

## Table of Contents (1 of 3)

How can I become a follower of Christ? .....	6
What does the Bible mean when it uses the term worshipper? .....	7
How do I discern what is God's part & what is my part in trying to change my life? .....	8
Will a Christian go to heaven if they commit suicide? .....	9
Where are we at in the "end times?" .....	11
Are we to be tolerant or accepting of homosexuals? .....	12
Why do I feel overwhelmed when God says He won't give me more than I can handle? .....	12
How do you become "re-pure" in the eyes of God? .....	13
Will Catholics go to heaven? .....	14
Is purgatory a real place? .....	14
What is the purpose of marriage? .....	15
Who are the sons of God & the Nephilem of Genesis 6? .....	16
Is there any hope for loving, caring Buddhists or Hindus who die not knowing Christ? .....	17
Is it OK to listen to secular music? .....	18
Why doesn't God just wipe out the world and start over? .....	19
Where does God stand on breast implants? .....	20
Is it hypocritical for a Christian to go into the military since one of the 10 commandments is, "Thou shall not kill?" .....	21
Since blasphemy is the 'Unpardonable Sin', can a Christian commit blasphemy? .....	22
Is Heaven a real place or simply a state of mind? .....	23
Does the Bible refer to an age of accountability? .....	26
Is a tattoo acceptable to God? .....	27
Is it okay to be cremated? .....	28

## Table of Contents (2 of 3)

Is it okay for people to live together without being married?.....	29
What’s allowed and not allowed in the marriage bedroom? .....	30
What is the Christian and biblical view of masturbation?.....	31
Are Jews going to heaven? .....	33
Is it OK for a Christian to date a non-Christian? .....	35
Is dancing a sin? .....	36
Is there any way to lose your salvation? .....	37
Is it a sin for a Christian to smoke? .....	38
Is it okay to keep a secret for a family member? .....	38
Should a Christian be a Republican or a Democrat?.....	39
Is gambling a sin? .....	40
Is drinking alcohol a sin? .....	41
How can we get God’s love through to those people who only know hate? .....	41
Why is church attendance important? .....	42
If I was baptized as a child do I need to be re-baptized as an adult? .....	43
Is it a sin to cuss/swear/curse? .....	43
What is the mark of the beast (666)? .....	44
Is it OK for a Christian to read their horoscope or visit a psychic? .....	45
Why do we stick with a church structure that sucks away resources from the needy? .....	46
Is it a spouse's duty to have sex with their partner, even if they don't want to?.....	47
Why would God allow bad things to happen to good people? .....	48
Is homosexuality a sin? .....	51
Is a person born gay? .....	51
Can a gay person be a Christian?.....	51
Can a gay person change? .....	51

## Table of Contents (3 of 3)

Will we recognize each other in heaven? .....	52
Can people see us from heaven?.....	52
Will we be married in heaven? .....	52
If God forgives your sins, why is He going to judge us for our sins after we die? .....	53
Does the Bible mention dinosaurs?.....	53
Does the Bible forbid interracial marriages?.....	54
Will I be surprised when I get to heaven to learn that people I went to church with EVERY Sunday aren't there? .....	54
Is tithing biblical?.....	55
Should I tithe off of my inheritance? .....	55
Should I tithe off of my student loans? .....	55
Why do people who do not believe in God all their lives, suddenly at the end of their lives begin calling out to Him? .....	56
Those who don't believe in Christ, do they get another chance after death?.....	56
Should a Christian protest the overturning of Proposition 8? .....	57
What is an OIKOS?.....	59

## THE GROUND RULES

The ground rules, just so we will all be on the same page; I believe that the Bible is the Word of God. So, if a question was asked and the Bible provided an answer for it directly, I answered the question according to the Bible and I did not waiver! There are many questions that were asked and the Bible didn't speak directly to those questions, so I found principles to apply and made it clear when I was doing that. There were times when the Bible did not speak to a topic even in principles, so at those times I gave you my opinion. You don't always have to agree on every topic, but as the joke goes, you always have the right to be wrong!

## How can I become a follower of Christ?

We believe it is as easy as A-B-C:

- A. Admit that you are a sinner. You must be sorry for your sins and turn away from sinning.
- B. Believe that Jesus is God's Son and that God sent Jesus to pay the penalty for sin.
- C. Confess your faith in Christ, and commit to follow him forever.

If you would like to become a follower of Christ, we would encourage you to pray and tell God of your desire.

Here is a sample prayer, make this your own.

Pray Heavenly Father, take my life, I am a sinner who needs a Savior. Jesus, save me! Forgive me! Make me brand new. I give all of my life to you, because you gave your life for me. Thank you for new life. Now you have mine; it belongs to you for the rest of my life. Help me to serve you and to know you in all I do. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

If you prayed that prayer, and meant it in your heart, we welcome you into the family of God. I am sure you have plenty of questions that this book will not answer, so I invite you to call our pastor, Chad Thibodeaux (Tibido) personally at 626-339-7378 x.12. He will pray with you, arrange to give you a Bible, and will provide other free resources that will help you in this new journey.

We encourage you to immediately begin attending church and learn how to worship God.

Our worship services are Sunday Mornings at 9:00 am and 11:00 am. We have excellent programs for infants, toddlers, children, and teenagers, so feel free to bring your entire family. You will feel welcome here.

**What if I don't have 'church' clothes?** That's OK. Most everyone at our church dresses however they want. You will see most everyone in jeans, tee-shirts, and shorts. Others will dress up. There is no requirement, so COME AS YOU ARE!

## What does the Bible mean when it uses the term worshipper?

God, who is the creator of the world, and the creator of all things is enthroned above all and is King of the Universe. By the very nature and identity of who God is, He evokes worship from all that He has created. As you read scripture, anytime creation encounters the Creator, worship takes place. Scriptures are filled with this core truth. Read the book of Psalms and see how nature displays God’s majesty; even calls on creation to proclaim His glory. Christ even taught that if the people didn’t worship Him, the very rocks would! All that He has made trembles before Him and *must* respond with worship.



Every time the Bible records an encounter between God and a person, the response is uniform: falling prostrate in humble, silent, awe-filled worship. It happened to Job, Abraham, Moses, Isaiah, Ezekiel, Paul, and John. When God’s presence and glory were revealed to them, they were all compelled to worship. God makes it clear that every person who has ever lived, and in fact all creation, will in the end see, bow, and confess Christ’s lordship and will worship (cf. Is. 45:23, Rom. 14:11, and Phil. 2:11).

But there’s more to the worship relationship between God and people than just creature-to-creator adoration. God uniquely created men and women in His very image so that they might enjoy a privileged relationship with Him and worship on the level of *friend*—not just creature. God is spirit and He created people as spiritual beings capable of knowing Him in an intimate relationship and enjoying Him as both Creator-King *and* Redeemer-Friend.

Comprehensively defining worship is as elusive a task as defining “love.” However, at its most basic essence, worship is the natural expression of our relationship to God. It is the response of adoration and thanksgiving to Him because He is both Creator and Savior. God himself is the initiator of the relationship and, in fact, He seeks out worship (John 4:23-24; II Chronicles 16:9). Our responsibility is to *acknowledge* who He is and *remember* what He has done. When we acknowledge and remember Him, the natural, appropriate responses are awe, gratefulness, and the declaring of His praises.

So what is a true worshipper? It is a person who comes into the presence of God as not just the created, but as the Redeemed. When we enter His presence we respond with awe, reverence, adoration, thanksgiving, and praise. If you do that, you are a worshipper.

## How do I discern what is God's part & what is my part in trying to change my life?

By "discern" I assume you mean "distinguish" or "determine" the reality of something. In all matters of faith and reason the written Scriptures (Old and New Testament of the Bible) become our standard for determining truth. The Bible says that the Holy Spirit is the source of power through which we are able to change our lives. "Walk by the Spirit and you will not carry out the desires of the flesh" (Galatians 5:16).

The Holy Spirit never forces life change on us. He simply shows us the right moral path for our lives and when we choose to walk on that path, He gives us power beyond our natural human abilities to live it out.

There is another important element of life change, and that is our "will" or "desire" to act in a certain way. Paul says in Philippians 2:13, "for it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure".

This verse teaches us that the Holy Spirit gives us the will or the desire to do what God wants us to do. Before we were Christians we only wanted to selfishly please ourselves; when we become Christians the Holy Spirit begins to give us a desire for holy living.

To summarize, God's part is giving us the desire to do what is right, and then if we choose to follow Him, the Spirit gives us supernatural strength to keep going. Our part is to submit ourselves to the Spirit's leading in our lives, and to choose not to give in to other paths that lead us into sin. Our part is to set boundaries or safeguards in our lives that prevent us from giving in to these destructive choices.

