

InFocus Bible Study in 2019

1. Who created human being, natural evolution or God?

Q1: Who do you think created human being? Natural evolution or God?

What is the teaching of your science class about the subject?

What is the teaching of your religion about the origin of human being?

Q2: Do you think human race is special among all living creatures? Why or why not?

Q3: Do you think your life has special meaning?

Genesis 1:1-2, 24-28 In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. ²The earth was without form, and void; and darkness ^[a]was on the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters.

²⁴And God said, "Let the land produce living creatures according to their kinds: the livestock, the creatures that move along the ground, and the wild animals, each according to its kind." And it was so. ²⁵God made the wild animals according to their kinds, the livestock according to their kinds, and all the creatures that move along the ground according to their kinds. And God saw that it was good. ²⁶Then God said, "Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness, so that they may rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals, ^[a] and over all the creatures that move along the ground." ²⁷So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them. ²⁸God blessed them and said to them, "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky and over every living creature that moves on the ground."

Q4: According to the above Bible verses, what are the differences in creation between animals and human being?

Q5: What does it mean that God made mankind in God's image? What does it mean to the value of human life?

Q6: What attributes of God can you find from the above Bible verses?

What else attributes does God have?

Isaiah 6:1-3 In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, high and lifted up, and the train of His *robe* filled the temple. ²Above it stood seraphim; each one had six wings: with two he covered his face, with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew. ³And one cried to another and said: "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts; The whole earth is full of His glory!"

Deuteronomy 32:4 "The Rock! His work is perfect, For all His ways are just; A God of faithfulness and without injustice, Righteous and upright is He."

1 John 4:7-8 "Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God, and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God. Anyone who does not love does not know God, because **God is love.**"

The dilemma of a righteous King toward his law-braking son

In a kingdom, there was a righteous king. He made a very important law and declared to all over the kingdom that he will take out two eyes from the first violator of the law as a punishment. Next morning, a police man arrested a young man who violated the law and brought him to the king. The king was shocked to find that the young man was his only son who the king loved so much and would inherit the kingdom. If the king takes out the two eyes from his son, then he will ruin his son's life and his kingdom. If the king forgives his son, then he cannot govern the country righteously and loses his credibility as a righteous king. He cannot lose his only son as well as his credibility as a righteous king.

Q7: If you were the king, what will you do to your son? How can the king solve his dilemma?

Q8: When mankind, whom God created in his image, commits sins, what is God's option?

Q9: Do you think your life has special meaning?

2. The Incarnation: Can God become a man and still be God?

Q1: In your religion (or that of your culture) has any deity become fully man?

Matthew 3:13-17 — 13 Then Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to John, to be baptized by him. 14 John would have prevented him, saying, “I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?” 15 But Jesus answered him, “Let it be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness.” Then he consented. 16 And when Jesus was baptized, immediately he went up from the water, and behold, the heavens were opened to him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and coming to rest on him; 17 and behold, a voice from heaven said, “This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased.”

Q2: Do you think this passage teaches that Jesus is God? Do you think it is possible for a human being to fully please God?

Mark 2:1-12 — 1 And when he returned to Capernaum after some days, it was reported that he was home. 2 And many were gathered together, so that there was no more room, not even at the door. And he was preaching the word to them. 3 And they came, bringing to him a paralytic carried by four men. 4 And when they could not get near him because of the crowd, they removed the roof above him, and when they had made an opening, they let down the bed on which the paralytic lay. 5 And when Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, “Son, your sins are forgiven.” 6 Now some of the scribes were sitting there, questioning in their hearts, 7 “Why does this man speak like that? He is blaspheming! Who can forgive sins but God alone?” 8 And immediately Jesus, perceiving in his spirit that they thus questioned within themselves, said to them, “Why do you question these things in your hearts? 9 Which is easier, to say to the paralytic, ‘Your sins are forgiven,’ or to say, ‘Rise, take up your bed and walk’? 10 But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins” —he said to the paralytic— 11 “I say to you, rise, pick up your bed, and go home.” 12 And he rose and immediately picked up his bed and went out before them all, so that they were all amazed and glorified God, saying, “We never saw anything like this!”

Q3: Why were the scribes upset? What title did Jesus use for himself?

Q4: How would you describe the faith of the paralytic and his friends?

Q5: What is the connection between God becoming a man and the forgiveness of sins?

Romans 5:19 — For as by the one man’s disobedience the many were made sinners, so by the one man’s obedience the many will be made righteous.

Q6: How did Jesus obey God? How can the obedience of Jesus make people righteous?

Romans 6:5-6 — 5 For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his. 6 We know that our old self was crucified with him in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing, so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin.

3. Miracles

Opening Session with Entire Group

Q1: How would you define a miracle?

Small Groups

Q2: Do you think that Miracles are possible? Yes, no, maybe?

