has a need to learn and grow, and is a part of a human family. “Man”, on the other hand, expresses being a part of the human race, a member of humankind. So why did God take on a title that normally refers to human beings?

The Purpose of Names

Firstly, in order to understand why Jesus is called the Son of Man, let us explore the purpose of a name. A name is not merely a tool by which we can differentiate ourselves, but, from a biblical perspective, a name can represent the character of an individual and their relationship with God.

For God, a name has a purpose. It can express a message such as in Hosea 1:6 and v. 9 when God instructed the prophet to name his children Lo’Ruchamah and Lo’Ammi, which translates from Hebrew to “No Mercy” (or “Not Pitied”) and “Not My People” respectively. He did this in order to express his grief over Israel’s spiritual adultery.

If you look up names of individuals throughout the Bible, you will see that there is a deeper meaning behind many of their names. Some people were aptly named while others misrepresented or were misrepresented by the names they were given (read about Daniel and his friends in Daniel 1).

The name change that God gave to Jacob in Genesis 32:27–28 demonstrates the importance of a name to God. He changed Jacob’s name, which means “supplanter” or “usurper”, to “Israel”, which means “he struggles with God”. “Jacob” represented who he was before he met God, while “Israel” represents the person he became.

The same can be seen in Isaiah 14:12-17. Satan, from the Hebrew word meaning adversary, began as the Hebrew Heylel (or Lucifer in Latin) meaning “shining one” or “morning star”. Of course, after his rebellion his original name was no longer fitting, therefore, God changed it to “adversary” to denote his changed character and relationship with God and mankind.

Now that we have established a bit of background behind biblical names we can delve into our subject.

Understanding Divinity

In 1 Timothy 3:16 we read, “And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifested in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen by angels, preached among the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up in glory.”

Firstly, we must recognise that there are certain things about God that we are just not going to grasp by our limited mortal understanding. He is the ultimate mystery; even in eternity we will never cease to learn about Him or the plan of salvation that He laid out. The infinite will always bring about greater questions with each answer given.

Secondly and to the point, everything God does has intent; there is always a purpose behind His actions even if we do not see or understand.

Jesus the Son of Man

Jesus is called the Son of Man because that is who He was on earth. He was a son and He was born and belonged to the family of man. This fact also leads us to understand with certainty the prophecies surrounding his birth and what was foretold in Isaiah 7:14: “Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.”

Further, Jesus as the Son of Man holds for us some incredible realities; this name and title allows us to perceive in words that we belong to Him and He belongs to us. It connects divinity to humanity in a manner that was lost when Adam and Eve sinned and had to leave the Garden of Eden.

It is also a reminder that God understands what it is to be human—to fight our fights, to be tempted and to feel alone—to be, according to Isaiah 53:3, “despised and rejected by men; a Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief.” After all, how much easier is it for you in your human relationships to connect with someone who understands what you have been through or are going through right now?

Additionally, Jesus showed that it is possible as human beings to keep the laws of God; that the battle against the flesh could be won. Hebrews 4:15 further expounds on both these concepts: “For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin.”

Jesus as the Son of Man reminds us that God is still the same God who desires a relationship with us as He did in Eden (Genesis 2); in Exodus 25:8 when He instructed Moses to “let [the Israelites] make me a sanctuary that I may dwell among them”; and in Jeremiah 32:38 when He said that we will be His people, and He our God.

Although Shakespeare wrote in *Romeo and Juliet* that “a rose by any other name would smell as sweet”, such is not the case in the Bible and in God’s eyes. The name God gives you reflects the person you will become, the person you are and your relationship with Him. The name and titles He calls Himself reveal to us His enduring promises, power, love and presence in our lives.

Question 3 - Is Jesus the Only Way to God?

Few people have made an impact on history like Jesus of Nazareth. He influenced even how we count years using B.C. ('before Christ') and A.D. ('anno domini', which is Latin for 'in the year of our lord').

But many still question who Jesus was and what He was really all about. Was he really the Christ (Messiah)? And is Christianity the only way to God and heaven? Or do all religions lead to God?

Who was Jesus?

Some people believe that Jesus was just a good man or a prophet. Although this is true, He is much more than that. Who did Jesus Himself claim He was?

Jesus claimed He was the long-awaited Messiah for the Jewish people. Many prophecies foretold how the Jewish Messiah would come and set the Jewish people free from their enemies. He would rule the world and bring order.

Jews were looking for a warrior-king, but Jesus came more in a spiritual sense. He wanted to first set His people free spiritually and then physically free them from all their adversaries such as the Romans.

Jesus also wanted to extend salvation to ALL people, even the non-Jews. Jesus was crucified on a cross like a criminal. The Jewish people were not expecting any of this, so many of them rejected Jesus because He wasn't the ideal Messiah they were looking for.

Some people think Jesus was a lunatic, a crazy man who thought He was the Messiah. And some say that He lied and made the whole thing up. But if either of these ideas is true, then Jesus certainly wasn't a good man. He can't be a liar or madman AND a good man.

The truth is, He was who He claimed to be. Jesus fulfilled every single prophecy about the Messiah right down to the last letter. From where He was born, to how He was killed, to exactly how He was betrayed, Jesus satisfied every requirement for being the Jewish Messiah. The chances of one person doing this is incredibly slim, but Jesus met the criteria, and no other person in history has even come close.

