Questions about the Bible. Believe me, I have many. Who doesn’t? What is most exciting, intriguing, and challenging is the Bible has answers to many of these questions. I offer this limitation because God has numerous mysteries He hasn’t revealed to us. Additionally, as finite creatures groping to understand and comprehend the infinite and eternal One, we must admit we have cognitive parameters we cannot traverse.

Yet, this is not to say there isn’t much He does desire for us to know about His inspired, inerrant Word. He wants us to ask tough, probing questions as we read and study, for it is through questions we grow in our understanding of Him, we learn to appreciate His cosmic plan and purpose, we come face to face with our mannishness and His otherness, and we are instructed in the ways of holy living.

As we begin this short, end-of-the-summer series, where I will seek to address the questions you’ve posed over the last several weeks, I must first make some opening statements and observations to make sure we are all on the same page.

- Thanks for asking such great questions. You obviously are reading your Bibles with inquisitive, searching, seeking minds.
- Our approach is simple: I’ve divided your questions into Bible questions based on texts, and those based on larger theological themes. Since I have more questions than I have weeks, I will first answer some of the Bible based questions, and then take the thematic theology based questions and fold them into a larger, longer apologetic study this fall called **Breakroom Belief**.
- To answer some of the questions I’ll have to lay a theological framework of the passage(s) in question. Hence, what you might think is an isolated, problematic question in a given text cannot be properly understood unless you understand authorial
intent of the book in question, and biblical theology related to the problem. For instance, Hebrews 6:4-6 appears to teach a Christian can lose their salvation at first glance; however, in light of contextual considerations, grammatical constructions, word usage, and the theological purpose of the book, we will be able to conclude this premise is tenuous.

- Some questions won’t be answered because they will be eventually answered/studied when I feel the Lord is leading in that direction. For example, I love the prophesies of Daniel and Revelation, yet I need a time venue in which to address and delve into them in detail. My goal is to teach Revelation next fall on Wednesday nights in a new Bible study time slot.

- Some questions don’t have definitive answers because we don’t have enough information to posit an answer. God has kept our knowledge limited, in some respects, for His purposes. Moses reminds us of this truth:

  "29 The secret things belong to the LORD our God, but the things revealed belong to us and to our sons forever, that we may observe all the words of this law” (Deuteronomy 29).

- I don’t have all the answers. There are many tough passages and lofty concepts which remain beyond my mind’s ability process effectively. But I do have some answers based on a lifelong commitment to studying God’s holy word.

- In answering questions we should always be looking with our minds eye to the key interpretive question of all Bible study: So what? Application is always key, for saints are supposed to be focused on information which leads to transformation. Anything less is pride and sin.

- If you are a saint, then you have the Holy Spirit, and based on John chapter 16:

  13aBut when He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all the truth; for He will not speak on His own initiative, but whatever He hears, He will speak; and He will disclose to you what is to come. 14a“He will glorify Me, for He will take of Mine and will disclose it to you.

  He is your personal teacher. Sure, God has equipped the Church with pastor/teachers; however, never forget who is at your disposal, the Spirit of the living God. Avail yourself of His mind, His heart, His thinking as you pray and study (1 John 2:20).

- Discrepancies are the tool of the Devil. I’m sure he counsels his minions to take so-called biblical discrepancies and inflate them in your mind to cause you to question God and His Word. So be careful with the motivations behind your questions. The scoffer, who isn’t in pursuit of God, asks provocative questions to seek to undermine people of faith, and to keep him from safe from a relationship with God in his fortress of never ending biblical incongruities. On another note, the answer to discrepancies is the concern of the field of apologetics, the defense of the faith.

- Note: Many questions, complex and simple, can, and are, resolved in a better, deeper, more consistent understanding and knowledge of God, who He is, what His character is like, what He does what He does, how He views sin and so forth. Let me counsel you,
one of the greatest things you can commit your life to until you see Him face to face is to study and know Him well. Reading the Word of God, coupled with a continual reading of sound, trusted theological books, is a must for any growing Christian. Suggest some to read.