Q3: If so do you believe miracles still happen today?

Q4: Have any of you experienced or known anyone who has experienced something miraculous?

Let's read about what many believe to be a miracle that is written about in the Bible.

Mark 4:35-41

³⁵ On that day, when evening had come, he [Jesus] said to them [disciples], "Let us go across to the other side."
³⁶ And leaving the crowd, they took him with them in the boat, just as he was. And other boats were with him.
³⁷ And a great windstorm arose, and the waves were breaking into the boat, so that the boat was already filling.
³⁸ But he was in the stern, asleep on the cushion. And they woke him and said to him, "Teacher, do you not care that we are perishing?" ³⁹ And he awoke and rebuked the wind and said to the sea, "Peace! Be still!" And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm. ⁴⁰ He said to them, "Why are you so afraid? Have you still no faith?"
⁴¹ And they were filled with great fear and said to one another, "Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?"

Q5: What were Jesus' instructions to his disciples who by the way were Jesus' closest followers?

Q6: What happened as they [Jesus and his disciples] were traveling in the boat?

Q7: What was Jesus doing during this time?

Q8: What was the reaction of the disciples at this point in the story? What did they say to Jesus? Do you think the disciples' reaction to these circumstances was reasonable? What do you think they thought Jesus could do at this point in time -- many of them were fishermen by trade, Jesus was not?

Q9: What did Jesus do in response to the disciples' question?

Q10: What happened after Jesus said "Peace! Be still!"? Do you think this is what the disciples expected to happen? yes or no. If this is true would you think this to be a miracle or a coincidence?

Q11: What did Jesus then ask his disciples? What do you think Jesus meant by his question to them (i.e. what does faith have to do with it -- faith in what)?

Q12: What did the disciples say at the end of this story? If this event were to be interpreted as a sign of something bigger than escaping impending disaster what might this be?

Q13: What do you would have thought and done if you experienced this event in the manner it was recorded?

Concluding Session with Entire Group

----- end handout material -----

Opening Session with Entire Group -- quick introduction of topic of miracles with an open discussion question of what miracles are hoping to end with a general definition of something that seems to defy the normal order of creation.

Small Group meeting -- most of the time will be spent here (70% -- 80%). Read the text answer questions but not be constricted to the questions -- go where the holy spirit leads you. If we finish early we will go back to large group early.

Concluding Session with Entire Group -- polling of small groups on their answers to questions and any insights they may have had that were not covered by the questions, quick discussion of how story fits into the larger account of miracles describe in the Bible. How miracles are used as a sign and miracles in themselves do not result in faith. Also, as time permits may discuss the reasonability of belief in miracles as described below.

Exit to big group. In big group summary of group responses, quick discussion of how this story fits into the larger account of miracles describe in the Bible.

General discussion and background material for helpers – this is just my thoughts and current plans – please feel free to let me know your input before the meeting and participate with your own ideas and perspectives during the meeting.

My original text I was given also included Mark 5 1-13 “Jesus Restores a Demon-Possessed Man” which demonstrates a spiritual miracle. Although this in many ways is more spectacular than a physical miracle I am thinking that this is too much material for the big group/small group format for seekers with the background of those reported for the group. I also do not think they have the background right now to understand that there is a spiritual dimension to this world. I would like to truncate it to include only the calming of the storm. I believe the exploration of a small portion of the text in an intimate setting of small groups is also more in line with the current learning style of this generation. I am in the process of expanding my knowledge of technical material using on-line methodologies and their concepts are introduced in small chunks after which there is hands-on training. My thoughts are if we need more verses for people to read we could include in the handout another parallel account in Matthew or Luke of the same event from different peoples perspectives but I think one account may be enough.

Miracles in general -- my thoughts for discussion – helpers will have many other insights which I would love to hear.

Miracles tend to be good things that happen that are out of the ordinary and often appear to be contrary to the laws of nature. Some people believe that miracles are not possible because they have not observed them directly themselves or out of the common human experience, they discount the experiences of others. They also overestimate human knowledge in general. This fact is demonstrated in nature as we gain more and more understanding through science. As we discover the answer to one mystery of the world on the macro or micro scale it opens up a host of other questions that we do not yet understand. In fact, we tend to take as given fundamental entities that we really have no idea what they are. For example, what is energy, matter, or the forces that hold things together. The true scholar as he/she learns realizes more and more what they DO NOT know. In some ways even the ordinary is miraculous! A big question is why is there order and not disorder in the universe? The fact that there is order is the basis of science and gives humans the ability to harness it for our use.