So what does this mean? Jesus wasn't crazy, and He wasn't a liar; He was who He claimed to be: the Jewish Messiah, the only Son of God who lived a perfect life so He could be the perfect blood-sacrifice covering our sins, making us acceptable to God the Father.

Why Did Jesus Come?

Most are familiar with the story of Adam and Eve. God created these humans in His image and placed them in a beautiful garden where he told them to “Be fruitful and multiply. Fill the earth and govern it. Reign over the fish in the sea, the birds in the sky, and all the animals that scurry along the ground.”

God’s plan was to be friends with and have a relationship with His creation; He gave people authority and wanted them to increase and rule the earth for Him. God and Adam and Eve had a good relationship until Satan tempted the humans to doubt and disobey God.

Because of Adam and Eve’s choice to sin (disobey God), death, sickness and separation from God began. This broke God’s heart; He didn’t want to be separated from the people He had created in His own image.

Since God is holy and He cannot tolerate sin, He ordered the people to kill a perfect animal so that its blood could cover their sin and they could be acceptable to Him. The people obeyed God in this for many years, but God had an even better rescue plan: Jesus would be the final blood sacrifice.

Jesus was God’s “do-over.” Since the first man (Adam) messed up, God decided to send another to restart humanity. Jesus, God’s Son, was willing to do whatever His Father asked of Him – even being born as a human and sacrificing His perfect blood to cover mankind’s sin. In this way, God and his human creation could be made friends again.

Romans tells us, “When Adam sinned, sin entered the world. Adam’s sin brought death, so death spread to everyone, for everyone sinned. ... Adam’s sin led to condemnation, but God’s free gift leads to our being made right with God, even though we are guilty of many sins. ... Christ’s one act of righteousness brings a right relationship with God and new life for everyone.”

Now, when Jesus gave His life, that wasn’t the end. Unlike other teachers and prophets, Jesus even claimed he would raise to life again after his death. In fact, the Bible and other historical sources document how His disciples and others saw Him and talked with Him after His Father raised Him from the dead.

God wouldn’t allow death to conquer His Son, and that’s why we can have hope that physical death isn’t the end for us either. When Jesus conquered death, He defeated it for all mankind. Timothy explains: “Christ Jesus ... has destroyed death and has brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.”

In the Garden of Eden, death didn’t exist. When Jesus nullified death’s power, God’s plan to restart humanity and reset things like in the beginning commenced. We just have to accept his sacrifice, and we can live forever with our Creator like we were meant to.

Is Jesus the Only Way to God?

The short answer to this is “yes.” Now before you start to argue or get offended thinking this is a very narrow view, consider this: God is God, and He makes the rules. If He wants there to be just one way to get to Him, then He has the right to do that.

He is God; we are not. If we decide how we want to get to God, then aren't we acting like God, making our own rules? And think about it: Since there's only one way to the Father, it's pretty simple.

Jesus proclaimed, “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.” That's pretty clear. Notice that Jesus didn't say, “I'm one of the ways ... to come to the Father.”

A famous verse, John 3:16, tells us, “For this is how God loved the world: He gave his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life.” So sin is not God's problem; it's a human problem. But because God loves people and wanted to have a relationship with them, He was willing to fix our sin problem.

Death came through Adam, but life comes through accepting Christ. The only question left to ask is, will you accept Jesus's sacrifice so that you can be made right with God, and then will you live to please and honor Him?

“But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.”

Question 4 - Why Is Forgiveness so Important?

Forgiveness is a familiar concept in Christianity. Most people realize that they have done bad things, have sinned against God and need His forgiveness. When we receive His forgiveness, we receive many other benefits including freedom and peace.

Most people appreciate being forgiven, but when the time comes for them to forgive someone else for a wrong committed against them, they have a difficult time extending forgiveness. So what does the Bible say about forgiveness? Why should we forgive others?

Why is Forgiveness Needed?

Romans 3:23 says “for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.” Each one of us has wronged God; we have broken His laws. Even if we think we are a “good person,” 1 John says, “If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”

Sin separates us from a Holy God. But because of Jesus’s sacrifice, we can be forgiven and made right with God. “In Him [Jesus] we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace.”

Likewise, when we have wronged someone or someone has wronged us, a wall forms between us causing problems in relationships, marriages and families. The antidote is forgiveness.

Forgive to Be Forgiven

Perhaps the most well known prayer on earth is the Lord’s Prayer. Jesus said, “And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.” And later, “For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.” Why should we forgive others? We must forgive others if we want our wrongs to be forgiven by God.

In fact, Peter asked Jesus, “Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? Up to seven times?” Jesus’s answer surprised Peter: “I do not say to you, up to seven times, but up to seventy times seven.” Peter thought forgiving someone seven times was pretty generous, but Jesus raised the bar by instructing that we are to forgive people every time they sin against us.

Jesus told a story to make His point:

There was a king who was settling accounts with those who owed him money. One of his servants owed him an enormous amount of money, so the king ordered that the servant be thrown into prison and his wife and children be sold until he could pay all he owed. The servant begged the king for mercy, and the king mercifully forgave the huge debt. But this same servant then went and found a fellow servant who owed him a tiny amount of money. Instead of having mercy, he threw his fellow servant into prison until he could pay the tiny debt.