Examples of these safeguards might be avoiding certain people that are bad influences on us, not visiting places where it is easy for us to sin, or not keeping things around our house (easily accessible) that lead to sin. These external safeguards are helpful, but the greater safeguards are the internal ones. We become stronger spiritually when we are regularly praying by ourselves and with others, reading the Bible, attending church and Bible study, and confessing our sins to an accountability partner. God's part is to change our hearts and empower us to overcome sin; our part is to submit to the Spirit's leading, participate in spiritual activities that strengthen us, and to avoid evil influences.

## Will a Christian go to heaven if they commit suicide?

In the U.S each year, about one million people attempt suicide. Tragically, about one in fifteen succeed. That number of attempts has doubled in the last 10 years. There's a lot of hurting people.

I just want to say first of all, is that I'm going to try to answer this, and I want to do it as compassionately as I can, because there are many of you who have experienced loss, someone that you love. My heart breaks for you. Some of you may be at a place where you feel like the world is so dark, you've actually thought about that maybe in the past, or even recently contemplated taking your own life.

As a pastor, to officiate at one funeral of a suicide is too many. One of the most painful was a girl in my youth group named Brandi that took her life after feeling a lot of pressure over some family issues. It was one of the toughest things that I have ever experienced. So, it's with an understanding of what many of you have experienced that I will try to answer this question.

Some Biblical examples: Judges, Chapter 9, shows one time when Abimelech asked his armor bearer to kill him. That would probably qualify as suicide. Saul, in the Old Testament, when he was mortally wounded, fell on his own sword. Again, that probably would qualify as suicide. In the New Testament, Judas, after he betrayed Christ, went out and took his life, unable to handle what he did.

What happens to someone eternally when they commit suicide? While the Bible doesn't say directly, here's what happens. Those who say unquestionably, if someone commits suicide they go to hell, they'll often use 1 John 3:15, the Bible says:

“Anyone who hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life in him.” (1 John 3:15)

**Will a Christian  
go to heaven if  
they commit  
suicide?**

They'll say taking your own life is obviously murder, so therefore you will not go to heaven. It's interesting though, if you think about Samson, you may remember in the Old Testament you can read about him. He took his own life, admittedly trying to take out the enemy, the Philistines. But, he's listed in the chapter of faith, Hebrews Chapter 11; implying most likely, that even though he did take his life he would spend eternity in heaven.

Here's my take.

Romans, Chapter 5:1 says this: "Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand."

I see only one sin in the Bible which is unforgivable. That is the unpardonable sin, the blasphemy of the Holy Spirit. I believe that is a different sin than taking your own life. I do believe that taking your life is unquestionably a sin. It's also one of the most selfish things that you can do. It is my hope, just as all other sin is forgivable, that this one is as well. It is my guess that a Christian who takes his life can be forgiven.

But, I say that with more caution than you could ever imagine; because I beg you, never, ever use that as a justification or to rationalize a decision to do such. I would never risk my eternal destination based on a dark moment. I believe there are people who can be under severe demonic attack, demonic oppression, maybe they are chemically imbalanced, maybe they are at a very dark place and in a moment of panic and sheer fear of thinking life will never, ever get better; they make a sinful, a stupid and a selfish decision.

It is my hope that God has grace through His Son, and I believe He does, to forgive them. But I will tell you, if you ever contemplate suicide, it is never the answer. You will leave a wake of more pain than you can possibly comprehend. There is always hope. If you are considering this, I want you to tell somebody today. I want you to tell Christ, I want you to call on Him. There is always help in Christ, there is always healing in Christ, there is always forgiveness in Christ, there is always love in Christ. Call on Christ, call on His people and let them comfort you in this time.

## Where are we at in the “end times?”

This depends on what your definition of the ‘end times’ is. I’m assuming this question could mean, “Are Christians going to be on earth during the tribulation?” The timing of the rapture in relation to the tribulation is one of the most controversial issues in the church today. As I have studied this there are numerous viewpoints on the rapture, but 3 primary views: pre-trib (the rapture occurs before the tribulation), mid-trib (the rapture occurs at or near the mid-point of the tribulation), and post-trib (the rapture occurs at the end of the tribulation).



As a child I heard my dad preach on this topic numerous times, so I am biased toward the pre-trib theory. I’m not sure if it is because I believed most everything my dad preached, or if it’s because it’s the most convenient position for me, or if it’s because I believe it’s the biblical view, but here’s my take as I interpret scripture.

The primary Scripture passage on the rapture is 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18. It states that all living believers, along with all believers who have died, will meet the Lord Jesus in the air and will be with Him forever. The rapture is God’s removing His people from the earth. A few verses later, in 1 Thessalonians 5:9, Paul says, “For God did not appoint us to suffer wrath but to receive salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ.” The book of Revelation, which deals primarily with the time period of the tribulation, is a prophetic message of how God will pour out His wrath upon the earth during the tribulation. It seems inconsistent for God to promise believers that they will not suffer wrath and then leave them on the earth to suffer through the wrath of the tribulation. The fact that God promises to deliver Christians from wrath shortly after promising to remove His people from the earth seems to link those two events together.

So using those verses as my premise, and not getting into a major theological dissertation, my belief is that Christians will be dancing on streets of gold during the rapture.

## Are we to be tolerant or accepting of homosexuals?

I'm probably in the minority on this topic, and after reading this answer you may vote me out as your pastor, but let me see if I can reveal my heart to you.

Homosexuality is a sin. There's not a question about that. However, so is lying, stealing, cheating, gluttony, not tithing, and failing to give God the worship that He deserves. If you lie, we don't forever label you as a liar. We don't give you a title, a stereotype, or even argue whether you'd be allowed in our church or not. Why do we do this over the sin of homosexuality? This is a sin, and Satan has so many people enslaved to sin.

In this case, there is only one thing that can overcome this stronghold: radical, undeniable, unconditional, selfless, sacrificial love. We must ask God to give us an opportunity to lay our lives down for the people that He has put in our path. If we love our gay and lesbian neighbors in a way that truly costs us something, it becomes very difficult for them to discount our love for them.

So are we to be tolerant of them? No! Not at all. We are to love them unconditionally. We are to be Christ to them.

Don't get this confused. Just because I love them, doesn't mean that I have to agree with their behavior, or pattern my life after theirs. But Christ did not spend his time with the religious leaders, or good people. He spent time with tax collectors, harlots, thieves, fishermen, and all kinds of sinners. If He were in physical form today, my guess is that he would spend time with homosexuals as well, because sinners need a Savior. He said it best in Mark 2:7, "Healthy people don't need a doctor--sick people do. I have come to call not those who think they are righteous, but those who know they are sinners." Healing the lost from their sin was the mission of Christ. Luke 19:10 gives us the mission statement of Christ, "For the Son of Man came to seek and save those who are lost." As a follower of Christ this should be my mission as well. The best way to be Christ to people is to love them.

## Why do I feel overwhelmed when God says He won't give me more than I can handle?

A lot of people think that God won't give us more than we can handle, but the Bible never says that. The Bible says that God will not let us be tempted beyond what we can bear. He will always give us a way out from temptation. But, God actually often will allow us to have more than we can handle so we can learn to depend on Him.

## For those of us who have lost our purity, is it still wrong to have pre-marital sex? How do you become “re-pure” in the eyes of God?

Yes, I do believe that it is ‘wrong’ to have pre-marital sex whether you are a virgin or you are not. However, I want to challenge you to view this not from the stance of right or wrong but from the position of what God truly had in mind for sex.

While you can’t change the past – the good news is that you can return to the path of purity – with God’s help. God’s plan of sexuality within the context of marriage is beautiful and perfect, and He can give you what you need to honor His plan.

Acquiring renewed purity does not involve a surgical procedure as some doctors suggest. For purity to be renewed it is a willingness of self that responds to the call from God to live in sexual purity. It won’t magically take you back to the innocent days of pre-sexual encounter. It won’t ‘repair’ you physically, nor wipe out the memories of sexual promiscuity. But what it will do is give you back your sexuality, so that you can make better decisions about the way that you live out your life.

**How to become pure:** The battle for purity begins long before a physical act. It starts with the eyes and with the mind. I like what Job said in Job 31:1: “I made a covenant with my eyes not to look lustfully at a girl.” Before a physical act, there is usually a look or a thought and so we make a covenant, I will not look lustfully at another person. Paul told the Corinthians in 2 Corinthians 10:5: “We take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.” If there’s a runaway sinful, lustful thought; we grab it, we replace it with the Word of God, with something excellent, lovely, pure, or admirable. We think about things that would glorify God. The battle for purity starts with the eyes and the mind.