As humans acquire more and more knowledge what is considered to be miraculous by one generation becomes common place to another. Take human powered flight as an example. The effects of gravity have been well known for centuries and these properties are still considered to be valid today. What was not known previously was that there were other valid principles of aerodynamics that could temporarily counter and overcome the effects of gravity. It was not like the miracle of flight made the previous Newtonian laws invalid their effect was overcome by a higher principle. The God of the Bible is depicted as a God of infinite knowledge which is beyond the scope of any human to comprehend. We do not even have categories to classify the types of knowledge that God possesses. He must bring things down to our level for us to understand. In this view, God gives us glimpses of his capability through the ordinary things in life, but these things are often so common in our thoughts that we are not impressed. They are as they are and we take them as what things should be. The English phrase is we take them for granted. In this backdrop miracles are rare events or displays that are designed to get our attention.

The book of John in the bible describes a small set of Miracles that are said to be signs. These signs were aimed at giving authenticity to the work and life of Jesus. While the Bible has miracles throughout there are three main times when these tend to occur (Exodus/Judges, Prophets, and in the Time of Jesus). These were key points in the progressive revelation in who God is. The miracles themselves were not easily dismissed and would require attention. But people still were free to believe or not and many people refused to believe even though they experienced the miracles themselves. The God of the Bible did not overwhelm them and made them believe. Instead he used miracles to get their attention so that they would listen to the claims of Christ.

It has been said that most of what we know is not by direct observation but by some sort of authority. In fact, some say over 99% is through such a source. The miracles reported in the Bible have had a chain effect. They inspired the followers of Christ to believe he was the Son of God. Their belief was reflected in their writings and behavior. Their writings reflected realistic reactions to the unknown and often were very unflattering to themselves and the other eye witnesses. They too were taken back and had to evaluate what was going on. The difference between them and the others who were in the accounts was that they were willing to consider the possibility that the miracles came from God. The followers of Christ took the miracles in light of what was already revealed about God in the older parts of the Bible and found them to be consistent with what was already known and explained many of the more difficult portions of this text. They then took a step in the light in an act of faith.

4. Miracles and the Acts of the Apostles

Q1: Do you believe that there are miracles today?

Q2: Do you believe that the Bible is a book of miracles?

Written over three periods:

.. Creation, Fall, Flood??

.. 2000 BC to about 400 BC the O.T.

.. About 4 BC to 90 AD the N.T.

Most of the miracles of the Bible occur in four or five short periods of time. (Moses, Elijah and Elisha, Christ, and the apostles)

Introduction:

*Assume for the discussion that miracles are designed to be signs to authenticate the message of the messenger and answer the following questions for all **five** groups.*

1. Who needs to be authenticated and why?
2. What is **the** message to be authenticated?
3. Did the signs and wonders work?

1. Moses:

Exodus 4:1 Moses answered, “What if they do not believe me or listen to me and say, ‘The LORD did not appear to you?’” 2 Then the LORD said to him, “What is that in your hand?” “A staff,” he replied. 3 The LORD said, “Throw it on the ground.” Moses threw it on the ground and it became a snake, and he ran from it. 4 Then the LORD said to him, “Reach out your hand and take it by the tail.” So Moses reached out and took hold of the snake and it turned back into a staff in his hand. 5 “This,” said the LORD, “is so that they may believe that the LORD, the God of their fathers—the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob—has appeared to you.” 6 Then the LORD said, “Put your hand inside your cloak.” So Moses put his hand into his cloak, and when he took it out, the skin was leprous—it had become as white as snow. 7 “Now put it back into your cloak,” he said. So Moses put his hand back into his cloak, and when he took it out, it was restored, like the rest of his flesh. 8 Then the LORD said, “*If they do not believe you or pay attention to the first **sign**, they may believe the second.*”

Acts 7: 35 “This is the same Moses they had rejected with the words, ‘Who made you ruler and judge?’ He was sent to be their ruler and deliverer by God himself, through the angel who appeared to him in the bush. 36 He led them out of Egypt and **performed wonders and signs** in Egypt, at the Red Sea and for forty years in the wilderness.

2. Elijah and Elisha:

1 Kings 18:21 Elijah went before the people and said, “***How long will you waver between two opinions? If the LORD is God, follow him; but if Baal is God, follow him.***” But the people said nothing. 22 Then Elijah said to them, “I am the only one of the LORD’s prophets left, but Baal has four hundred and fifty prophets. 23 Get two bulls for us. Let Baal’s prophets choose one for themselves, and let them cut it into pieces and put it on the wood but not set fire to it. I will prepare the other bull and put it on the wood but not set fire to it. 24 Then you call on the name of your god, and I will call on the name of the LORD. The god who answers by fire—he is God.” Then all the people said, “What you say is good.” 25 Elijah said to the prophets of Baal, “Choose one of the bulls and prepare it first, since there are so many of you. Call on the name of your god, but do not light the fire.” 26 So they took the bull given them and prepared it. Then they called on the name of Baal from morning till noon. “Baal, answer us!” they shouted. But there was no response; no one answered. And they danced around the altar they had made. 27 At noon Elijah began to taunt them. “Shout louder!” he said. “Surely he is a god! Perhaps he is deep in thought, or busy, or traveling. Maybe he is sleeping and must be awakened.” 28 So they shouted louder and slashed themselves with swords and spears, as was their custom, until their blood flowed. 29 Midday passed, and they continued their frantic prophesying until the time for the evening sacrifice.

