

John 3:16 GOOD NEWS... made simple!

WHAT IF THEY SAY...?

Quick Answers to Common Questions for Laymen

[God]

[Heaven/Hell]
[Evolution]
[Homosexuality]
[Absolute Truth]
[Self-Righteous]

[Bible]

WHAT IF THEY SAY...?

Quick Answers to Common Questions for Laymen

Like many Christians, you might be shy of difficult “religious” questions and refrain from spiritual discussions. Your heart whispers, “What if they say...?”

Or, in an attempt to become an expert in “defending” your faith, you intently study how to respond to certain objections - only to soon forget the details.

Offered here, are responses to common questions and statements made by open and inquiring minds. Questions and statements that might come up while you are seeking to or sharing the Gospel. Responses to people who are open to spiritual discussions but have *sincere* questions or conflicts of opinion.

There are some who outright reject Christ, Christianity, you or your faith; those who only want to harass you. To people like that, Jesus talked in parables so they wouldn't understand. Not that He loved them less, but He knew their hearts were hardened against seeking Truth. Evaluating which type you are dealing with will guide you how hard to try.

- Keep in mind; these responses are intentionally simple. Not a formal defense of a position or doctrine in great detail or depth. But responses a common layperson can grasp, remember and use to *facilitate sharing the Gospel*. Use them to lead into sharing the Gospel or quickly respond to a question while sharing.
- These responses are not filled with Scripture. Not that God's Word isn't important but to make them easier to remember.
- Also, don't feel you need to have all the answers. Just admit it (a “know-it-all attitude” is offensive). And never fear doing a little more research with your friend. There's plenty of good thorough apologetic material to research. Research will never disprove God.

KEY Things in Sharing the Gospel

- **Don't Argue** – Don't feel you need to win an argument. Think of it as an exchange of ideas, not a debate. Everyone has a right to their own beliefs. Seek to show respect while attempting to reason.
- **Ask Permission** – Asking to share goes a long way in showing respect and building trust.
- **The Power of the Gospel** – The Gospel is the “power of God unto salvation” (Romans 1:16). Our part is to speak it (in love) so God can use it to “convict” and “convince” and “convert” (John 16:7-11).
- **The Main Message** - Remember, the goal is exposing the person to the Good News; dealing with the MAIN MESSAGE OF THE BIBLE, that is, HOW A PERSON CAN EXPERIENCE ETERNAL LIFE! Answering questions while sharing the Gospel will temporarily divert you from the main message. So seek to return to the Main Message – keeping the main thing, the main thing.
- **The Bible's Authority** – As Christians, the Bible (specifically God, the author) is our central source of revealed truth. We derive responses to many questions from it. Therefore, the trustworthiness of the Bible is very important and a core point in discussing other issues. Consequently getting a good handle on “why we can trust the Bible” is a great place to start and revisit often!!

[BIBLE] What if they say... *How can I trust the Bible? Or, I don't believe the Bible.*

This could come up before or while you are sharing the Gospel. When it does there are several things you can say (in your own words). One or several may be sufficient. But get the Prophecy illustration down well.

- **Transformed Lives** – One thing that helps us trust the Bible is the positive effect it has had on individuals and societies. It has sobered drunkards and turned cannibal tribes into peace loving neighbors.
- **Documented Proof** – Of all the ancient books, the Bible has scores more reliable manuscripts (copies) than any other that support the accuracy of the Bible.
- **Historical Accuracy** – Although the Bible is not a history book, archeological discoveries continue to prove its historical accuracy.
- **PROPHECY** – But the errorless prophecy contained in the Bible is a KEY way it validates itself! Prophecy is the ability to - *predict something BEFORE it happens.* [Use the following Illustration]

Suppose someone predicted 8 things about a person, for example:

- Date of birth
- Place of birth
- Number of siblings
- Occupation
- Name of wife
- Number of children
- Date of death
- Place of death

This might seem reasonably possible however, the chances of predicting all 8 is: **1 in 10¹⁷** (that's 10 with 17 zeros - 1,000,000,000,000,000,000)!

To get a picture of this, let's cover the state of Texas 2 feet deep in silver dollars. Hidden among them is 1 silver dollar marked with an "X".