- Those who pose supposedly damaging questions to Christianity could not even begin to articulate their questions, which are typically based on fair and balanced philosophical assumptions and the belief in wrong and right, if it were not for the Word of God and its teachings about absolute truth.
- We must always be cognizant that we are the created, the clay, and He the Creator and the Potter. Based on this reality, we should pose our questions with great humility, devoid of arrogance and agitation. We should approach the Bible with the premise that it is innocent until proven guilty, and discard the notion it is guilty until proven innocent. Jeremiah’s words should always be firmly before us as we seek to question the Almighty:

  5Then the word of the LORD came to me saying, 6“Can I not, O house of Israel, deal with you as this potter does?” declares the LORD. “Behold, like the clay in the potter’s hand, so are you in My hand, O house of Israel. 7“At one moment I might speak concerning a nation or concerning a kingdom to uproot, to pull down, or to destroy it; 8if that nation against which I have spoken turns from its evil, I will relent concerning the calamity I planned to bring on it. 9Or at another moment I might speak concerning a nation or concerning a kingdom to build up or to plant it; 10if it does evil in My sight by not obeying My voice, then I will think better of the good with which I had promised to bless it. 11“So now then, speak to the men of Judah and against the inhabitants of Jerusalem saying, ‘Thus says the LORD, “Behold, I am fashioning calamity against you and devising a plan against you. Oh turn back, each of you from his evil way, and reform your ways and your deeds.”’ (Jeremiah 18).

  Isaiah’s words are also instructional:

  9 “Woe to the one who quarrels with his Maker— An earthenware vessel among the vessels of earth! Will the clay say to the potter, ‘What are you doing?’ Or the thing you are making say,’ He has no hands?’ (Isaiah 45).

- For the Christian who deals with non-Christian people who continually ask questions but never make any movement toward God, you know, those antagonistic, quarrelsome types who are passionate about mocking God, belittling His Word, and besmirching you, they don’t have to be your continual focus. As Paul counsel’s Timothy:

  23But refuse foolish and ignorant speculations, knowing that they produce quarrels. 24The Lord’s bond-servant must not be quarrelsome, but be kind to all, able to teach, patient when wronged, with gentleness correcting those who are in opposition, if perhaps God may grant them repentance leading to the
knowledge of the truth, and they may come to their senses and escape from the snare of the devil, having been held captive by him to do his will (2 Timothy 2).

- A word to those who don’t know Jesus and just ask questions to put Christians on the defense. One day Jesus will be asking you the questions face to face. Are you ready for that? Additionally, there are answers to your questions, but there is certainly no end to questions. If you are really in a pursuit of God, there has to come the time when you ask your last question and then, by faith, chose to bow your knees to Jesus Christ.
- Let Colossians 4:6 be our guide in answering questions:

> 6Let your speech always be with grace, as though seasoned with salt, so that you will know how you should respond to each person.

Okay. I think we are now ready to get to those questions you’ve asked. First up is one I wrestled with years ago, and which I’ve been asked about more times than I can recall.

**Is There Such A Thing As An Unpardonable Sin?**

Who hasn’t wondered, “Have I committed a sin which has precluded me from being forgiven?” “Have I said something toward God in a moment of despair, hurt, or rage which bars me from enjoying the glory of His eternal presence?” These are by no means academic questions. They are highly practical and personal. Perhaps the best way to answer this query is to approach it in a four-fold manner:

**The Passage In Question**

This thorny, sometimes soul-jarring question is typically tied to Christ’s pointed, powerful words in Matthew chapter 12:

> 22Then a demon-possessed man who was blind and mute was brought to Jesus, and He healed him, so that the mute man spoke and saw. 23All the crowds were amazed, and were saying, “This man cannot be the Son of David, can he?” 24But when the Pharisees heard this, they said, “This man casts out demons only by Beelzebul the ruler of the demons.” 25And knowing their thoughts Jesus said to them, “Any kingdom divided against itself is laid waste; and any city or house divided against itself will not stand. 26If Satan casts out Satan, he is divided against himself; how then will his kingdom stand? 27If I by Beelzebul cast out demons, by whom do your sons cast them out? For this reason they will be your judges. 28But if I cast out demons by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God has come upon you. 29Whoever speaks a word against the Son of Man, it shall be forgiven him; but
got Questions? 

whoever speaks against the Holy Spirit, it shall not be forgiven him, either in this age or in the age to come.