Second, if something causes you to sin, remove it. Jesus taught this in Matthew 5:28-30, He said: *“If your right eye causes you to sin, gouge it out and throw it away and if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away.”* Jesus was not being literal, He was basically saying if there is something that is going to cause you to fall into temptation, avoid it at all cost. If going to the gym causes you to lust then work out at home. If your cable TV is an issue, cut your cable TV. If you can’t get on the internet without being drawn into looking at pornography, get filters or blogs, or remove the computer from your home. Whatever you need to do to remove the temptation that would lead you into sin, do it.

Third, and probably the most important is the issue of accountability. If you struggle with sin, someone can hold you accountable, not for the purpose of chastisement, but to help restore you to wholeness (See Galatians 6:1-2). There is a state of purity that many people do not believe is possible, but if you will take your thoughts captive, allow the Word of God to renew your mind, consistently train your eyes to turn away, and submit yourself to accountability, then, over time, God can renew your mind and your heart to a state of purity greater than you could ever imagine.

## Will Catholics go to heaven?

For a more in-depth study on this topic I would encourage you to download the "What's the Difference?" series at [www.christ-first.org](http://www.christ-first.org).

Although Catholics and Protestants disagree on a lot, some of the major Doctrines of our Faith are mutual. We agree on the Trinity which is One God who consists of three persons. We agree on Original Sin, where all men have sinned and sin separates us from God. We both believe that Jesus died on a cross for our sins, and after three days, God raised Christ up from the dead. Because of Christ's sacrifice, salvation is available to all through Christ.



Protestants believe that faith is a gift from God and we can do nothing to earn it. However, Catholics believe in Baptismal regeneration. Baptism is salvific. They baptize babies at birth to save them from their original sin. They believe that God only holds them accountable for the sins we commit thereafter.

Christ is pretty clear in the scriptures what someone who is a Catholic, Baptist, Methodist, or Atheist has to do to be saved. Acts 2:21 says, "And everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved." Romans 10:9 says, "That

if you confess with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved." Jesus claimed in John 14:6, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."

There are many Catholics who will be in heaven because they have called upon the name of the Lord; they have confessed with their mouth Jesus is Lord, and believe in their heart that God raised Him from the dead. Those who do not do this will face judgment.

## Is Purgatory a real place?

What is purgatory? A lot of our Catholic friends believe in a place called purgatory, where the soul goes after one dies to be purged or to be cleansed and prepared for heaven. To be honest, the Bible doesn't mention purgatory anywhere. The Bible does say in 2 Corinthians 5:8: "*To be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord.*" No mention of purgatory.

Hebrews 9:27 says, "*Just as a man is destined to die once and after that face judgment.*" Purgatory is not a real place.

## What is the purpose of marriage?

What a great question, and for the first part of the answer I went to a great website called [purposeofmarriage.com](http://purposeofmarriage.com). The purpose of marriage is to *spiritually, emotionally* and *physically* unite a man and a woman together, as husband and wife, in a *covenantal* relationship between themselves and their Creator.

The late Ray Stedman states this, “What, then, is the purpose in marriage? It is to become one. This is what marriages are for. Two people who are disparate, distinct, and different individuals, with different personalities, different gifts, blending their lives together so that through the process of the years they become one flesh--that is what marriage is. It is not something that happens instantaneously when you get married. The wedding service does not make you one. The first act of sex after marriage does not make you one. It begins the process, but it does not finish it. It takes the whole marriage to accomplish this. Marriage is the process of two people becoming one.’

I also like what another theologian said: “Understanding God's purpose for marriage is of the utmost importance, because to marry and miss it is to enter into a life full of frustration and disappointment -- setting the stage for great marital unrest. Most of us tend to marry with romanticized ideas of what marriage is going to be. With great excitement we anticipate the relationship that will finally meet our romantic and emotional needs. God's primary intention for marriage however, is not what most of us imagine it to be.



He has not designed marriage as a place where we can finally try to get our needs met. He has created it as something much better -- something far more grand than that. God intends to use marriage to accomplish a very important goal -- one that is His *primary* goal for all Christians. *God's primary purpose for marriage is to use it to help shape us into the image of His Son.* If we miss out on this we are doomed to a life of anxiety and frustration.”

## Who are the sons of God, the daughters of men, & the Nephilem of Genesis 6?

As you read the account of the flood in Genesis 6-7 it is very easy to overlook some very controversial accusations in the verse. Let's read it together.

*1 When men began to increase in number on the earth and daughters were born to them, 2 the sons of God saw that the daughters of men were beautiful, and they married any of them they chose. 3 Then the LORD said, "My Spirit will not contend with man forever, for he is mortal ; his days will be a hundred and twenty years." 4 The Nephilim were on the earth in those days—and also afterward—when the sons of God went to the daughters of men and had children by them. They were the heroes of old, men of renown. 5 The LORD saw how great man's wickedness on the earth had become, and that every inclination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil all the time. 6 The LORD was grieved that he had made man on the earth, and his heart was filled with pain. 7 So the LORD said, "I will wipe mankind, whom I have created, from the face of the earth—men and animals, and creatures that move along the ground, and birds of the air—for I am grieved that I have made them."*

So who are the Nephilem that were on the earth in those days? Historians will tell you that the Nephilim were a pre-flood race of giants. They were reportedly the children born from the "daughters of men", and the "Sons of God". It is most important to note that they are mentioned almost simultaneous to God's statement that He would destroy the earth by flood, and it seems from this association that their affect upon mankind was one of the primary justifications that brought the destruction.

So who are the Sons of God? Here's what the Northwest Creation Network states: "Nobody knows what the "Sons of God" were, but the most obvious interpretation is that the Nephilim were a hybrid race between two distinct but sexually compatible beings. Many believe the "Sons of God" were fallen angels who corrupted mankind. The "Sons of God" are clearly distinguished from the daughters of men. This suggests the "Sons of God" were either not born on earth or simply righteous men as opposed to earthly. We can only speculate, but as angels are not biological organisms, they are not likely to be reproductively compatible with humans. As I investigate the phrase "sons of God" used in Genesis 6 the Hebrew translation is "bene elohim", which is used only three other times in Scripture all in the book of Job.

*Job 1:6 Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan came also among them.*

*Continued on the NEXT PAGE*

**Who are the sons of God, the daughters of men, & the Nephilim of Genesis 6?**

Job 2:1 *Again there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan came also among them to present himself before the LORD.*

Job 38:7 *When the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy?*

Let's look at one more very important phrase - *And Also Afterward*. In Genesis 6:4 it is said *the Nephilim were on the Earth in those days - and also afterward*. This seems to clearly imply that the Nephilim were also on the Earth after the flood of Noah. Although the Nephilim are only mentioned one other time in scripture (Numbers 13:30-33) after Genesis 6, during a false report brought back to Moses by the explorers of Canaan, this reference would suggest that the Israelites were familiar with the Nephilim.

Some argue that Goliath was a descendant of the Nephilim, although that's never been proven. The best argument that I've ever heard for the Nephilim is pretty gross. It seems as if fallen angels procreated with women and produced a deformed offspring. Pretty demented. I'm sure this is why you never read about them in the children's story book version of Noah and the flood.

**Is there any hope for loving, caring Buddhists or Hindus who die not knowing Christ?**

I am always cautious on how I answer this question, because God is the ultimate Judge, and it is His decision as to whether people live with Him for eternity, or are condemned to Hell.

There are many good people in the world who follow other religions. I personally know a few Buddhists, and I must say they are wonderful people. They are sincere, tender, and caring. However, as I study the Holy Bible I find that Jesus is the only way of salvation because He is the only One who can pay our sin penalty. He makes a pretty bold claim in John 14:6, Jesus says, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me." If Christ's statements are true, and we believe they are, then salvation is available only through faith in Jesus Christ!

Is there another way? Can other religions get you to Heaven? According to the claims of Acts 4:12, "Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved."

There is hope for any Buddhist, Hindu, Catholic, Mormon, or any person who calls upon the Name of the Lord for His salvation. If we do that He's promised to write our name in the Lamb's Book of Life (Revelation 21:27), and prepare a Mansion for us in Heaven (John 14:2-3). If we don't, we will face His judgment (Heb 9:27, 2Cor 5:10, Rev 20:11-15).

## Is it OK to listen to secular music?

What is the purpose of music? Is it designed solely for worship, or did God also intend music to be soothing and/or entertaining? The most famous musician in the Bible, King David, primarily used music for the purpose of worshipping God. However, in 1 Samuel 16, when King Saul was tormented by evil spirits, he would call on David to play the harp in order to soothe him. In the Old Testament, the Israelites used music to warn of danger (Nehemiah 4:20) and to surprise their enemies (Judges 7:16-22).