When the king heard how the servant didn't extend compassion and mercy toward his fellow servant, he was furious and said, "You wicked servant! I forgave you all that debt because you begged me. Should you not also have had compassion on your fellow servant, just as I had pity on you?" Then the servant was imprisoned until he could pay the large debt.

This is a picture of what God sees when we don't forgive others. Jesus ended this parable: "So My heavenly Father also will do to you if each of you, from his heart, does not forgive his brother his trespasses." We must genuinely forgive others if we want God to forgive us. This isn't an option but a command. And God wouldn't tell us to do something if we weren't capable of doing it.

Forgive to Be Like God

According to Genesis, human beings were created in God's image. God forgives, and as image-bearers, not only are we able to forgive, we should forgive. Forgiving means releasing someone from a debt that we say they owe us. When we forgive, we let the debt go and don't demand that amends be made.

While Jesus hung on the cross, He forgave the very people who were crucifying Him. "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do." These people didn't even ask for forgiveness, but Jesus still freely forgave them for wounding Him.

I believe that many times people don't even realize what they've done or how they've hurt us. In our own minds we were terribly wronged, but perhaps there was an incorrect perception or misunderstanding. We need to be ready to forgive even when there's no apology offered. This keeps us free from bitterness and resentment.

In some cases people do intentionally hurt us. Interestingly, the Bible doesn't say to forgive our enemies: Jesus said, "You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven."

Once again, Jesus raises the standard; He instructs us to love our enemies and do good things to those who hurt us. Wow! That sure can be challenging! But when we truly understand how much God has forgiven us, it's easier to release forgiveness to those

who have wounded us. As Philippians 4:13 teaches us, we can do all things through Christ who strengthens us.

Remember, when we forgive someone, it doesn't mean that what they did to us was okay. But holding on to hostility or resentment toward them only hinders us and steals our peace. We are the ones who end up in a prison of emotional pain.

Also note, Jesus isn't advocating staying in an abusive relationship where we are continually mistreated. God's plan for us is freedom and abundant life, as we read in John 10:10.

Unforgiveness Hurts Us

When we refuse to forgive, it only hurts us. Unforgiveness has even been linked to various physical ailments and diseases like cancer. Holding on to bitterness or anger toward someone will result in emotional anguish and unrest. But when we forgive, we can experience inner peace and restoration in relationships.

Psalm 86 says, "For You, Lord, are good, and ready to forgive, and abundant in mercy to all those who call upon You." May we be like God, merciful and ready to forgive, so that our relationships can be healthy and our hearts peaceful. Forgiveness is important so that our relationships with God and others are right.

Part Two: Understanding God

Question 5 - If God Is Good, Why Is There so Much Evil in the World?

You don't have to look very far to see evil in the world. It can be overwhelming when you think about it: school violence, terrorism, racial struggles, personal tragedies, illness and disease.

So why does God allow evil to run rampant? If God is good, why does He allow evil to exist? Why do bad things happen to people? The Bible gives us some answers to these questions.

How Evil Began

You've probably heard the story of Adam and Eve. God created these two humans in His own image. He placed them in a beautiful garden, and He would come and talk with them face to face.

They had a great relationship; He was their Father, and they were His children. And like any good Father, He gave them rules to live by for their own benefit. But God didn't want "robots" for children; He wanted them to desire a relationship with Him on their own, so He gave them free will to choose.

In the meantime, Lucifer (a former angel in heaven), caused a rebellion in heaven and persuaded one third of the angels to join him. God expelled them from His presence, and they came to earth to cause trouble.

What better way for these renegades to get back at God than to attack those He had created in His image? They (now known as Satan and his demons) tempted the humans to question God and disobey God's rules.

Unfortunately, Adam and Eve fell for Satan's deception and chose to disobey God. Because of humanity's choice, sin, death and evil entered the world.

But the good news is this: God loves His creation, so He formulated a plan to rescue humanity by offering His Son Jesus Christ so that we could be free from sin and death if we accept Him. Despite this great plan, we still have an enemy.

The Fight Isn't Against People

It's easy to think that we are fighting against evil people like terrorists, thieves or predators. But Ephesians tells us that "our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms."

The truth is many times there are unseen spiritual forces at work that are influencing and deceiving people to do evil. Many people believe that there are angels among us who do good and help people; likewise, there are demons (fallen angels) who work evil among us.

Jesus promised his followers that "In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world." Jesus overcame death and sin when he willingly offered Himself as the perfect blood sacrifice.

Evil still exists in the world, but when we accept His salvation and choose to follow Jesus, we too can overcome evil. For followers of Christ, "the one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world." So even though there is evil and trouble in the world due to Satan's schemes, Christ living in us is greater yet.

Jesus "appointed twelve [disciples] that they might be with him and that he might send them out to preach and to have authority to drive out demons." So it's not that God permits evil but that Jesus' followers are called and authorized to be His agents on the earth to combat the plots of the devil.

Overcome Evil with Good

The Bible commands Christians "Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good." It is clear that believers must fight back against evil by doing good. This is how believers avoid being overcome by evil.

Followers of Christ are also commanded "Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you." If we want the evil one to leave us alone, then it's our job to first submit ourselves to God and then resist Satan. Only then will the devil flee from us.