Mark gives us an alternate account of this historical theological sparring match between Jesus and the misguided, misinformed, jealous, and spiteful religious leaders of the day (Mark 3:20-30). Like so many in our day, these religious men were in love with religious ritual and rules to the point they would disregard all miraculous proofs, no matter how definitive they were, for the sake of preserving their false system of belief. Matthew’s fuller account of this encounter introduces us, therefore, to the first public showdown between Jesus, who claimed to be the Messiah and God, and the religious leaders, most probably from religious headquarters in Jerusalem, who were dead set on opposing His claims. If Jesus was who He claimed to be, then everything these people held dear had to radically change. If He wasn’t, then He needed to be ushered off the world stage and kept from spreading His false teaching to the populace.

It was high noon in Matthew chapter 12. Much was at stake. From Jesus’ words here it is clear He won the argument and proved His point; however, in so doing He made a statement in verses 31 and 32 which has rattled many minds and hearts. We’ll call this …

The Problem From The Passage

Let’s read those unnerving verses:

31 Therefore I say to you, any sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven people, but blasphemy against the Spirit shall not be forgiven. 32 Whoever speaks a word against the Son of Man, it shall be forgiven him; but whoever speaks against the Holy Spirit, it shall not be forgiven him, either in this age or in the age to come.

The Pharisees had a real problem on their hands. How do you account for Christ’s miraculous power? They never denied He had supernatural ability because they, along with countless others, had seen this power displayed in public. Was His power from God? If so, they must worship Him for no one could possess power like this if they weren’t God. Was His power from Satan? That was the only other logical conclusion. If this was the case, then He must be opposed at all costs.

Matthew, whose authorial goal was to substantiate the divinity of Jesus specifically to a Jewish audience, shows how Christ proved His deity by His miracles just as Isaiah prophesied the Messiah would. He reminds his readers of this prophetic reality in chapter 11 by referencing the words of Isaiah from the 35th chapter of his inspired book. Jesus spoke these words to comfort the now doubtful John the Baptist who was imprisoned for his faith and awaiting his execution:

1 When Jesus had finished giving instructions to His twelve disciples, He departed from there to teach and preach in their cities. 2 Now when John, while imprisoned, heard of the works of Christ, he sent word by his disciples 3 and said to Him, “Are You the Expected One, or shall we look for someone else?” 4 Jesus answered and said to them, “Go and report to John what you hear and see: 5 the BLIND RECEIVE SIGHT and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear,
the dead are raised up, and the poor have the gospel preached to them. 6 And blessed is he who does not take offense at Me” (Matthew 11).

Jesus, God in the flesh (Isaiah 7:14; 9:6), fulfilled everything Isaiah said He would, and Matthew made a historical record of this.

