

Chapter 1

Questions that Bothered Me the Most

When I was young, I could never be sure that I was a genuine “born-again” Christian, mainly because I wasn’t ever given satisfactory answers to many perplexing questions. Nevertheless, I did profess faith in Christ from a very early age, and throughout my life I have been actively engaged in church activities. I did my best to live my faith, despite serious doubts and reservations. It was not until very late in my life that I have been able to answer all of those questions with complete confidence and intellectual honesty.

Here is a list of questions that bothered me the most. As you read these questions, ask yourself how you would answer each of them. Are you completely satisfied with your answers? Are there questions on the list for which you have no satisfactory answer?

1. How can I know for absolute sure that God exists?
2. If God does exist, why does He hide Himself from us? Why does He make it so difficult for us to believe in Him? Why doesn’t He just visibly show Himself to all of us, thereby removing all doubts about His existence? If unbelievers will be condemned to everlasting Hell when they die, why wouldn’t God make it easier for them to believe?
3. If the Bible is truly God’s word, why does it contain so many historical, scientific, and theological contradictions and inaccuracies? If all the words of Scripture are not inerrant and infallible, in what ways might they still reveal truths about God that can absolutely be relied upon?
4. Why would an all-powerful God of love condemn the majority of the human race to eternal torture in Hell? Why would God command us to forgive our enemies and at the same time refuse to do so Himself?
5. If Christ paid the penalty on Calvary for the sins of mankind, why is most of humanity still required to pay the penalty? Either the penalty was paid or it wasn’t, right?
6. If the penalty for sin is eternal torture in Hell, how could Christ have possibly paid that penalty on our behalf on Calvary? He wasn’t eternally tortured in Hell. According to the Bible, He only remained in the grave for three days, and while there, he was not being tortured. Instead, He was preaching.
7. If belief or faith in Christ is necessary for salvation, how is a person to know what level of belief is required? For most Christians, belief is not absolute. It can only be measured in degrees. Some believe strongly, while others still harbor many doubts. How many doubts are permissible? How strong does one’s belief need to be? Where does God draw the line between saving faith and faith that doesn’t quite cut it?

8. If repentance from sin is necessary for salvation, how complete does that repentance need to be? Most of us continue to sin, despite being sorry for our sins. Is there any way to know for sure that we have adequately repented of the sin in our lives? Where does God draw the line?
9. Why is Christian salvation an all-or-nothing proposition, either eternal bliss in Heaven or eternal misery in Hell? Wouldn't it be more fair and just for God to impose rewards and punishments in an equitable and proportionate fashion?
10. Both Calvinists and Arminians believe that people are helpless to save themselves, and the intervention of the Holy Spirit is required to bring sinners to repentance. Why is it that the Holy Spirit does not intervene on everyone's behalf to change their hearts and draw them back to God?
11. Most people who reject Christianity do so because of strong cultural biases and non-Christian religious indoctrination, usually from a very early age. Can these people really be blamed for their lack of faith in Christ? Is it fair that God would condemn them all to eternal Hell merely for being a product of their culture and upbringing?
12. What are we to make of God-approved genocide in the Bible? Examples include the Genesis flood, the killing of all the first-born of Egypt prior to the Exodus, the subsequent conquest of Canaan, and God's continuing support of Israel in various wars against her enemies.
13. If only Christians go to Heaven when they die, why is it that both Christian and non-Christian near death experiencers (even atheists) have similar experiences while in Heaven? If the near death experience is a demonic deception, why is it that both Christians and non-Christians experience the same deception?
14. Why does God not intervene to alleviate human suffering and evil in this world?

If you were to ask these questions to your pastor, he or she would undoubtedly offer a pat answer to each of them. By now, most of you have heard those answers. The question I would ask you is this. How satisfied are you with those answers? For me, those pat answers were very unsatisfying. Today, I can honestly say that I have arrived at answers that not only resolve all the contradictions and paradoxes of popular Christianity, but I have been able to do it without having to throw my brains out the window. I am no longer forced to live with logical incongruities. The basic tenets of my faith are not only supported by the spirit and intent of the Christian Scriptures, but also by other sources of truth, including non-Christian religious experience, science, intuition, reason, logic, and common sense.