But there was no response, no one answered, no one paid attention. 30 Then Elijah said to all the people, “Come here to me.” They came to him, and he repaired the altar of the LORD, which had been torn down. 31 Elijah took twelve stones, one for each of the tribes descended from Jacob, to whom the word of the LORD had come, saying, “Your name shall be Israel.” 32 With the stones he built an altar in the name of the LORD, and he dug a trench around it large enough to hold two seahs of seed. 33 He arranged the wood, cut the bull into pieces and laid it on the wood. Then he said to them, “Fill four large jars with water and pour it on the offering and on the wood.” 34 “Do it again,” he said, and they did it again. “Do it a third time,” he ordered, and they did it the third time. 35 The water ran down around the altar and even filled the trench. 36 At the time of sacrifice, the prophet Elijah stepped forward and prayed: “LORD, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Israel, let it be known today that you are God in Israel and that I am your servant and have done all these things at your command. 37 Answer me, LORD, answer me, so these people will know that you, LORD, are God, and that you are turning their hearts back again.” 38 Then the fire of the LORD fell and burned up the sacrifice, the wood, the stones and the soil, and also licked up the water in the trench. 39 *When all the people saw this, they fell prostrate and cried, “The LORD—he is God! The LORD—he is God!”*

James 5:17 Elijah was a human being, even as we are. He prayed earnestly that it would not rain, and it did not rain on the land for three and a half years.

3. Christ:

John 6:14 After the people *saw the sign* Jesus performed, they began to say, “Surely this is the Prophet who is to come into the world.”

John 10:37 Do not believe me unless I *do the works* of my Father. 38 But if I do them, even though you do not believe me, believe the works, that you may know and understand that the Father is in me, and I in the Father.”

John 12:17 Now the crowd that was with him when he called Lazarus from the tomb and raised him from the dead continued to spread the word. 18 Many people, because they had heard that he had *performed this sign*, went out to meet him.

Acts 2:22 “Fellow Israelites, listen to this: Jesus of Nazareth was a man accredited by God to you by *miracles, wonders and signs*, which God did among you through him, as you yourselves know.

4. Apostles:

Acts 14:3 So Paul and Barnabas spent considerable time there, speaking boldly for the Lord, who *confirmed the message of his grace by enabling them to perform signs and wonders*.

2 Cor. 12:12 I persevered in demonstrating among you the marks of a true apostle, *including signs, wonders and miracles*.

Hebrews 2:3 how shall we escape if we ignore so great a salvation? This salvation, which was first announced by the Lord, was confirmed to us by those who heard him. 4 *God also testified to it by signs, wonders and various miracles*, and by gifts of the Holy Spirit distributed according to his will.

Romans 15:18 I will not venture to speak of anything except what Christ has accomplished through me in leading the Gentiles to obey God by what I have said and done— 19 *by the power of signs and wonders*, through the power of the Spirit of God. So from Jerusalem all the way around to Illyricum, I have fully proclaimed the gospel of Christ.

5. Satan and false Teachers:

Matt 24:23 At that time if anyone says to you, ‘Look, here is the Messiah!’ or, ‘There he is!’ do not believe it. 24 *For false messiahs and false prophets will appear and perform great signs and wonders* to deceive, if possible, even the elect. 11 Then I saw a second beast, coming out of the earth. It had two horns like a lamb, but it spoke like a dragon. 12 It exercised all the authority of the first beast on its behalf, and made the earth and its inhabitants worship the first beast, whose fatal wound had been healed. 13 And it performed great signs, even causing fire to come down from heaven to the earth in full view of the people. 11 Then I saw a second beast, coming out of the earth. It had two horns like a lamb, but it spoke like a dragon. 12 It exercised all the authority of the first beast on its behalf, and made the earth and its inhabitants worship the first beast, whose fatal wound had been healed. 13 And it performed great signs, even causing fire to come down from heaven to the earth in full view of

the people.