So how do we submit to God? Submit means to lower or to yield to authority. Simply put, we must do things God's way. He's the boss, and He makes the rules. Remember, He's a loving Father who wants what is best for His kids.

And how do we resist the devil? Resist means to defeat an aggressor by exerting force in the opposite direction. So when Satan tempts us to lie, gossip or steal, it's our job to stand against that enticement and choose God's ways instead. When we see injustice, violence or suffering, choose to stand against it and promote God's truth.

Submitting to God and resisting the devil are actions that we are responsible for. If we don't do these things, then the devil won't leave us alone, and evil will overcome us.

Followers of God Don't Need to Fear Evil

One of the benefits for those who are in covenant with God, who have chosen to accept and follow His Son Jesus, is living life free from the fear of evil.

Psalm 91 promises "If you say, 'The Lord is my refuge,' and you make the Most High your dwelling, no harm will overtake you, no disaster will come near your tent. For he will command his angels concerning you to guard you in all your ways; they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone."

Again, this is a choice on our part. Will we put our trust in money, power and self-effort? Or will we put our trust in God to provide and protect as a good Father? If we will choose to put our confidence in God and draw close to Him, He will guard us from evil.

Psalm 23 is perhaps one of the most famous psalms of King David. It encourages us: "Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me."

Peter reminds us that "the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous and his ears are attentive to their prayer, but the face of the Lord is against those who do evil." If we accept what Jesus did for us, we are righteous in God's eyes, and He hears our prayers.

So the question isn't "Why does God allow evil and suffering?" The question is: "When will God's people fully submit to Him, resist the evil one, and overcome evil with good?"

Question 6 - What Does God Think About Wealth?

Money is important to most people because without it, we couldn't live. We wouldn't have food or shelter or clothing. The Bible talks about wealth in almost every single book, so if God talks about money that much, let's see what He has to say.

Proverbs is well known as a book of wisdom, and it talks a lot about wealth:

“The blessing of the Lord brings wealth, without painful toil for it.”

“Honor the Lord with your wealth, with the firstfruits of all your crops; then your barns will be filled to overflowing, and your vats will brim over with new wine.”

In the book of Genesis, God blessed Abraham “abundantly, and he has become wealthy.” Isaac “planted crops ... and ... reaped a hundredfold, because the Lord blessed him. [He] became rich, and his wealth continued to grow until he became very wealthy.”

As you can see, God is not against wealth, but He does want us to honor Him with it.

In the book of Deuteronomy God reminds His people, “But remember the Lord your God, for it is he who gives you the ability to produce wealth, and so confirms his covenant, which he swore to your ancestors, as it is today.”

In this case, God explains that He is the one who gives His people the ability to gain wealth; it's one of the ways He confirms His promise to them. He also warns them not to forget Him when they do gain wealth. It's obvious that God isn't against wealth if He wants to bless His people with it.

Money Was One of Jesus's Favorite Topics

Jesus spoke to people using parables (stories) to help them understand the Kingdom of God. Often, Jesus told stories involving money and business because those were things people could relate to and understand.

The religion in Jesus's day taught that having wealth meant you were favored and blessed by God, but if you were poor, you were cursed and not favored by God. This was a convenient belief if you had money, but if you did not, then too bad.

Jesus challenged this belief head on when he told the parable of The Rich Young Ruler. This story is told three times in the Bible. It goes like this:

A rich young ruler came to Jesus asking how he could inherit eternal life. He told Jesus that he had kept all the commandments, but was there something else he needed to do?

“Jesus answered, ‘If you want to be perfect, go, sell your possessions and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me.’ When the young man heard this, he went away sad, because he had great wealth.”

Jesus went on to say that it’s hard for the rich to enter the Kingdom of Heaven, though not impossible. His disciples “were greatly astonished and asked, ‘Who then can be saved?’” Remember, they thought the rich were the ones who would inherit eternal life because they were favored by God. But Jesus refuted this.

Why would Jesus ask this young man to sell what he owned and give to the poor (“cursed” people)? Was Jesus against this man having wealth? Not at all. But Jesus could see that his wealth had an unhealthy hold on his heart that needed to be broken.

In the book of Luke, Jesus also challenged the religious leaders concerning money because many of them loved money:

“No one can serve two masters. Either you will hate the one and love the other, or you will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money.’ The Pharisees, who loved money, heard all this and were sneering at Jesus. He said to them, ‘You are the ones who justify yourselves in the eyes of others, but God knows your hearts. What people value highly is detestable in God’s sight.’”

God wants us to be devoted to Him, not money or things. He realizes that we cannot love both Him and money. We need to value Him above all else, then we will be truly blessed.

Isn’t Money Evil?

Most people assume that in Christianity money is the root of all evil, but that isn’t quite right.

Scripture actually says, “For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs.”

Just like the religious leaders, when we love money, God knows that it opens us up to “all kinds of evil.” And like a good father, He wants to protect and guide His children so that they will have a good life. Loving money won’t result in a good life.

The Bible also says, “Command those who are rich in this present world not to be arrogant nor to put their hope in wealth, which is so uncertain, but to put their hope in God, who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment. Command them to do good, to be rich in good deeds, and to be generous and willing to share.”