Then we'll send someone "blindfolded" out to pick up just 1 coin.

The chances of them choosing the one with the "X" is: **1 in 10¹⁷**.

Yet - **THERE ARE OVER 300 PROPHECIES** (actually 333; most have already happened) **ABOUT JESUS IN THE OLD TESTAMENT!** **What are the chances of that?**

Then say:

***WELL, JUST FOR THE SAKE OF CONVERSATION, LET'S ASSUME that the Bible is the word of God.**

- a. And return to where you left off in sharing the Gospel.
- b. If this precedes sharing the Gospel, ask, "May I share what I discovered the Bible says about how a person can experience eternal life?"

**** By saying JUST FOR THE SAKE OF CONVERSATION, you're NOT asking them to agree with you. Rather you're simply seeking to begin, or continue, sharing the Gospel. This is a very valuable statement; don't underestimate it – it's worth memorizing.***

[GOD] What if they say...

*I don't believe there is a God.
Do you think God created us?*

A couple of things you can say (in your own words) are:

The Awesome Design of Creation – You could say:

- Let's consider the unseen minute DNA in a single cell in the womb. Isn't it amazing how it directs the development of this one cell into an incredibly complex human being?
- Or on a more grand scale, consider how the earth's rotation, orbit and position from the sun are precisely maintained to perpetuate life!

Our Sense of Morality and Justice – You could say:

- I find it interesting that we possess a conscience; a sense of right and wrong.
- And our hearts yearn for justice against acts of evil.
 - For example, if your daughter is raped and murdered!
 - Where does this moral sensitivity come from?

Then say:

**JUST FOR THE SAKE OF CONVERSATION, LET'S ASSUME there is one true God.*

- a. And pick up from where you left off from your previous conversation.
- b. Or say, "The main message of the Bible is how a person can be made right with God. Can I share with you what I discovered the Bible says about this?"

** By saying this statement, you're NOT asking them to agree with you. Rather you're simply seeking to begin or continue sharing the Gospel.*

[EVOLUTION] What if they say... *What do you think about evolution?
Evolution makes it hard for me to believe the Bible.*

You will find it helpful to keep in mind that *the main message of the Bible is “how a person can have eternal life” regardless of the origin of mankind*. You can say (in your own words):

I’m not a scientist

- And I don’t understand all the details concerning evolution and creation.

However, according to the *Bible, I **believe God created the original species** or “kinds” of animals, for example: fish, birds, dogs, cats, primates, humans.

- And there have ‘**evolved**’, **mutations and adaptations** among those various kinds of species
 - For example, there have ‘evolved’ many types of dogs.

Then say:

However, THE MAIN MESSAGE OF THE BIBLE is “how a person can have eternal life” **regardless of how we came to be**.

God wants us to know how we can experience His love, acceptance and forgiveness, and know we will spend eternity with Him.

- a. Now, if you were sharing the Gospel, simply resume where you left off.
- b. If you were not sharing the Gospel, ask, “May I share with you how I came to know I have eternal life?”

**Referring to the Bible may lead them to say, “I don’t trust the Bible” in which case you can use the response given under [BIBLE].*

[HEAVEN/HELL] What if they say... *I don't believe in heaven/hell.
Do you really think there is a heaven/hell?
I don't think a loving God would send good people to hell.*

You can use the following response to questions about either heaven or hell. In the case of hell, **most people don't like to think about hell**. For many, the thought of hell, pain and suffering causes our human emotions to question whether God has a right to do what He says He will do (His ultimate authority).

Keeping in mind that heaven and/or hell are based on the Bible. You can say:

The Bible teaches there is a heaven/hell.

Do you believe the Bible?

If they are unsure:

Share with them why you think the Bible is trustworthy using the example(s) under [BIBLE].

Then say:

JUST FOR THE SAKE OF CONVERSATION LET'S ASSUME there is a heaven/hell.

- a. If you were sharing the Gospel, resume where you left off.
- b. If you were not sharing the Gospel, ask, "May I share with you what the Bible says about going to heaven and knowing for sure you won't go to hell?"

[HOMOSEXUALITY] What if they say...

*What do you think about gay marriage?
I don't like Christian views on homosexuality.*

When talking about this issue, it's important to be gracious; speak the truth but *with the love of Christ*.