2 Thess 2:8 And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord Jesus will overthrow with the breath of his mouth and destroy by the splendor of his coming. 9 The coming of the lawless one will be in accordance with how Satan works. ***He will use all sorts of displays of power through signs and wonders that serve the lie,*** Revelations 13:11 Then I saw a second beast, coming out of the earth. It had two horns like a lamb, but it spoke like a dragon. 12 It exercised all the authority of the first beast on its behalf, and made the earth and its inhabitants worship the first beast, whose fatal wound had been healed. ***13 And it performed great signs, even causing fire to come down from heaven to the earth in full view of the people.***

5. Jesus' Teaching on the Morality of Love, Sex and Marriage

Introduction:

When my grandmother was married nearly a century ago in south Korea, she met her husband at her wedding. Her grandfather chose her groom, and she was expected to obey and to be a virgin. My grandfather and his family held the right to divorce her, if it was found that she lost her virginity before marriage. Love was expected to grow afterwards as the married couple did their duties of providing and caring for each other and for the groom's extended family. So, marriage came first, then sex and then love... In modern times, our grandfathers and fathers no longer feel the responsibilities of finding spouses for the young and single of their families. Young women also no longer feel the obligation to protect their virginity before marriage.

Q1. How does your culture view love, sex and marriage? What are the moral codes of your religion on this subject? Was your parents' marriage arranged or they found each other? What do you feel is the ideal way to ensure personal happiness and stability of our community/society?

When Jesus was on earth, He encountered and interacted with people from many backgrounds. He taught people God's law of holiness, healed the sick, cast out evil spirits, forgave their sins and offered hope.

Jesus' teaching on marriage and divorce to the Pharisees in the Gospel of Matthew

Matthew 19:3-6: 4 "Haven't you read," He replied, "that at the beginning the Creator 'made them male and female,' 5 and said, 'For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh'? 6 So they are no longer two, but one. Therefore what God has joined together, let man not separate."

Q2. What do you think about the idea of a man leaving his father and mother?

Samaritan woman at the well in Sychar in Samaria

In the Gospel of John chapter 4, Jesus spoke to a woman, who had been married five times and now living with a man not her husband, about a new life—living water that He offers.

John 4:13-19: 13 Jesus answered, "Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks the water I give him will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life." 15 The woman said to Him, "Sir, give me this water so that I won't get thirsty and have to keep coming here to draw water." 16 He told her, "Go, call your husband and come back." 17 "I have no husband," she replied. Jesus said to her, "You are right when you say you have no husband. 18 The fact is, you have had five husbands, and the man you now have is not your husband. What you have just said is quite true." 19 "Sir," the woman said, "I can see that you are a prophet..."

Q3. How did Jesus respond to this immoral person? What did He offer to her?

From the sermon on the mount

Matthew 5:27, 28: "You have heard that it was said, 'Do not commit adultery.' But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart."

Q4. How high is Jesus' standard? Can we satisfy Jesus' moral standards?

Jesus and the woman caught in adultery

In the Gospel of John, the teachers of the law and the Pharisees bring to Jesus a woman caught in adultery. This dramatic scene appears in the Mel Gibson movie, "The Passion of the Christ." To everyone's surprise, Jesus turns the tables on them, and challenges their own integrity.

John 8:5-11: 5“...In the Law of Moses commanded us to stone such women. Now what so you say?” 6They were using this question as a trap, in order to have a basis for accusing Him. But Jesus bent down and started to write on the ground with His finger. 7 When they kept on questioning Him, He straightened up and said to them, “If any one of you is without sin, let him be the first to throw a stone at her.” 8 Again He stoop down and wrote on the ground. 9 At this, those who heard began to go away one at a time, the older ones first, until only Jesus was left, with the woman still standing there. 10 Jesus straightened up and asked her, “Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?” 11 “No one, Sir,” she said. “Then neither so I condemn you,” Jesus declared. “Go now and leave your life of sin.”

Q5. Who is the nicest, most respectable, kindest and wonderful person you met?

What would he/she say, if you were brought in with charges against you? How does Jesus compare to your nicest person?

The Good News

This passage is the foundation of Christian faith and offers hope for all of us.

John 3:16-18: 16For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. 17For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. 18Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because he has not believed in the name of God’s one and only Son.

Q6. What do you think about this passage?

6. What is the Holy Spirit?

Introduction: In the 80s, I and my husband used to give a ride to an old lady to church dawn prayer meeting at 6:00 AM every weekdays. She wanted to quit the smoking that she started as a little girl to avoid stomach ache caused by stomach worm (parasites) but could not. During our church revival service, she experienced the Holy Spirit. Since then she could not smoke anymore due to severe bitter taste it gave her. After she was free from the smoking addiction, she wanted to serve at church out of gratitude. Her daughter brought her to the church every Saturday for her to clean the church toilets for the Sunday service more than a year.

Q1: After the old lady experienced the Holy Spirit, what happened to her?

Q2. Have you or your family/friends ever experienced the Holy Spirit similar to the old lady above?

Genesis 1 In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. ² The earth was without form, and void; and darkness *was* on the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters. ³ Then God said, “Let there be light”; and there was light.

2 Timothy 3 ¹⁶ The whole Bible was given to us by inspiration from God...(written by about 40 people)

Q3. From the above two Bible verses, what does the Holy Spirit do?