Having wealth is a responsibility. God calls wealthy people to put their hope in God (not their money), to share their wealth generously, and to do good deeds.

Jesus actually advocated investment. One of His parables taught about how the Kingdom of God is like a homeowner who had servants. He was going away for a long time, but before he left, he gave one servant 5 gold pieces, another 2 gold pieces and another 1 gold piece.

The two servants who had 2 and 5 gold pieces went to work and doubled their money. But out of fear, the third servant took his 1 gold piece and hid it.

When the owner returned, he said to the servants who increased their money, “Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master’s happiness!”

But to the third servant he said, “You wicked, lazy servant! ... You should have put my money on deposit with the bankers, so that when I returned I would have received it back with interest.”

It’s evident that God looks favorably on interest and investment; He wants us to take what we have and earn more. It’s not evil or wrong to increase your wealth; it’s responsible, and God sees people who do this to be faithful.

Isn’t the Church After My Money?

The truth is that the church wants you blessed as God wants you blessed. The church is involved in what God has set up as a constant check on our attitude towards money. The church challenges the believer to give in order reveal ones attitude towards God and money. God knows that when we are willing to give to His Kingdom, then we are pursuing Him, not wealth. It’s to help us keep our hearts in check.

So if that’s true, what was Jesus doing in the temple in the book of Mark?

”On reaching Jerusalem, Jesus entered the temple courts and began driving out those who were buying and selling there. He overturned the tables of the money changers and the benches of those selling doves, and would not allow anyone to carry merchandise through the temple courts. And as he taught them, he said, ‘Is it not written: ‘My house will be called a house of prayer for all nations’? But you have made it ‘a den of robbers.’”

So, if you always picture the quiet, humble Jesus with a lamb over his shoulders, throw that idea out. In this passage Jesus was angry – very angry. Why?

What was truly going on was corruption. When people would come to the temple and need to offer a sacrifice to God, they would buy an animal from these money changers. But the money changers were overcharging and cheating in other ways too (reusing the same animals, etc.).

This fraudulence was what Jesus objected to; He wasn’t upset about money in the church but about the dishonesty and trickery going on. And He put a stop to it.

Jesus said, “For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.” That’s what it’s about – our hearts. God wants our hearts and lives to be completely His; He doesn’t want to compete with our love for money, fame, success or anything else.

What does God think about wealth? As long as you love Him wholeheartedly and demonstrate that commitment with your wealth and life, then He has no problem entrusting you with wealth.

Question 7 - Why Do We Need God's Heavenly Wisdom?

We need God's wisdom to get through life successfully because it's hard to distinguish what is truly right with just our own understanding. We need God's wisdom to help us discern and make good decisions. Otherwise, we're just floundering around doing what we think is best (which isn't really best), or doing whatever we want (which is worse).

The world's definition of wisdom

The definition of 'wisdom' from Merriam Webster is, "knowledge that is gained by having many experiences in life". This definition exemplifies the incorrect way our world views wisdom. We're under the impression that life experiences are enough to give us the wisdom we need to get through life successfully.

Now, going through different things in life does give us a new perspective and knowledge about situations, giving us a better idea of what to do in similar circumstances in the future. But that 'wisdom' isn't enough to coast through life and make our own decisions. We still need God because we could go through the same scenario ten times and think we know for sure what we need to do that eleventh time, but only God knows what will actually happen.

We can learn useful things from our past experiences, but they can't give us certainty. God's wisdom is the only thing that can do that.

We are human. We can only grasp so much of how the world works and how God's intricate plan fits into it and includes us all. Because of our limited understanding, we have to rely on God, who knows everything, to guide us through all of life's circumstances... even the ones we think we know how to navigate through on our own.

God's definition of wisdom

The Bible defines heavenly wisdom a little differently. James 13:17 says: "But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy."

Two things that stand out here as distinctly different from our earthly wisdom are the words 'pure' and 'without partiality'. By nature, we as humans are not pure. As Christians we have been made new and holy by the grace of God and Jesus' sacrifice, but as simple humans, we are not pure.

We are imperfect creatures who are anything but spotless. Even exceptionally “good” people, those everyone else applauds for their morals and upstanding behavior, have stains somewhere on their soul. Without God, we cannot have pure wisdom if we ourselves aren’t pure.

We also can’t be without partiality. Our life experiences and personalities make our perspectives skewed to a certain degree. Everything we see in the world is colored by the lens of our perspective.

Therefore, we can’t look at something and make a decision with the complete objectiveness that heavenly wisdom has. God’s wisdom is the only perfectly objective and accurate way to look at situations in life and make decisions.

How do we get God’s wisdom?

So if we need God’s wisdom in life, how do we get it?

1) Genuinely ask for it

James 1:5 tells us that if we want wisdom, we should “ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault”. This means that even if you’re an imperfect person, which we all are, he’ll give you wisdom if you ask for it. And not only will he give it to you. He’ll do so generously!

God loves to impart wisdom to His children, and he loves it when we ask for His wisdom. Remember Solomon? When Solomon could have asked God for anything at all as king of Israel—wealth, popularity, etc.—he asked for wisdom to lead God’s people. God was impressed and pleased with Solomon’s request.

When we ask for God’s wisdom, what we’re saying is that we recognize the fact we can’t do life on our own and that we need God’s help and perfect guidance.