In the Ephesians 5:19, the apostle Paul instructs Christians to encourage one another with music: “Speak to one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs.”

So, while the primary purpose of music does seem to be worship, the Bible definitely allows for other uses of music.



The Bible nowhere condemns any particular style of music. Since neither the purpose of music nor the style of music determines whether a Christian should listen to secular music, the content of the lyrics must be considered.

Secular music often promotes immorality and violence while belittling purity and integrity. If a song glorifies what opposes God, a Christian should not listen to it. However, there are many secular songs with no mention of God

that still uphold godly values such as honesty, purity, and integrity. If a love song promotes the sanctity of marriage and/or the purity of true love—even if it does not mention God or the Bible—it can still be listened to and enjoyed.

**CAN WE JUST IGNORE THE LYRICS?** Just be cautious, a considerable amount of secular music today glorifies murder, rape, gangs, defiling of women, promiscuity, and is filled with profanity. Don’t be naïve. You can’t ignore lyrics in music. They will register in your spirit. If you like the music but do not like the lyrics, then consider buying a performance track without the words.

## Why doesn't God just wipe out the world and start over?

In Genesis 9:8-17, God promises never to destroy the earth by a flood again. However, it is feasible that He could use other means besides water. In fact, if you're an Al Gore fan, you might even say that God will destroy it with global warming.

I'm not sure if God will or won't destroy the earth before the Rapture, but let me speak to the premise of the question. This question assumes that God is frustrated with this earth, and should destroy it and start all over again. This is not His plan of redemption.

As depraved as this world is, these are the people that God loved so much that He sent His Son to die for them. There is nothing that catches God by surprise, and He is not shocked by anything that is happening in this world. We can NEVER out-sin the grace of God. His grace is sufficient according to 2 Corinthians 12:9.

If Ephesians 1:4-6 is accurate and since it's in the Bible we have to assume that it is, then this was God's plan even before the world was made. Adam and Eve didn't spoil the plan of God. You see as you read the Scriptures, if you start in Genesis 1:1 you read, "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth...God created a perfect earth. You go on and you read about a perfect man—a perfect man and this perfect man when given a choice didn't choose God.

If you don't know anything else, you are disappointed and you think, "Oh how sad God must be that the Devil ruined His plan. How sad God must be that the Devil did something that kept God from fulfilling His purpose and His plan. God knew it would all occur exactly in the manner that it did, and so before the foundation of the world, He made provision for you. He planned on redeeming us and adopting us as sons.

His ultimate plan has not been thwarted, He is not flying by the seat of His pants, He is sovereign and He is in control.

So why doesn't God just wipe out the world and start over? Because it's not in His plan of redemption. As you read the prophecies in the book of Revelation, then you know the world will eventually be destroyed, but not before His Church is raptured and worshipping Him in the brilliance of Heaven.

## Where does God stand on breast implants?



Christians were asked in a recent poll what they thought. They were given three choices; yes, no, or the bigger the better! 29% said yes! 37% said no! And 34% need Biblical counseling, because they voted the bigger the better! A lot of guys voting I suppose. What does the Bible say about breast implants? It does not say anything, because that obviously was not a surgery at the time the Bible was written.

Let's broaden this from breast implants and discuss any type of body-altering surgery. It could be hair implants, a nose job, liposuction, face lift, butt lift, lip enlargement, or Botox. In Christian circles, there's a couple of kinds of extremes. There are those who say any kind of body-altering thing is always wrong.

I don't think you can say that, because if you do, you better not get braces, or get your ear pierced, because those are body-altering. On the other hand, there are people who say, "As long as it's safe, you can do it freely!" Again, I don't think that's right.

**When would body-altering surgery be wrong?** In my opinion:

1. When you are trying to find your security in your appearance, rather than in who you are in Christ.

If you feel like you have to have something different to be special, to feel beautiful, to feel of worth; then I would argue that you really need to get to know who you are in Christ, because it's who you are on the inside that matters more than what you look on the outside.

I would argue that if you are trying to find your security and this is the only way you can, in your appearance rather than in Christ, this is probably wrong. With that being said, there is a difference between security and confidence.

2. Second, I would argue it would be wrong when you are using your body to attract inappropriate attention.

If you are showing your cleavage to everyone and causing men to lust then biblically that is wrong. If it's between you and your husband, enjoy all you want, but cover up in public. The Bible speaks about dressing modestly and quite honestly, you don't have to have a surgery to dress immodestly, many of you do that without a surgery.

*Continued on the NEXT PAGE*

## Where does God stand on breast implants?

Cover yourself up, don't cause others to lust or stumble. Honor the temple of the Holy Spirit by covering up.

### When would body-altering surgery be right?

1. I would say if you are doing some kind of restoration unquestionably, a burn victim, someone with a deformity.
2. Perhaps you need to have something done for medical reasons, maybe a reduction because your back hurts, maybe you had a double mastectomy and you want to put back what was there, or if you make a prayerful decision with those around you.

My stance is that I am guessing God is going to look every time at the motive. 1 Chronicles 28:9 says: The LORD searches every heart and understands every motive behind the thoughts.

It is not wrong to try to present yourself in the best light, but if you are trying to find your self worth and your security in your appearance, I promise you that you are fighting a losing battle. Gravity and time will always win no matter what you do.

## Is it hypocritical for a Christian to go into the military since one of the 10 commandments is, "Thou shall not kill?"

War is an unfortunate reality in this world and it causes great destruction, misery, and loss of life. It should be avoided if possible and undertaken only as a last resort. The Bible teaches that we have the right to self defense in Exodus 22:2: "If the thief is caught while breaking in, and is struck so that he dies, there will be no blood guiltiness on his account." The Bible also tells us to protect the innocent. (Deut. 19:10) If we were to apply these principles to war, I would conclude that war is justifiable when it is in self defense and/or when it is to protect the innocent. Therefore, a Christian could rightfully engage in war given those conditions.

## Since blasphemy is the ‘Unpardonable Sin’, can a Christian commit blasphemy?

Although I love to study theology, I do not feel qualified to answer this topic since I have not devoted much study to it. Therefore, I defer to Hank Haanagraaf, the Bible Answer Man. Here’s what he says.

The case of the “unpardonable sin/unforgivable sin” or “blasphemy of the Holy Spirit” is mentioned in Mark 3:22-30 and Matthew 12:22-32. The term “blasphemy” may be generally defined as “defiant irreverence.” We would apply the term to such sins as cursing God or willfully degrading things relating to Him. It is also attributing some evil to God, or denying Him some good that we should attribute to Him. This case of blasphemy, however, is a specific one called “the blasphemy against the Holy Spirit” in Matthew 12:31. In this passage, the Pharisees, having witnessed irrefutable proof that Jesus was working miracles in the power of the Holy Spirit, claimed instead that He was possessed by the demon Beelzebub (Matthew 12:24). In Mark 3:30, Jesus is very specific about what exactly they did to commit “the blasphemy against the Holy Spirit.”

This blasphemy then has to do with accusing Jesus Christ (in person, on earth) of being demon-possessed. There are other ways to blaspheme the Holy Spirit (such as lying to Him, as in the case of Ananias and Sapphira in Acts 5:1-10), but the accusation against Jesus was the blasphemy that was unpardonable. This specific unpardonable sin against the Holy Spirit cannot be duplicated today.

The only unpardonable sin today is that of continued unbelief. There is no pardon for a person who dies in unbelief. John 3:16 tells us, “For 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.” The only condition in which someone would have no forgiveness is if he/she is not among the “whoever” that believes in Him. Jesus said, “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me” (John 14:6). To reject the only means of salvation is to condemn oneself to an eternity in hell because to reject the only pardon is, obviously, unpardonable.

Many people fear they have committed some sin that God cannot or will not forgive, and they feel there is no hope for them, no matter what they do. Satan would like nothing better than to keep us laboring under this misconception. The truth is that if a person has this fear, he/she needs only to come before God, confess that sin, repent of it, and accept God’s promise of forgiveness. “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.” (1 John 1:9) This verse assures us that God is ready to forgive any sin—no matter how heinous—if we come to Him in repentance. If you are suffering under a load of guilt today, God is waiting with His arms open in love and compassion for you to come to Him. He will never disappoint or fail to pardon those who do.

## Are Heaven and Hell real places or simply a state of mind?

As you read philosophers today many will wax poetically about Heaven being a state of mind. If you haven't learned by now, I'm not real interested in someone's opinion, but curious as to what does Scripture teach? A friend of mine preached on the topic of Heaven and sent me an excerpt from his sermon. I hope you are blessed.