- He healed every kind of disease in Galilee at the start of His ministry, and the religious leaders were present (Matthew 4:23).
- He healed physical, organic diseases and demon possessed people (Matthew 4:24).
- He healed a leprous man and the crowds watched in amazement (Matthew 8:3).
- He healed the paralyzed servant of a centurion, and an undetermined amount of people witnessed the event (Matthew 8:10).
- He healed Peter’s mother-in-law (Matthew 8:14).
- He freed people from demon possession again as He traveled, and a scribe was present letting us know they knew about Christ’s actions firsthand (Matthew 8:16).
- He calmed the raging sea with a word, as only God could, and His disciples never forget the event (Matthew 8:23).
- He freed the demoniac, with superhuman power, from his torment in the land of the Gerasenes on the eastern shore of Galilee (Matthew 8:28).
- He healed a paralytic in the seaside village of Capernaum (Matthew 9:1-8). Crowds were present, along with scribes, and these religious men for the first time looked at the miraculous event, which only God could perform, and concluded that Christ was a blasphemer (Matthew 9:3). Unbelief overshadowed any form of belief in Jesus, even in the face of incontrovertible evidences.
- He next raised a young girl from her deathbed (Matthew 9:18-26), again, an action only God could do. Her father, a synagogue official, did what the other religious men should have done: He bowed in humility before Christ, his only hope for help.
- After this, Jesus gave two blind men new eyes (Matthew 9:27), and according to verse 31, the news of this event spread like wildfire. How could it not?
- Jesus then freed another demon possessed man from his supernatural tormentor, resulting in the man gaining the ability to speak again (Matthew 9:32). This miracle blew the people away: “Nothing like this has ever been seen in Israel” (Matthew 9:33). No kidding. God was walking among them. Now what is most interesting in this story is the response of the Pharisees. They looked at this wonder and snidely surmised: “He casts out the demons by the ruler of the demons” (Matthew 9:34). The dark shadows of unbelief grew even darker in their hearts. They so loved their false belief system and sin so much they wouldn’t give it up even in the face of undisputable evidence.
• Jesus followed this miracle up with many other healings to substantiate His identity (Matthew 9:35).

• Later He ventured into a Galilean synagogue and healed a man with a withered hand on the Sabbath (Matthew 12:9-14). The Pharisees responded accusing Him of breaking Sabbath laws by performing a work on the holy day. Jesus corrected them by showing how God is more concerned with the man than laws they had added to God's laws. They didn't take His teaching well, and for the first time we read they sought a way to kill Him (Matthew 12:4). Unbelief darkened almost every square inch of the room in their spiritual hearts.

• Christ kept up the pressure by healing many others (Matthew 12:15).

• And then He drove home His identity by healing a demon possessed man who was both blind and mute (Matthew 12:22). Total spiritual darkness engulfed the religious leaders when they chose to attribute Christ's verifiable power to the prince of demons, Beelzebul, literally “The Lord of the Dung,” or “The Lord of Flies,” which are associated with dung. Historically, this was none other than Satan himself.

One can hardly comprehend the depth of unbelief in the lives of the Pharisees, the very men who should have warmly embraced the Messiah. Their spiritual darkness and animosity toward Jesus reached its zenith in this particular miracle. Their spiritual darkness also accomplished what it always does: It drove them to disavow clear evidences as to the person of Jesus, while opting to explain Him in the most twisted format imaginable. Such is the dangerous nature of unbelief.

Jesus wasted no time in dismantling their false conclusion and in offering His ominous pronouncement in light of their unwavering unbelief.

First, Jesus presented a logical absurdity in verses 25-26: Any kingdom, even Satan's kingdom, can't stand if it's divided. If He employed Satanic power to expel demons from people, then Satan's empire courted disaster. Surely, Satan isn't in the business of helping demon possessed people find freedom. He's into slavery.

Second, since some Jewish religious leaders were able to cast demons out of people in that day (most likely related to the power of God), then did that mean they were using Satan's power (verse 27-28)? This was a point the Pharisees wouldn't and couldn't concede. If Jesus, then, was casting out demons by the power of the Holy Spirit, then God was among them.

Third, since He was able, at will, to bind the strong man, Satan, and expel his demons, He must be God because only God could and can control Beelzebul (verse 29).

Then Jesus drew a line in the sand with this bold, concise, easy-to-understand statement:

30 He who is not with Me is against Me; and he who does not gather with Me scatters.

You cannot be neutral about Jesus. You either bow before the evidences of His deity and Messiahship, or you are scattered to the proverbial spiritual wind and lost forever. The Pharisees chose, in light of, as I have said, incontrovertible evidences, to embrace spiritual
darkness and not light, to have a form of religion while rejecting the Person of true religion, Jesus Christ. Once they reached this point, Jesus made His ominous statement:

31 Therefore I say to you, any sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven people, but blasphemy against the Spirit shall not be forgiven. 12 Whoever speaks a word against the Son of Man, it shall be forgiven him; but whoever speaks against the Holy Spirit, it shall not be forgiven him, either in this age or in the age to come.