2) Learn to discern God’s voice

Asking for God’s wisdom is the first part, but we also need to learn to discern God’s voice so we can hear Him when he gives it to us.

1 Cor. 2:10 says: “These are the things God has revealed to us by his Spirit.” The Spirit searches all things, even the deep things of God. The spirit is how we hear and recognize God’s voice and everything He tells us. Our spirit, which He has claimed and made new

when we accepted Christ's salvation, is the go-between that connects us to God on a personal level.

Now think of that spirit like a muscle. If we don't exercise it, it grows weak, but if we use it regularly, it will grow strong. We need to constantly seek a deeper relationship with God by being in communion with Him through our spirit. That, of course, involves prayer and meditating on God's Word. The more we do this, the stronger our spirit will be and the deeper our relationship with God will be. Then, the closer we are to God, the more we'll be able to discern his voice from all the other voices around us vying for our attention.

God's wisdom is the only way to get through this life successfully. Let's make it a priority to gain as much as we can.

Part Three: The Christian Life

Question 8 - Are Faith and Science Incompatible?

Faith versus Science. They are often paired against each other. Scientists argue faith can't be proven and therefore is false. People with faith have felt the quiet assurance from the Spirit and know the truth, but can't prove it to the scientists. Sometimes arguments ensue. Is there a way that faith and science can be compatible? Or do we always need to pick a side?

Christ is Always the Same

We need to remember faith and science are both compatible- as long as we keep in mind that faith doesn't change, but our understanding of science often does. (In Hebrews 13:8) The Apostle Paul wrote to the Hebrews, "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever." God's doctrines never change. Programs yes, but doctrine no. We can always have faith in God. He knows all things. He teaches us the absolute truths. If faith and science are telling us different things we know we can rely on God even if current scientific views say otherwise.

Scientific Law versus Scientific Theory

The laws of science are constant and don't change. An example of this is the law of gravity. Scientific *Theories*, on the other hand, are not settled and often change. An example of this is nutrition. Studies show certain foods are good for you. Other studies show those same certain foods are harmful. We should be wise in differentiating between scientific laws and scientific theories.

Scientific Theories Change

Scientists and experts change their minds. Scientific theories change as new information is learned. Scientific theories change as new knowledge is gleamed from new studies and discoveries. Science evolves, refines, and grows. Scientific "truths" change as we gain understanding.

Daniel

A scripture hero who understood this well was Daniel. That's what we love about him. He fearlessly stood by God's laws. In Daniel 1 it tells all about his story. Daniel's people were taken captive by King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon. Daniel and his friends were taken into the King's court to be trained with other young men *"in whom there was no blemish, but good-looking, gifted in all wisdom, possessing knowledge and quick to understand, who had ability to serve in the king's palace, and whom they might teach the language and literature of the Chaldeans."* In other words Daniel and his friends were among the best of the best.

The king gave them all *"a daily provision of the king's delicacies and of the wine which he drank."* He wanted them to have the best so they could become the best. Daniel and his friends did not want to go against God's laws for them. *"Please test your servants... and let them give us vegetables to eat and water to drink."* At the end of the 3 years of training it states that *"the king interviewed them, and among them all none was found like Daniel [and his friends]."*

Daniel understood God's laws were perfect and the king and his experts did not have all the absolute truths. He also understood that faith and science are compatible. He learned from the experts. He learned all the knowledge they were able to teach him. He learned their skills. But Daniel also applied his learning from God and relied on Him for the absolute truths.

Because Daniel and his friends followed God's laws and were guided by God during their studies and training they excelled. They excelled to such an extent it says, *"And in all matters of wisdom and understanding about which the king examined them, he found them ten times better than all the magicians and astrologers who were in all his realm."* That is faith and science working together at its best!

Christians are Pro-Science

God is the ultimate scientist! He created all things. He knows all things. He encourages us to experiment, theorize, and learn. Science is good! Science helps our communities grow and our opportunities increase. It makes different aspects of our lives easier! Daniel didn't reject the learning and the training. He simply relied on the Lord to teach him the absolute truths and expand on the things he was learning while at the King's court.

Prove through Testing

There is an interesting correlation between faith and science. They can both be confirmed through testing. Both in following the Scientific Method and in our spiritual lives we learn something, we form our hypothesis (scientific or spiritual), and then we act on it. We conduct our experiment. We then analyze our results and form our conclusion.

For example, both Faith and Scientific Theory could be compared to a seed. When speaking scientifically it is literally a seed you plant. If you give that seed sunlight, water, and care you will see the plant grow if it's a good seed. If it does grow you can taste the fruit. If its fruit is good you can conclude it is a good seed that brings forth good fruit.

Spiritually speaking your seed might be attending church. You hear that attending church will bring you closer to God. You realize that might be true. You then plant your seed. You start attending church regularly. As you attend church you feel closer to God. You learn Christ's teachings. You apply them to your life. You feel more joy in your life. You realize your seed has grown and the fruit is good. As the Apostle Paul told the Galatians (Galatians 5:22) *"But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness."*

Application for Our Lives

So what does this mean for us? Like Daniel we can rely on God's laws even when the experts tell us something contrary. We can take the best science has to offer- and be confident that with God's help we can incorporate science in our lives and receive additional truths. Let's commit to following Daniel's example! Let's study and learn, while always keeping in mind that scientific theories will change as we learn and grow, and God will teach us the absolute truths.