Did Jesus say, "I go to prepare a state of mind for you?" No. Jesus said, "In My Father's house are many mansions/rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you (John 14:2)." The Biblical word translated place is the Greek word "topos" a word from which we get our English word topography, which is the study of places. Jesus said, "I go to prepare a place for you." In the book of Revelation, Heaven is described as a city, the New Jerusalem, a better country. All of these terms indicate that Heaven is a real, literal place.

If there is such a place, where is it? Many of you adults will remember the news stories from the early 60's about the first Russian cosmonaut who went up in space to study the Heavens. He came back and boldly declared that there was no heaven and no God. While he was in space, he said that he had looked around and did not see either God or heaven, so that settled it once and for all! We could now forget all of this nonsense and know that it had been scientifically demonstrated that there was no heaven and no God. Because we can not see something with the naked eye, does that mean it doesn't exist? What about the air we breathe, electricity we use, radio & cell phone signals we receive – are they not invisible to the naked eye, yet real?

By the way, you might be interested to know that when that cosmonaut died in the 70's, the Russian newspaper reporting his death, said that when he was being buried, his mourners threw the branches of an evergreen tree onto his grave. The evergreen tree is used as a symbol of immortality, yet this happened in a land supposedly full of atheists!

Let's consider the universe we live in. Astronomers tell us it consists of billions of galaxies, many of them far more vast than the Milky Way; which itself contains millions of suns, of which our sun scientists say, according to its size, is only a class 3 star. Around that little third-rate star, in a second-rate galaxy, there are 9 planets, all of which are invisible from the closest other star.

*Continued on the NEXT PAGE*

**Are Heaven  
and Hell real  
places or  
simply a state  
of mind?**

Around the third planet from the sun there is a tiny, little moon that travels around so close to the earth as to be invisible from even the nearest planet.

Now our Russian cosmonaut flew out into space and went around the earth so much closer to it than even to the moon that he seemed to be crawling around it like an ant. Then, having made several revolutions, he came back and declared that there was no God because he had searched everywhere and found none! That is like a little boy sailing his toy boat in the bathtub, and saying, "There is no such place as Africa. I have proven it to be true. It is not at this end of the bathtub nor at that end of the bathtub, therefore, it doesn't exist."

Some people have objected to the Bible's description in Revelation 21:16, of the dimensions of the New Jerusalem, as a city that lies foursquare. "The city is laid out as a square; its length is as great as its breadth. And he measured the city with the reed; twelve thousand furlongs. Its length, breadth, and height are equal." "That is ridiculous!" they say, "12,000 furlongs wide, why can you imagine all the people in heaven jammed into one little city? They wouldn't even have room to turn around." The glories of heaven are not going to be jammed into the straitjacket of our puny words we use to try and describe it. Look at that symbol for a moment and let's see what we might discover.

One mathematician did a little computation and this is what he found. A furlong is an eighth of a mile, 660 feet. So 12,000 furlongs is 1,500 miles. This city foursquare is as large as the distance from Florida to Maine and from New York to the Mississippi River.

Now I submit to you, that is a city of the first magnitude! Yet it is only the beginning. We find in Scripture that this city is also 12,000 furlongs high. That is 1,500 miles high! The Empire State Building isn't fifteen hundred **feet** high! If you made the stories not a mere 10 or 12 feet, as in most construction today, but a spacious 15 feet, you would then have 528,000 stories in that city. They would each one consist of 2 million 250 thousand square miles. For a total of one trillion, one hundred, eighty-eight billion square miles of space!

Historian Daniel Kevles, of the California Institute of Technology, estimated that up to the year 2000 there had been about 36 billion people who had lived upon this planet to that time. If all of them went to heaven that would mean every single person would have 33 square miles of space in which to live. I think you might be able to turn around and stretch your arms in a place like that!

## Are Heaven and Hell real places or simply a state of mind?

### Now let's talk about Hell

It is interesting that a much higher percentage of people believe in the existence of heaven than believe in the existence of hell. According to the Bible, though, hell is just as real as heaven. The Bible clearly and explicitly teaches that hell is a real place to which the wicked/unbelieving are sent after death.

The punishment of the wicked dead in hell is described throughout Scripture as

- “eternal fire” (Matthew 25:41),
- “unquenchable fire” (Matthew 3:12),
- “shame and everlasting contempt” (Daniel 12:2),
- a place where “the fire is not quenched” (Mark 9:44-49),
- a place of “torment” and “fire” (Luke 16:23-24),
- “everlasting destruction” (2 Thessalonians 1:9),
- a place where “the smoke of torment rises forever and ever” (Revelation 14:10-11),
- a “lake of burning sulfur” where the wicked are “tormented day and night forever and ever” (Revelation 20:10).

The punishment of the wicked in hell is as never ending as the bliss of the righteous in heaven. Jesus Himself indicates that punishment in hell is just as everlasting as life in heaven (Matthew 25:46).

The wicked are forever subject to the fury and the wrath of God. Those in hell will acknowledge the perfect justice of God (Psalm 76:10).

Those who are in hell will know that their punishment is just and that they alone are to blame (Deuteronomy 32:3-5).

Yes, hell is real. Yes, hell is a place of torment and punishment that lasts forever and ever, with no end.

## Does the Bible refer to an age of accountability? If so, how old are you before God holds you accountable for your sins?

The age of accountability is a concept that teaches those who die before reaching the age of accountability are automatically saved, by God's grace and mercy. The age of accountability is a belief that God saves all those who die before reaching the ability to make a decision for or against Christ. Unfortunately this is a tradition that has been passed from generation to generation, but does not have any Biblical merit. Scripture does not mention this at all. Something to consider is the fact that children, no matter how young, are not "innocent" in the sense of being sinless. The Bible tells us that even if an infant or child has not committed personal sin, all people, including infants and children, are guilty before God because of inherited and imputed sin. Inherited sin is that which is passed on from our parents. In Psalm 51:5, David wrote, "Surely I was sinful at birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me." David recognized that even at conception, he was a sinner. The very sad fact that infants sometimes die demonstrates that even infants are impacted by Adam's sin, since physical and spiritual death were the results of Adam's original sin.

Although it is possible that God applies Christ's payment for sin to those who cannot believe, the Bible does not specifically say that He does this. Therefore, this is a subject about which we should not be adamant or dogmatic. God's applying Christ's death to those who cannot believe would seem consistent with His love and mercy. Most Baptist theologians take the position that God applies Christ's payment for sin to young children and those who are mentally handicapped, since they were not mentally capable of understanding their sinful state and their need for the Savior, but again we cannot be dogmatic. Of this we are certain: God is loving, holy, merciful, just, and gracious. Whatever He does is always right and good.

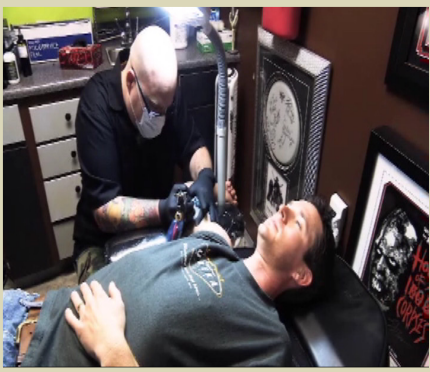
## What's the opposite of trust? Please give a specific word that can be defined, not an example.

According to the dictionary the opposite of trust is distrust. I would say that the opposite of trust is control. As a leader when I trust someone I release them to do a task without much argument or suspicion. When I don't trust someone I try to control the situation so I can control the outcome.

## Is a tattoo acceptable to God? Especially if it exalts the Lord?

I answered this question via video and it is available at [www.christ-first.org](http://www.christ-first.org). Here's the script of my response.

Tattoos can be controversial in different circles, especially in Christian circles. Some people would say, "Oh, no! You can't do that! You are being very rebellious!" Others would say, "Hey, tattoos are just an artistic expression on my body." Some would say, "Oh no! It's a dangerous, satanic and cults practice." Others would simply say, "You know, it's a personal expression." The bottom line isn't as much as what do people think, but what does God think about tattoos? What does the Bible say? And the answer is, not a whole lot! There's one verse that speaks directly to tattoos. It's found in Leviticus 19:28, when the Bible says:



“Do not cut your bodies for the dead or put tattoo marks on yourselves. I am the LORD.” (Leviticus 19:28)

You could say that God is very, very clear and says, "You should not have tattoos," right? Well, to understand this verse, you have to look at the text in the context of what Leviticus 19 was saying as a whole.

You see, the Israelites had just escaped from Egyptian bondage and passed through the Red Sea and God was telling them, 'Don't take on the Pagan practices of the Egyptians.' When an Egyptian would die, the remaining relatives would often cut into their body to let out what was known as the life blood. This was a pagan ritual, God said, 'Don't do that!' Some would also tattoo on their bodies pictures of pagan Gods; and again, the One true God said, 'Don't you ever do that!'