Jesus Promises the Holy Spirit

John 14 ¹⁵ “If you love me, keep my commandments. ¹⁶ And I will pray the Father, and he will give you another Helper, that he may abide with you forever- ¹⁷ the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, for he dwells with you and will be in you.

Acts 1 ⁸ But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you. And you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.

Q4. What do the people need to do for the Holy Spirit to reside in them? How does the Holy Spirit change them?

Acts 1 ¹³ And when they had entered, they went up to the upper room, where they were staying, Peter and John and James and Andrew, Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew, James the son of Alphaeus and Simon the Zealot and Judas the son of James. ¹⁴ All these with one accord were devoting themselves to prayer,



The Coming of the Holy Spirit

Acts 2 When the day of Pentecost arrived, they were all together in one place. ² And suddenly there came from heaven a sound like a mighty rushing wind, and it filled the entire [house](#) where they were sitting. ³ And divided tongues as of fire appeared to them and rested on each one of them. ⁴ And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance.

⁵ Now there were dwelling in Jerusalem Jews, devout men from every nation under heaven. ⁶ And at this sound the multitude came together, and they were bewildered, because each one was hearing them speak in his own

language. ⁷ And they were amazed and astonished, saying, “Are not all these who are speaking Galileans? ⁸ And how is it that we [hear](#), each of us in his own native language? ⁹ Parthians and Medes and Elamites and residents

of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, ¹⁰ Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya belonging to Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, ¹¹ both Jews and proselytes, Cretans and Arabians—we hear them telling in our own tongues the mighty works of God.” ¹² And all were amazed and perplexed, saying to one another, “What does this mean?” ¹³ But others mocking said, “They are filled with new wine.”

Q5: What happened to the disciples when the Holy Spirit came to them?

Q6: What happened to the people from all over the world when the disciples spoke in other tongues?

Acts 2: 36-42: ³⁶ “Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ.” ³⁷ Now when they heard *this*, they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, “Men *and* brethren, what shall we do?” And Peter said to them, “Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the [gift](#) of the Holy Spirit. ⁴⁰ And with many other words he testified and exhorted them, saying, “Be saved from this perverse generation.” ⁴¹ Then those who gladly received his word were baptized; and that day about three thousand souls were added to them. ⁴² And they continued steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers.

Q7: How was Peter changed after receiving the Holy Spirit?

Q8: How did the people receive the Holy Spirit? What happened to the people when they received the Holy Spirit?

Spiritual Gifts

1 Corinthians 12 Now concerning spiritual gifts, brothers, I do not want you to be uninformed. ² You know that when you were pagans you were led astray to mute idols, however you were led. ³ Therefore I want you to understand that no one speaking in the Spirit of God ever says “Jesus is accursed (under a curse)!” and no one can say “Jesus is Lord” except in the Holy Spirit.

⁴ Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; ⁵ and there are varieties of service, but the same Lord; ⁶ and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who empowers them all in everyone. ⁷ To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. ⁸ For to one is given through the Spirit the utterance of wisdom, and to another the utterance of knowledge according to the same Spirit, ⁹ to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit, ¹⁰ to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another the ability to distinguish between spirits, to another various kinds of tongues, to another the [interpretation](#) of tongues. ...

Q9. What is the purpose of spiritual gift? What gift did the old lady mentioned in the introduction receive?

Galatians 5 ²² But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³ gentleness, self-control...

Q10. Which spiritual fruits do you want to harvest?

7. The Resurrection of Jesus Christ

Introduction: The dominant religion today in America is “secularism” which puts no trust in an afterlife, nor does it believe we are designed, or even have a purpose in life. They argue that all of life is “material”, there is no soul, no spirits, and no God. In contrast, nearly every other religion believes in an immaterial soul that outlives the body, ghosts, and God.

Q1: If you had to rank your professors, would more of them be “secular” or “religious”?

Q2: What are the advantages of being secular? What are the disadvantages of being secular? Which do you think wins? If there was one thing that would make you change your mind, what would it be?

St. Paul wrote the Letter to the Corinthians around 60AD, when most people living in Corinth were secular. The city was known for parties and Epicurean (secular) philosophers. He is defending the fact that after Jesus was killed by Roman crucifixion, he was raised up. Secularists thought it was unlikely, and even a repugnant idea that ruined the excellent reputation Jesus had. “Can’t we be a Christian without believing in a Resurrection?” they asked.

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15:1 Now I would remind you, brothers, of the gospel I preached to you, which you received, in which you stand, 2 and by which you are being saved, if you hold fast to the word I preached to you—unless you believed in vain. 3 For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, 4 that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures, 5 and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. 6 Then he appeared to more than five hundred brothers at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have fallen asleep. 7 Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles. 8 Last of all, as to one untimely born, he appeared also to me. 9 For I am the least of the apostles, unworthy to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. 10 But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace toward me was not in vain. On the contrary, I worked harder than any of them, though it was not I, but the grace of God that is with me. 11 Whether then it was I or they, so we preach and so you believed.