Question 9 - Do You Really Have to Read the Bible?

Reading the Bible can seem like such a chore. The old-fashioned language and writing style often make it very hard to understand. Plus, it has so many pages. Who has the time nowadays? Besides, do we really need to read the Bible? After all, that's what the Sunday school teacher and pastor are for, right?

The answer to that last question is a resounding “No!” It may be hard to fit it into our schedules. It can be hard to understand what is being said at times, leaving you to wonder how it is relevant to your life. However, the truth is that studying the Bible is a requirement for which there is no substitute or shortcut. I can promise, though, that if you put in the time, the rewards are immeasurable.

Because He Said So

First and foremost, you have to read the Bible because it is a directive from God. God tells us that we are to know his Word and keep it close to our hearts. If you knew nothing else, the fact that God orders us to do it means you really do have to read the Bible. There are other reasons, though, why it has to become part of your life.

Many times we feel that we need guidance. Maybe we just need that quiet time for ourselves away from our crazy, packed schedules. We think things would be easier if we could just talk to God. Well, the Bible is God's word. It is one way that He communicates with us. Any problem or any question we could ever have is covered in that book. Whether we see it or not, the answers are in there. Anytime we need peace, it's in there. Some of your most peaceful moments of clarity will be when you are spending quiet time studying the Word. Maybe you're happy and just want to share your joy. The Bible has that, as well. It is also very often a conversation starter. You read. You pray. You find yourself talking to God and asking questions about what you're reading. What's amazing is that you'll find that God answers back.

Stop and Ask for Directions

Think about driving to an appointment downtown in a big city. You glanced at the directions, but didn't write them down or plug them into your GPS. It's no biggie. You've been there before. You kind of know the way. However, once you get downtown in the thick of traffic, you start doubting if you're going the right way. Things don't look exactly how you remember them. You take a wrong turn and have to go around the block to get back on track. Now you're running late and get stuck behind the only person who decided to go ten miles below the speed limit. So now you're late, frustrated, and so mad you can't see straight. Your whole day is ruined just because you didn't want to take the extra five minutes to study the directions and take them with you.

This is what happens when you don't study the Bible. The Bible is the complete set of directions God has given us for how to live our lives. A lot of times we know the gist of what's in it. We've been there before. We kind of know the way.... That is, until we get in the thick of our chaotic lives. How can you walk the correct path to God if you don't know the way? Furthermore, how can you lead others to God if you can't give them complete directions? It's not enough to know the basics. You have to study the Bible in order to learn the complete set of directions God has given us.

There Has to Be an Easier Way

I wish there were a shortcut or a substitute for reading the Bible. We go to church, we go to Sunday school, and we listen to the preacher teach us about what's in the Bible. We have unlimited access to information and advice on the Internet. There are even whole channels devoted to sharing the Gospel. However, nothing can take the place of studying God's word for yourself.

Just because your preacher or Sunday school teacher is educated doesn't mean they are always correct. Just because that was how you were raised doesn't mean it's correct. Just because your religion says that's what you should believe doesn't mean it's correct. You have to answer for your own actions. You should never blindly follow.

There are a lot of false teachings in the world. The Bible says that some are purposely put in our lives to try to keep us from God. Others are honest mistakes or misinterpretations of God's word. If you don't know the Bible well enough, you won't know when you're being led astray. Your trust and faith in God should be the ultimate authority, not your religious leaders and teachers. Rely on the Bible, not on your religion. People are not perfect. The Bible is. Being able to recall proper and thorough directions when you need them will save you a lot of wrong turns and wasted frustration.

The Armor of God

When we're little, we're taught about putting on the armor of God in Sunday school. We hear it but don't really understand it. As we get older, though, it becomes clearer how we need some sort of figurative shield to protect us. The uncertainty and stress that comes with change can be overwhelming. We are constantly evolving – finish school, get a job, lose a job, get a new job, get married, move to a new place, have a baby, sell the house, put the kids through college, suffer the loss of a loved one, struggle to pay bills, etc.

Those of us that choose to follow the Lord may have extra challenges to overcome. It seems like the world constantly throws obstacles in our way during our walk with God. Our jobs or schools sometimes ask us to do things that we feel goes against our beliefs.

People berate us for believing in God. Kids get made fun of for praying. It's no wonder we need protection. We need something to help us keep our sanity.

That's why we talk about putting on the armor of God. There are many ways God protects us from the world and gives us peace and joy. The Bible is one of those ways. It is one piece of that armor. If we study what is in the Bible, then we can recall what we need when we need it. It is the ammunition to help defeat whatever problem arises. Yes, the Bible is huge and sometimes hard to understand. Yes, it is sometimes hard to know how to apply it to your life. The thing is that it doesn't matter. God knows. You never know what problem or question you will have in the future, but God does. You never know what questions others will ask of you about God, but God does. Every time you read and study the Bible, you strengthen that armor.