If you want to take Leviticus 19 literally, we need to be careful, because this was the Old Testament Law, fulfilled by Christ in the New Testament. Leviticus 19 also tells us: Do not cut the hair at the sides of your head or clip off the edges of your beard. Leviticus 19:27.

**Is a tattoo acceptable to God, especially if it exalts the Lord?**

**It also says:** “Do not wear clothing woven of two kinds of material.” (Leviticus 19:19) - things that we all do every day. In Leviticus 19, the bottom line, was talking about idolatry. Don't take on the pagan practices of the Egyptians.

Some of my Christian friends that are very pro-tattoo make a very good argument that a Christian tattoo can be a good witness, or a good conversation starter. They will also argue, if you want to be against tattoos, you should probably be against ear piercings, because Leviticus 19:28 says, "Don't cut your body."

If you are considering getting a tattoo, there are a couple of things to think about. First of all, you might be considered rebellious by some. If you are going in for a job interview, or meeting someone for the first time, people can be very judgmental, and they may look at the outside and make a judgment on you, so it's something to think about.

Second, you need to remember that you might be making a decision that you would later regret. I had a friend who tattooed, 'I love Beth', and then he married Susan; which was awkward for everyone. And what looks good on you at 22 might look very saggy at 62!



Just think about it, if you are 19 years old and living with Mom and Dad, and Mom and Dad are paying the bills, and you want a tattoo and Mom and Dad say “no”, there's no tattoo for you! If my kids ask, "Daddy, can we get a tattoo?" I'm going to tell them, I don't think so right now! When they are grown ups, if they want to get a tattoo, I'd simply say, let's make sure it's something you want forever, in a place you want forever, and a size you want forever. I'm not going to recommend they get it, but again, it's like a haircut, a style; it's the outside, what's on the inside matters most. That's my take on tattoos.

**Is it okay to be cremated?**

Most people ask this question because the Bible says that one day the dead in Christ will rise and meet Jesus in the air. They are typically wondering, if someone is cremated, will her body come back together? Genesis 3:19 says: 'For dust you are and to dust you will return.' If you are buried in a box, you are going to become dust, if you are cremated you are going to become dust, it's just going to be faster. My guess is that Jesus can put you back together. Cremation is probably okay.

## Is it okay for people to live together without being married?

This is becoming a very common issue in our society. In fact, according to a USA Today article, in this decade, over two thirds of the people who get married will have lived together first. So, more than half of the people who get married in this decade will have already lived together. Many reading this book are living together and are not married.

What are some reasons to live together?



**Economics:** Money is tight, and by living together we are going to save money. This is quite a compelling and convincing argument.

**Trial Period:** We are going to get married one day, and we really love each other, and so we are just going to give this a test run. The example is given, "You wouldn't buy a car without test driving it first! So, we are going to give this a little test drive and after all, we are married in our hearts anyway. Marriage is just a piece of paper. We really love each other, so what's the big deal?"

Well, if you're not a Christian, and you don't believe in God, I'd say you are absolutely right, what's the big deal? It's just a relationship so who really cares?

If you're a Christian, and you do believe in God though, I believe there is a different answer to your question.

Many say that marriage is just a piece of paper. I would contend that is to grossly misunderstand and misrepresent what marriage really is. A piece of paper implies there is a contract. A contract is simply something to protect people from each other. Marriage though, is not a contract. It is a covenant before a Holy God.

If you get married, you will stand before God and God's people and you will swear to God and create a covenant which is a binding agreement in sickness and in health, for better or for worse, till death do us part. It is not a contract, it's an all in, full-blown, 100% commitment before a Holy God and asking Him to bless the covenant of your relationship, which you will honor until death do you part.

*Continued on the NEXT PAGE*

**Is it OK for people to live together without being married?**

Hebrews 13:4 says this: "Marriage should be honored by all, and the marriage bed kept pure, for God will judge the adulterer and all the sexually immoral."

The covenant of marriage should be honored by all. If you are not married, you still honor the covenant of marriage and the Bible says the marriage bed should be kept pure. I could argue that being and pretending like you're married when you're not and doing married things is a violation of keeping the marriage bed pure.



If you are a Christian, then go ahead and ask God to bless your relationship, stand before Him and make a covenant which you will honor and He will bless for the rest of your life.

## **What's allowed and not allowed in the marriage bedroom?**

Scripture states in Hebrews 13:4, "Marriage should be honored by all, and the marriage bed kept pure, for God will judge the adulterer and all the sexually immoral." The Bible does not give us parameters for what is or isn't allowed in the marriage bed. No one should be encouraged or coerced to do something he or she is uncomfortable with or thinks is wrong. If a husband and wife both agree that they want to try something (e.g., oral sex, different positions, sex toys, etc.), then the Bible does not give any reason why they cannot.

Here's what I would argue is forbidden: If you want to bring another person in, another couple that's absolutely wrong all of the time. If you want to introduce pornography into your marriage I believe that is wrong as well.

My perspective is, as long as you agree, alone together, turn the light on, leave them off...have fun!

## What is the Christian and biblical view of masturbation?

To all of you with raging hormones my heart goes out to you. I know where you're at and I've been there too. For all the parents who asked this question, I know you are in a difficult position trying to counsel your children in this extremely tough topic. Remaining pure is very difficult; our society, from every direction, inundates our senses with sexually oriented images. It would be easy to think that God has forsaken us on this topic. However, since He designed and made us, He is intimately familiar with what we are going through.

From a pastoral position I could take the easy road and simply say, "Yes," masturbation is a sin. However, I'm not going to simply jump to that conclusion.

The Scripture is strangely silent about masturbation, while not shy about all sorts of other sexual situations and perversions.



There are two sides to this debate.

**There are those that say this is not a sin.** They claim they do not find masturbation listed anywhere as an "abomination," or anywhere among the various lists of prohibited sexual practices (See Leviticus 18). Adultery is prohibited; rape is prohibited; incest is prohibited; homosexual sex is prohibited; sex with animals is prohibited. But masturbation is not even mentioned. They argue that if masturbation were really a sin, surely it would be mentioned somewhere in the Bible.

Others justify masturbation by saying, "Well, what I am doing is not hurting anyone, what's the big deal?" If I'm not married; "Hey, this helps me from doing other things that are worse. If I am married and my spouse isn't meeting my needs; this is just kind of how I get by. They will often say that masturbation gives you an appropriate form of physical release that will keep you from being involved in more dangerous sexual temptations. People will often say, "Well, as long as you don't have any lustful thoughts, then it's really not a sin."

**On the other hand there are those people who say that this is a sin.** They will often quote Genesis 38, where Onan spilled his seed on the ground and God killed him. They say, "See, if you do that you'll die!" Truthfully, that is not addressing masturbation. This was a guy who was selfishly using Tamar and God was not happy about that.

*Continued on the NEXT PAGE*

In Ephesians 5:3, the Bible says, "...among you there must not be even a hint of sexual immorality, or any kind of impurity." From their perspective, it's hard to see this act without a hint of sexual impurity, because even if you argue that the act is not a sin, what leads up to it is often unquestionably sinful. Masturbation is often accompanied by pornography, lustful thoughts, and fantasy and it's hard to see this act as not having at least a hint of immorality, therefore in their opinion, it is sinful.

**Here is my advice:**

It is easy as adults to forget what life was like when we were a teenager. We think we remember the struggles, the pressure, but we do not. Not only do we not remember what it was like, but the identity crisis that our teens face is much greater than anything we experienced. Pre-marital sex is so rampant in our high schools, homosexuality is claiming a massive amount of teenagers, and the church has been so legalistic on issues that many people struggling with identity do not look to parents or pastors for help any longer. We have got to reverse this. The way we are going to be able to minister to our kids is through love and grace, and by being involved in their life.

If your teenager struggles with masturbation or any other sexual sin this does not disqualify them from receiving grace from God, and it should not disqualify them from receiving grace from you. Preventing the act of masturbation is not your long term concern, purity is. Don't simply be against masturbation, or pre-marital sex, but endorse purity. Discover ways to open a dialogue with your young adults and challenge them to research sex and purity in scripture and learn for themselves who they are in Christ, and what God's plan for sex is. James Dobson has some good advice in his book "Preparing for Adolescence."

If you struggle with masturbation I would recommend you follow the action of Job in Job 31:1 where he said, "I made a covenant with my eyes not to look lustfully at a girl." Make a covenant that you will not lust. If you do lust then immediately confess it before God and ask for His help in not submitting to this temptation.

Be faithful to reading the word of God, praying, and worshipping God. Fill your mind with things from above.