Commit any kind of sin, you name it, and God will forgive you. Jesus forgave Paul of his wickedness, ranging from murder to blaspheming:

12 I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who has strengthened me, because He considered me faithful, putting me into service, 13 even though I was formerly a blasphemer and a persecutor and a violent aggressor. Yet I was shown mercy because I acted ignorantly in unbelief ... (I Timothy 1).

Even speak a word against Jesus and He will forgive you. However, to look at the evidences of the Holy Spirit at work specifically in the miracles of Christ and to conclude Satan is at work is to be in a place where forgiveness is impossible because the deluded sinner doesn't desire belief, nor does he seek forgiveness. Mark this well: The unpardonable sin dealt with an unbeliever, not a believer and it was directly related to how one believed the miracles Christ performed revealed His heavenly identity.

As you can see, this was an unusual pronouncement made at an unusual time in history to an unusual group of godless men. What is most sobering is they went to hell because of their unchecked unbelief. Never would God forgive them because they would never come to a place of genuine repentance because of the tentacle of darkness which held them.

They had committed what Jesus couches as the unpardonable sin. All of this logically leads, of course, to our final point:

The Positions Before Us
Can we still commit this sin today?

Some, like John Piper believe we can. Pastor Piper states, “The fact that there is an unforgivable sin—that there comes a point in a life of sin after which the Holy Spirit will no longer grant repentance—that fact should drive us from sin with fear and trembling. None of us knows when our toying with sin will pass over into irrevocable hardness of heart” (Sermon titled: Beyond Forgiveness: Blasphemy Against The Spirit”). I agree that the sinner must beware of the danger of unbelief, of arguing with God, with opposing His gentle prodding with biting sarcasm and perpetual skepticism. I agree it is sin to continually reject the proofs of God’s existence, the proofs of Christ’s person and plan, and the proofs of God’s Word, resulting in a life where darkness grows more intense.

I, however, believe this particular sin isn’t possible today. I think this showdown was a historical event with a word of judgment for those particular religious leaders in question. At issue were the miraculous works of Christ, many of which they had seen, or at least heard about through viable witnesses. Christ judgment was upon these men, not future men. Remember, Jesus specifically addressed their thoughts, and the vile words contained in those thoughts. If
His judgment applied to people of the future, then why is there not one instance in the New Testament where the gospel is presented with the exception clause of this passage from Matthew?

12 But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name, “who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God” (John 1) ... of course, except for those who’ve committed the unpardonable sin.

12 Then Jesus again spoke to them, saying, “I am the Light of the world; he who follows Me will not walk in the darkness, but will have the Light of life” (John 8) ... of course, except for those who’ve committed the unpardonable sin.

31 They said, “Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household” (Acts 16) ... of course, except for those who’ve committed the unpardonable sin.

24 Truly, truly, I say to you, he who hears My word, and believes Him who sent Me, has eternal life, and does not come into judgment, but has passed out of death into life (John 5) ... of course, except for those who’ve committed the unpardonable sin.

Forgiveness of sin is readily available from God today. Yes, you must be cautious about the sin of unbelief for it can and will eat away at your spiritual soul like a cancer. However, we must underscore the truth that God always stands ready to forgive if you will but come to Him.

Today is the day to lay down your arguments bathed in unbelief.

Today is the day to come to terms with the evidences of who Jesus was and is.

Today is the day of redemption.

The 20th-century ethics philosopher Mortimer Adler (who was baptized quietly at age 81) confessed to rejecting religious commitment for most of his life because it “would require a radical change in my way of life, a basic alteration in the direction of my day-to-day choices as well as in the ultimate objectives to be sought or hoped for ... The simple truth of the matter is that I did not wish to live up to being a genuinely religious person.’ What a story. For 81 years unbelief reigned in his life, and, then, as his life approached its end, Mortimer traded unbelief for belief. I’m sure it proved to be the best decision he ever made.

Now, it is your turn to turn to Jesus in believing faith.