Seasons of Change

There is another reason to study the Bible that isn't discussed so often. The Bible always seems to tell us something new and vital. The Bible is God's word. It's His instruction book and inspirational speech to coach you throughout your entire life. The thing is we change so much over the span of our lives. Who we are, how we view the world and what we need is completely different at the age of 21 than it is at 61. The Bible, on the other hand, is unchanging. Yet the message God wants to convey through his word seems to change with us. The words may not change, but the lesson or inspiration we get from those words grow as we grow. So, just because you read a certain part of the Bible years ago doesn't mean that you don't ever have to study it again. Just because you have already been taught that particular lesson doesn't mean you don't need to revisit it. God knows what you need at whatever stage of life you're in. Further study always yields further understanding.

So, open up your Bible. It's one of those things that God requires of his believers. However, it doesn't have to be a chore. It's a great way to communicate with the Lord, and yet it can be so much more. It's your one-on-one quiet and peaceful time with Him. It's your way of gaining the direction or inspiration you need. It's one more tool you can use to strengthen your heart and mind so you can shield yourself from any pitfalls you encounter. It's one way God gives us what we need when we need it. It's always there. All you have to do is read it.

Question 10 - Does It Matter What You Wear to Church?

When it comes to clothing, there are many different opinions as to what is acceptable and what is not. And it's no different in church; some people dress very casually, and others wear more dressy clothing.

Is there some sort of church dress code? Do women have to wear dresses to church? What does the Bible actually say about how we should dress?

God Looks on the Heart

Have you ever heard this? "God doesn't care what I wear. He looks at my heart."

It's absolutely true that God looks at our hearts. And it's also true that many times people get more wrapped up in appearances than they should.

Israel asked God for a human king to rule them so that they could be like all the other nations around them. Saul became the first king of Israel and Judah, and was praised for his appearance.

"[Saul] was taller than any of the people from his shoulders upward. And Samuel said to all the people, 'Do you see him whom the Lord has chosen, that there is no one like him among all the people?'"

The Israelites were impressed with Saul's stature and appearance, but it wasn't long before Saul's flawed character caused problems for the nation.

God chose a new king (David) for His people, but when Samuel saw Eliab (David's brother), God said: "Do not look at his appearance or at his physical stature, because I have refused him. For the Lord does not see as man sees; for man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart."

James warns believers against favoring people based on how they dress.

"For if there should come into your assembly a man with gold rings, in fine apparel, and there should also come in a poor man in filthy clothes, and you pay attention to the one wearing the fine clothes and say to him, 'You sit here in a good place,' and say to the poor man, 'You stand there,' or, 'Sit here at my footstool,' have you not shown partiality among yourselves, and become judges with evil thoughts?"

James reminds Christians that they are wrong to dishonor a poor person who is poorly dressed and to treat a rich, well-dressed person with respect. Obviously, how we treat people matters much more than how we dress or how much money we have.

It is human nature to look at what we can see with our physical eyes. But we should strive to be like God: we need to look not at outward appearances or possessions but rather at the heart and character of people. Outward appearances change; it's the heart that matters.

Clothe Yourself With the Right Attitudes

In the book of Timothy, women were encouraged to “adorn themselves in modest apparel, with propriety and moderation, not with braided hair or gold or pearls or costly clothing.”

Apparently, the women of this congregation were dressing to impress others and show off their wealth. The Apostle Paul warned the women not to dress in a way as to attract attention to themselves (possibly from men other than their own husbands). And it's likely that jealousy and competition reared their ugly heads as well in this church.

So is Paul against wealth and braided hair? No, but he is encouraging moderation instead of excess and decency instead of immodesty. Dressing nicely is acceptable as long as the motive is right (not wanting to show off or draw attention to oneself or one's position).

Peter advises believers: “Likewise you younger people, submit yourselves to your elders. Yes, all of you be submissive to one another, and be clothed with humility, for ‘God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble.’”

Both men and women alike need to submit to one another, thinking about what they are wearing and whether it would honor God. Rather than demanding our own way, humility says, “I don't want to draw attention to myself or offend by how I dress; I want all attention to be given to the Lord.”

Peter also taught women that instead of adorning themselves with fancy clothes, hair and jewelry that the “beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit ... is very precious in the sight of God.”

God Deserves Our Best

Clearly, the condition of our heart is very important to God. But God also deserves our best, even when it comes to clothing. Of course, day to day, we should dress modestly and appropriately to honor God.

But consider this: you are meeting an important government official. How would you dress? Most likely you would put thought and effort into this decision, and you wouldn't wear something that would be considered too casual. You probably wouldn't wear shorts and a tank top.

What if you were attending a wedding or a funeral? These are special events in which apparel is important. In fact, it may be considered rude to dress too casually.

Likewise, when we go to church, we are entering the house of God, the Creator of all things. Isn't the King of the Universe more important than a government official? And isn't coming together with other believers to experience God's Presence more important than a wedding? Of course!

Now before you become anxious, if you don't have nice "dress clothes," then a decent pair of jeans and basic shirt is sufficient. It's not about the type of clothing you wear, it's about honoring Him with the best you have.

Like anything, going to church can become repetitious or common, so throwing on something casual or comfortable is easy. But we must resist this complacency and make an effort for God.

This isn't an issue of whether God "accepts" you or not – if you have accepted Jesus as your Savior and Lord, then you are accepted by God. Rather it's an issue of respect and reverence for who God is. It's an issue of showing Him the honor He deserves by how we dress when we come into His Presence.