If there are things that cause you to sin, remove it. Jesus taught in Matthew 5:28-30, "If your right eye causes you to sin, gouge it out and throw it away and if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away."

Jesus was not being literal, He was basically saying if there is something that is going to cause you to fall into temptation, avoid it at all cost. If going to the gym causes you to lust then work out at home. If your cable TV is an issue cut your cable TV. If you can't get on the internet without being drawn into looking at pornography, get filters or blogs, or remove the computer from your home. Whatever you need to do to remove the temptation that would lead you into sin, do it.

## Are Jews going to heaven?

There is a lot of theological debate on whether a Jew needs to be saved or not because they are God's "chosen" people. There is no doubt that the Jews are still God's chosen people. The scripture says in Deuteronomy 7:6-8 "For you are a holy people unto the LORD your God: the LORD your God hath chosen you to be a special people unto himself, above all people that are upon the face of the earth. The LORD did not set his love upon you, nor choose you, because you were more in number than any people; for you were the fewest of all people: But because the LORD loved you, and because he would keep the oath which he had sworn unto your fathers..."

I've wondered many times why exactly did God "choose" the Jews? As I studied this topic I read an excerpt from John Gill, in his "Exposition of the Entire Bible." He says the Jews were "chosen for special service and worship, and to enjoy special privileges and benefits, civil and religious; though they were not chosen to special grace...or eternal glory." The Jews were chosen to be a blessing to all the nations of the earth (Genesis 12). The Jews were chosen to be a light to the Gentiles. So then, are all Jews "saved" just because they are Jews?

According to the Bible Answer Man, Judaism does not believe that man, by his nature, is evil or sinful and therefore has no need to be "saved" from an eternal damnation. In fact, most Jews today do not believe in a place of eternal punishment or a literal hell. The Hebrew root word for "sin" is chayt, which literally means to "miss the mark." It is a term commonly used in archery, of one who "misses the mark" of the bulls eye. When a Jew misses the mark, and occasionally falls into the sin of failing to fulfill the law, the belief is that one can obtain forgiveness through prayer, repentance and doing good deeds.

The Book of Leviticus (17:11), which is the third Book of the Torah, clearly gives the prescription for forgiveness. "For the life of the flesh is in the blood: and I have given it to you upon the altar to make atonement for your souls: for it is the blood that makes atonement for the soul." According to my research the Temple sacrifice was always the centerpiece for Jewish atonement. Once a year, on the Day of Atonement (Yom Kippur), the Levitical High Priest would enter the Holy of Holies in the Temple and sprinkle the blood of the sacrifice on the Mercy Seat. Through this yearly act, atonement was made for the sins of all Israel, but the Holy Temple was destroyed in 70 AD, and for almost 2000 years Jews have been without a Temple, a sacrifice, and a means of atonement.

*Continued on the NEXT PAGE*

**Are Jews going to Heaven?**

Jesus said "I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life; no one comes to the Father but by Me" (John 14:6). The "no one" He referred to includes Jews and Gentiles. I believe that the Bible teaches Jews are not saved because they are God's chosen people, but because they believe in Jesus Christ as their true Messiah. There are many Messianic Jews who have accepted Yeshua (the Hebrew word for Jesus) as their Messiah.

As individuals, Jews have as much chance for salvation as any Gentile. When Paul started his ministry, the Christian church was made up largely of Jews. There were many who believed and came to Christ. Peter said to the Jewish leaders: "Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved." (Acts 4:12 NKJV) Jew or Gentile, it makes no difference, we are all saved through Jesus Christ. So, if a Jew, or any other person calls upon the name of the Lord they WILL be saved. Ultimately, I will leave it up to God to judge the soul of man, and I will keep preaching the New Testament way of redemption.

**When we go to heaven will our pets be there?**

The Bible does not give any explicit teaching on whether pets/animals have "souls" or whether pets/animals will be in heaven. However, we can use general biblical principles to develop some clarity on the subject.



As you study the book of Genesis you find the teaching that both man and animal has the breath of life. The primary difference between human beings and animals is that humanity is made in the image and likeness of God (Genesis 1:26-27), while animals are not.

Being made in the image and likeness of God means that human beings are like God, capable of spirituality, with mind, emotion, and will, and they have a part of their being that continues after death. If pets/animals do have a "soul" or immaterial aspect, it must therefore be of a different and lesser "quality." This difference possibly means that pet/animal "souls" do not continue in existence after death.

Some theologians encourage us to consider that animals are a part of God's creative process in Genesis. In Genesis 1:25, God created the animals and said they were good. Therefore, some would argue there is no reason why there could not be animals on the new earth as referred to in Revelation 21:1. There will most definitely be animals during the millennial kingdom (Isaiah 11:6; 65:25).

So will your pets be there? I'm not sure, but I do know there will be animals there.

## Is it OK for a Christian to date a non-Christian?

To date or not to date, that's the question. For a Christian, dating a non-Christian is unwise, and marrying one is not an option. Second Corinthians 6:14 (KJV) tells us not to be "unequally yoked" with an unbeliever. This is painting a picture of two incompatible oxen sharing the same yoke. Instead of working together to pull the load, they would be working against each other.

While this passage does not specifically mention marriage, it definitely has implications for marriage. There can be no spiritual harmony in a marriage between a Christian and a non-Christian. As a pastor, one of the most difficult burdens that I share is praying for a spouse who is married to an unbeliever. This burden is great. Paul goes on to remind believers that they are the dwelling place of the Holy Spirit, who inhabits their hearts at salvation (2 Corinthians 6:15-17). Because of that, they are to be separate from the world—in the world, but not of the world—and nowhere is that more important than in life's most intimate relationship—marriage.

The Bible also says, "Do not be misled: 'Bad company corrupts good character' (1 Corinthians 15:33). Having any kind of intimate relationship with an unbeliever can quickly turn into something that is a hindrance to your walk with Christ. I believe that God has placed 8-15 people in your relational world to reach them for Christ, but that is different than being 'intimate.' There is nothing wrong with building quality friendships with unbelievers, doing life with them, and enjoying their company but that is as far as it should go. This is one of the reasons you need to be in a LifeGroup, because you need the intimacy of other believers in your life.

Some people say they are 'missionary' dating. This is dangerous on many accounts. First, if the person you are dating finds out you are simply with them for the salvation of their soul, they will feel quite manipulated and could turn against you and against God. Would you break up with them if they got saved? Also, if you were dating an unbeliever, what would honestly be your priority, romance or winning a soul for Christ? If you are truly only concerned with their soul, then dating is not necessary.

A believer should view every person they date as a potential mate. They shouldn't get caught up in games, manipulation, or 'playing the field.' If you were married to an unbeliever, how would the two of you develop a spiritual intimacy in your marriage? How could a quality marriage be built and maintained if you disagree on the most crucial issue in the universe—the Lord Jesus Christ?

So, is it a sin to date a non-believer? No, it's not a sin. Is it wise? Definitely not!

## Is dancing a sin?

For many years dancing has been looked upon as either a sin or a really bad idea in Christian circles. There is an old joke that says Baptists can dance as long as they don't move their hips. What does the Bible say?

In the book of Exodus, while Moses was up on the mountain talking to God, the Israelites built an idol. In the process of idol worship, they began to dance. This ended up in what scripture calls "revelry" (v. 6) and being "out of control" (v.25 says "naked" in some translations). In this case, dancing led to very sinful activity. However, a little later on in the book of Exodus (15:20) Miriam was dancing to celebrate the victory God's power had brought at the Red Sea. King David "danced before the Lord" often when the Spirit came upon him. It is important to note that every instance in scripture where dancing is mentioned in a positive light was when people danced before the Lord. It is clear that the children of God should dance in worship of the King.

The Bible never directly condemns dancing and because of that I would argue there are many types of dancing that would be acceptable. My mother, who is completely against going dancing, is the queen of the Jitterbug. Her feet can move to a rhythm faster than anyone that I've ever seen. I don't see anything harmful with dance that is intended for entertainment and 'moving to the music.' Square dancing is a lot of fun, and even churches who are against dancing, often will allow square dancing. The Macarena is quite a popular dance, and my guess is if you go bird and start doing the chicken dance God isn't going to be offended. You may get laughed at by your peers, but God won't mind.

So when would dancing be a sin? As with most controversial issues I would recommend you ask where, when, and why. Where do you dance? If you are dancing at a wedding reception, at a friend's house, or in front of your Nintendo Wii (there are blackmail pictures out there) then you're probably alright. However, if you are going to a night club, where most everyone is drunk, sleazy guys are trying to pick up women, the ladies have spray painted pants on and very revealing tops, I'm not sure that is an appropriate place for a believer to be hanging out. You're at best putting yourself in a very compromising situation, and given the right circumstances it would be quite easy to compromise morals.