Q3: Philosophical arguments are based on “knowledge” (epistemology), “reason” (metaphysical), or “morals” (ethics). Which type of argument is Paul using?

Q4: He ends with a personal defense against “ad hominem”. Which kind of argument is that?

12 Now if Christ is proclaimed as raised from the dead, how can some of you say that there is no resurrection of the dead? 13 But if there is no resurrection of the dead, then not even Christ has been raised. 14 And if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain and your faith is in vain. 15 We are even found to be misrepresenting God, because we testified about God that he raised Christ, whom he did not raise if it is true that the dead are not raised. 16 For if the dead are not raised, not even Christ has been raised. 17 And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins. 18 Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. 19 If in Christ we have hope in this life only, we are of all people most to be pitied.

Q5: One lawyer tactic is to assume your critic is right, and show why this is a foolish thing. Why does Paul think it foolish to not believe in the Resurrection of Jesus?

20 But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the firstfruits [pioneers] of those who have fallen asleep. 21 For as by a man came death, by a man has come also the resurrection of the dead. 22 For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive. 23 But each in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, then at his coming those who belong to Christ.

Q6: What type of philosophical argument is this?

24 Then comes the end, when he delivers the kingdom to God the Father after destroying every rule and every authority and power. 25 For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. 26 The last enemy to be destroyed is death. 27 For [Psalm 8] “God has put all things in subjection under his feet.” But when it says, “all things are put in subjection,” it is plain that He is excepted who put all things in subjection under him. 28 When all things are subjected to him, then the Son himself will also be subjected to Him who put all things in subjection under him, that God may be all in all.

Q7: Paul here makes an argument based on Jewish Scripture, Psalm 8, which is where David writes a poem to God, thanking him for making humans the most special beings on the planet. The Rabbis said David was a prophet, and he was not talking about himself, but about the coming “Anointed One”, the special King. How does Paul use that?

29 Otherwise, what do people mean by being baptized on behalf of the dead? If the dead are not raised at all, why are people baptized on their behalf? 30 Why are we in danger every hour? 31 I protest, brothers, by my pride in you, which I have in Christ Jesus our Lord, I die every day! 32 What do I gain if, humanly speaking, I fought with beasts at Ephesus?

Q8: Paul uses another lawyer tactic, showing that behavior illustrates a common belief. What behavior is Paul using?

If the dead are not raised, “Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die.” 33 Do not be deceived: “Bad company ruins good morals.” 34 Wake up from your drunken stupor, as is right, and do not go on sinning. For some have no knowledge of God. I say this to your shame.

Q9: The Epicureans were the most famous Greek “secularists” famous for partying. What argument is Paul making?

35 But someone will ask, “How are the dead raised? With what kind of body do they come?” 36 You foolish person! What you sow does not come to life unless it dies. 37 And what you sow is not the body that is to be, but a bare kernel, perhaps of wheat or of some other grain. 38 But God gives it a body as he has chosen, and to each kind of seed its own body. 39 For not all flesh is the same, but there is one kind for humans, another for animals, another for birds, and another for fish. 40 There are heavenly bodies and earthly bodies, but the glory of the heavenly is of one kind, and the glory of the earthly is of another. 41 There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars; for star differs from star in glory. 42 So is it with the resurrection of the dead. What is sown is perishable; what is raised is imperishable. 43 It is sown in dishonor; it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness; it is raised in power. 44 It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body.

Q10: What kind of argument does Paul make here?

45 Thus it is written, [Genesis 2] “The first man Adam became a living being”; the last Adam became a life-giving spirit. 46 But it is not the spiritual that is first but the natural, and then the spiritual. 47 The first man was from the earth, a man of dust; the second man is from heaven. 48 As was the man of dust, so also are those who are of the dust, and as is the man of heaven, so also are those who are of heaven. 49 Just as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we shall also bear the image of the man of heaven.

Q11: Paul quotes Jewish Scripture again, and combines it with previous paragraph to say something new. What justifies the inference? How does this rely on verses 1-10?

50 I tell you this, brothers: flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable. 51 Behold! I tell you a mystery. We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, 52 in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised

imperishable, and we shall be changed. 53 For this perishable body must put on the imperishable, and this mortal body must put on immortality. 54 When the perishable puts on the imperishable, and the mortal puts on immortality, then shall come to pass the saying that is written: [Hosea 13]  
“Death is swallowed up in victory.”55 “O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?”