You can say (in your own words):

[Be gracious]

Too often Christian views on homosexuality come across as mean and disrespectful – even if they aren't intended to be.

- I hope I don't come across that way.

The Bible clearly instructs us to “love people but despise sin”. That's what we need to do.

In the Bible, it is **God, not man, who calls the acts of homosexuality a sin.**

- God loves homosexuals. The challenge for Christians is agreeing with God that these are acts of sin WITHOUT seeming to hate the person.

And in the **Bible, God provides guidelines for what is best for people and society**, for example:

- Don't lie, steal, murder, etc.
- Be kind, generous, help others, etc.
- In regards to marriage (and sex): God says in His Word, between one man and one woman.

We all can choose to DISREGARD God's clearly revealed guidelines BUT NOT WITHOUT ITS CONSEQUENCES, for example:

- Aids/STD's rapidly spreading among active homosexuals and the sexually promiscuous
 - To disregard God's guidelines is like driving on the wrong side of the road! It will have its consequences.

Then say:

However, the bottom line is this:

We all have a problem – sin. (Sin = anything we think, say, do or don't do that does not please God.)

BUT God, in His amazing love for you and me, SOLVED OUR PROBLEM.

May I share with you how God did this?

[ABSOLUTE TRUTH] What if they say...

Who gets to say what is right and wrong?
I don't believe there is "absolute truth".

Note: To say there is no absolute truth is a contradiction because they are saying, "The absolute truth is: there is no absolute truth."

You can say (in your own words):

We seek purpose and meaning - I find it fascinating that mankind has always wrestled with the purpose and meaning of life. A quest for what's right and what's wrong.

- Where does this quest for fulfillment and morality come from?
- Could it come from Someone greater than ourselves?

We desire justice – If there isn't a God and therefore no "truth", we are free to do whatever we want.

- It's everyman for himself. We become a "**whatever**" world without guidelines. And **whoever has the most power or influence rules!**
 - Adolf Hitler killing off the Jews is a good example.
 - But that's not what we want deep in our heart. We want things to be fair; we want justice.

Rebellious by nature – And it seems most people resist authority and accountability. How many of us look out for the cop car while driving!

- But, if there is a GOD, doesn't He have a right to establish right and wrong?
- It's our rebelliousness that doesn't want to believe there is a God to whom we must ultimately answer. Instead, we really want to be our own "god".

I think there is sufficient evidence to believe in a God and the Bible where He reveals specific moral principles (truth) to us.

[Sharing the illustration of how PROPHECY validates the BIBLE could be helpful at this point.]

Conclude with "JUST FOR THE SAKE OF CONVERSATION, LET'S SAY the Bible reveals foundational truth to us."

- a. Then go back to sharing the Gospel
- b. Or state, "The main truth and message of the Bible is 'how a person can have eternal life'."
Then ask, "May I share with you what I discovered it says about this?"

[SELF-RIGHTEOUS] What if they say... I'm a good person and think I'll go to heaven.
Why would God send me or any good person to hell?

A couple of things to focus on are the reality and seriousness of our individual sin.
And that God's "10 Commandments" (law) serve to convict us of our sinfulness and need for a Savior.
Jesus used the "law" to bring conviction to the self-righteous.

You can graciously point out (in your own words):

We all sin

Start by asking a few simple "10 Commandment" questions like:

- "Have you ever told a lie?"
- "Have you ever used God's name in vain?"
- "Did you ever steal anything?"
- "Have you ever looked at someone lustfully?" etc.

If they are honest, they'll say "**yes**".

The Seriousness of our personal sin

Define sin, saying, "**Sin is anything we think, say, do or don't do that does not please God.**"

Tell them how serious sin is stating,

- "The Bible tells us that "no matter how good we are, whoever falls short in even *one point* is *guilty* of breaking *every point*." (paraphrase of James 2:10)

God's requirement - Be perfect

Ask, "Have you ever thought just how good you have to be to DESERVE heaven?"

- The Bible says, "Be perfect as your Father in heaven is perfect." (Matt. 5:48)

"Since heaven is perfect and we are not, there must be a different way – God's way."

Ask, "May I share with you what I discovered the Bible says about how we can avoid hell and go to heaven?"