Q12: Paul does something different here, quoting Jewish Scripture. What kind of argument is this? Why does it work



## 8. Why is religion still around in the twenty-first century?

**Introduction:** Religion has dominated the world since the beginning of the human race; found throughout history and the entire planet. Even today with our advanced science, our incredible technology, and learning of all kinds, most people still believe in a God or gods of some kind. A Pew Poll from 2014 revealed that 53% of Americans viewed religion as very important in their lives while only 11% did not believe in God at all. Majorities of adherents of most Christian traditions say they believe in God with absolute certainty: Protestants: 66%, Catholics: 64%. Americans of other religions answer that question this way: Muslims: 84%, Hindus 41%, Jews 37%, Buddhists 29%.

Q1: Why do you think religion / belief in God(s) is still prevalent today?

Q2: What purpose does religion serve?

Q3: What benefits do you derive from your religion, the teaching you received growing up in your family / country?

Q4: Do you think religion will gradually fade away in time?

Christians follow the teachings of Jesus. Jesus was a Jew 2000 years ago and based his ministry on the teachings of the God and scriptures of Israel. But he said all those scriptures written over the 1500 prior years were pointing to him as the promised Messiah. He expounded on their teachings, explained the true meaning, and introduced the true God to the whole world.

Jesus said he was the truth.

He said he was the way, the truth, and the light.

He said he came to set men free.

He said my peace I give you. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.

He said I am going to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me there.

Q5: How does ultimate and final truth deliver the promise of religion?

## 9. Will God send everybody to heaven as God is love?

Q1. Is there a heaven? Is there a hell?

Q2. Who chooses who will go to heaven and who will not? Can you change which one you are in after you go there?

Luke 16:19-31

The Rich Man and Lazarus

**19** “There was a rich man who was clothed in purple and fine linen and who feasted sumptuously every day. **20** And at his gate was laid a poor man named Lazarus, covered with sores, **21** who desired to be fed with what fell from the rich man's table. Moreover, even the dogs came and licked his sores. **22** The poor man died and was carried by the angels to Abraham's side.[f] The rich man also died and was buried, **23** and in Hades, being in torment, he lifted up his eyes and saw Abraham far off and Lazarus at his side. **24** And he called out, ‘Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus to dip the end of his finger in water and cool my tongue, for I am in anguish in this flame.’ **25** But Abraham said, ‘Child, remember that you in your lifetime received your good things, and Lazarus in like manner bad things; but now he is comforted here, and you are in anguish. **26** And besides all this, between us and you a great chasm has been fixed, in order that those who would pass from here to you may not be able, and none may cross from there to us.’ **27** And he said, ‘Then I beg you, father, to send him to my father's house— **28** for I have five brothers—so that he may warn them, lest they also come into this place of torment.’ **29** But Abraham said, ‘They have Moses and the Prophets; let them hear them.’ **30** And he said, ‘No, father Abraham, but if someone goes to them from the dead, they will repent.’ **31** He said to him, ‘If they do not hear Moses and the Prophets, neither will they be convinced if someone should rise from the dead.’”

Q3. What do you notice in this passage about the information needed to get into heaven?

Q4. What does the rich man say his current conditions are? Does he want his family to be in the same place with him after they die?

Matthew 25:31-46

The Final Judgment

**31** “When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on his glorious throne. **32** Before him will be gathered all the nations, and he will separate people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. **33** And he will place the sheep on his right, but the goats on the left. **34** Then the King will say to those on his right, ‘Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. **35** For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, **36** I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to me.’ **37** Then the righteous will answer him, saying, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you drink? **38** And when did we see you a stranger and welcome you, or naked and clothe you? **39** And when did we see you sick or in prison and visit you?’ **40** And the King will answer them, ‘Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers,[f] you did it to me.’

**41** “Then he will say to those on his left, ‘Depart from me, you cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. **42** For I was hungry and you gave me no food, I was thirsty and you gave me no drink, **43** I was a stranger and you did not welcome me, naked and you did not clothe me, sick and in prison and you did not visit me.’ **44** Then they also will answer, saying, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not minister to you?’ **45** Then he will answer them, saying, ‘Truly, I say to you, as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to me.’ **46** And these will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.”

Q5. Who is eternal fire and punishment prepared for?

Matthew 7:21 **21** “Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. **22** On that day many will say to me, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?’ **23** And then will I declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness.’

Matthew 12:50 **50** For whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother.”

John 15:12-17 **12** “This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. **13** Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends. **14** You are my friends if you do what I command you. **15** No longer do I call you servants,[a] for the servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all that I have heard from my Father I have made known to you. **16** You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should

go and bear fruit and that your fruit should abide, so that whatever you ask the Father in my name, he may give it to you. **17** These things I command you, so that you will love one another.

John 6:28-29 **27** Do not work for the food that perishes, but for the food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give to you. For on him God the Father has set his seal.” **28** Then they said to him, “What must we do, to be doing the works of God?” **29** Jesus answered them, “This is the work of God, that you believe in him whom he has sent.”

Q6. So, to enter heaven one must do the will (work) of the Father. What is the work of the Father? Therefore, who decides if you go to heaven