I would also ask the question when do you dance? Are you dancing a few times per year at a wedding, or do you go out every Friday night to a club?

I would also examine why do you dance? Dancing can be fun and expressional, but it can also be hypnotic and erotic. A romantic waltz by a bride and groom and their entourage is different from dances with movements clearly intended to be erotic. The 'bump and grind' can not be justified, is sinful, and degrading to the opposite sex. So dance before the Lord in worship; put on your zoot suit and have fun Swing Dancing; do the Cotton Eyed Joe, but don't use dance for emotional or sexual stimulation.

## Is there any way to lose your salvation?

There are very sincere and committed Christians on both sides of this question. There are some who say, 'No, there's no way, once you're saved, you're always saved!' There are other very sincere Christians who disagree and say that you can lose your salvation. I have a close friend who was in the ministry, ended up divorcing his wife, was fired by his church, and now there is no evidence that he is living according to scripture. He totally rejects Christ. So, when I examine the situation, I ask myself is he simply backsliding, or is he a Christian who has fallen away? Was he a Christian that lost his salvation and he's not a Christian anymore, or was he never really a Christian in the first place? Very complicated, very important question.

When people come to know Christ as their Savior, they are brought into a relationship with God that guarantees their eternal security. Jude 24 declares, "To Him who is able to keep you from falling and to present you before His glorious presence without fault and with great joy." God's power is able to keep the believer from falling. It is up to Him, not us, to present us before His glorious presence. Our eternal security is a result of God keeping us, not us maintaining our own salvation.

The Lord Jesus Christ proclaimed, "I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one can snatch them out of my hand. My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all, no one can snatch them out of my Father's hand" (John 10:28-29b). Both Jesus and the Father have us firmly grasped in their hand. Who could possibly separate us from the grip of both the Father and the Son?

Ephesians 4:30 tells us that believers are "sealed for the day of redemption." If believers did not have eternal security, the sealing could not truly be unto the day of redemption, but only to the day of sinning, apostasy, or disbelief. John 3:15-16 tells us that whoever believes in Jesus Christ will "have eternal life." If a person were to be promised eternal life, but then have it taken away, it was never "eternal" to begin with. If eternal security is not true, the promises of eternal life in the Bible would be in error.

The most powerful argument for eternal security is Romans 8:38-39, "For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord." Our eternal security is based on God's love for those whom He has redeemed. Our eternal security is purchased by Christ, promised by the Father, and sealed by the Holy Spirit.

## Is it a sin for a Christian to smoke?

The Bible never directly mentions smoking. There are principles, however, that definitely apply to smoking. First, the Bible commands us not to allow our bodies to become "mastered" by anything. The Apostle Paul says in 1 Corinthians 6:12, "Everything is permissible for me—but not everything is beneficial. Everything is permissible for me—but I will not be mastered by anything."



Smoking is strongly addictive. Later in the same passage we are told, "Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your body." Smoking is damaging to your body, not honoring it.

Someone very close to me began smoking out of rebellion to her parents in High School. At the age of 26 she developed lung cancer and died. As I attended her funeral the thought kept racing through my mind that all of this could have been avoided if she would not have picked up that first cigarette.

So is it a sin? It can be. However, God's grace will forgive you of your sin, but many times He will allow you to live with the consequences. Some people may look at you as rebellious or lacking control and it could hinder you from getting a job, or entering into a romantic relationship. You must know that most people do not appreciate the smell of cigarettes and may avoid you. You could develop breathing issues or asthma. And you may also develop emphysema or even cancer. Just because it's permissible doesn't mean it's beneficial.

## Is it okay to keep a secret for a family member?

I would have to know more about the situation, can you tell me? Just kidding. Yes, I think it is OK to have a secret and to tell a secret. There are many things about God that he is revealing to us, but the entire concept of the revelation means that at one time they were a secret. In Proverbs 11:12-13, it says, "A man who lacks judgment derides his neighbor, but a man of understanding holds his tongue. A gossip betrays a confidence, but a trustworthy man keeps a secret."

Here's a word of caution. If a family member tells you something that is going to harm someone or themselves, then I think you have an obligation to break confidence and intervene. If the information is not harmful, and they confide in you in confidence, and you tell others about it, then you would be a gossip. Many friendships have been ruined over gossip. Those who engage in this behavior do nothing but stir up trouble and cause anger, bitterness, and pain among family and friends.

## Should a Christian be a Republican or a Democrat?

This issue runs a close second to women's role in the church as one of the most hotly debated topics in the church. Let me answer this question by giving you a little personal history. About a decade ago when George W. Bush was running for president against Al Gore, a group of ladies in the church where I was on staff set up a booth in our parking lot trying to register everyone for the Republican Party. I was actually a little perturbed by this because it made the assumption that all Christians vote Republican. Being the smart-alecky person that I am, I asked her if she had a Democratic sheet because I planned on voting for Al Gore. This lady got up out of her chair, pointed her finger in my face and told me I could not be a Christian and vote for Al Gore, and that would also disqualify me to be a pastor as well. What? As I brought this up in our pastors meeting it was quite apparent that the other four pastors on staff held to her belief.

So was I just young and naïve to think the Bible was pretty clear on the pre-requisites for salvation? I don't remember reading anything about G.O.P. in the book of Romans, but it does have plenty to say about G.O.D.

I believe that anyone who is a Christian should not necessarily align directly with the Democratic or Republican parties. The fact of the matter is that both major political parties hold some views that align with Christian principles, and both parties hold some views that are in direct violation of the Christian principles.

The Republican platform opposes abortion and defends family values. The Democratic platform seems more sympathetic to the poor, orphans, and widows—as is God. As a result, until we vote on ballots that allow us to punch our position on issues, rather than select the name of a politician, I'm not sure whether to vote Republican or Democrat.

Our church is diverse and we have plenty of Republicans, Democrats, and Independents. Our obligation is not to a political party but to the body of Christ. Let us love those who disagree with us. Let us not enforce our opinion upon someone else. Let us not create a political theology based upon bias and logic but upon the word of God.

No matter who is in office, whether we voted for them or not, whether they are of the political party we prefer or not, the Bible commands us to respect and honor them (1 Peter 2:13-17; Romans 13:1-7). We should also be praying for those placed in authority over us (Colossians 4:2; 1 Thessalonians 5:17). We do not have to agree with them, but we do have to honor and respect them.

Ultimately, we are to be heavenly-minded, more concerned with the things of God than the things of this world (Colossians 3:1-2). As one pastor wrote, "As believers in Jesus Christ, we are all members of the same political party—monarchists who are waiting for their King to return (Revelation 19:11-16)."

## Is gambling a sin?

Playing the lottery, cards, or going to a casino in many churches is considered taboo even to this day. Others wonder what's the big deal about playing a friendly game of poker?

Here's what I would argue; that the Bible does not specifically condemn gambling, betting, or the lottery. And because the Bible does not specifically condemn gambling, I would argue that there are times when a little bet may not really be a sin and let me explain.

Maybe you go to a friend's house and you are playing a game of cards for quarters, or maybe there's a March Madness Pool that you get into at work. There may be times when you say, 'Hey, I bet you five bucks you can't make this shot!' I would argue that there are those times when at worst you may be wasting money, at best you may be having some light-friendly entertainment, and it's probably not a sin. Just be cautious here because what starts out as a little friendly entertainment can very quickly and often does become sinful and dangerous.



If gambling is an issue for you, I would challenge you to ask yourself three questions; when, where and why.

**When do you gamble?** If it's once or twice a year or you go and play Bingo every now and then, you are on a cruise and put a couple dollars in a slot machine, it's probably entertainment and not a sin to you. If it's once or twice a month, or once or twice a week, you better be very careful as this is probably becoming an obsession and is sinful.

**I would also ask you where do you gamble?** You go to a buddies house and you are playing some cards, probably no big deal. You go to a place where most of the women are half naked, or all the way naked, everybody is drunk, and there are big men named Guido ready to take you out. You probably crossed the line into a sinful environment where you are putting yourself in a tempting place and I don't see much good that is going to come out of that.

**I would also ask you why are you doing this?** 'Well you know, it's just a little fun and I can afford it, it's no big deal', versus 'Oh my gosh! I lost my child support money and I've got to win it back. Oh my! If I don't get this I can't pay the mortgage. If that's you, you have very likely crossed the line into the sin of greed, which is incredibly dangerous.

In 1 Timothy 6:10, it says: *"For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs."* You can see many other sins developing around gambling. I can't tell you the number of times I've seen gambling wreck marriages, homes, families, kids, and the future. There's not much good that comes from it, there's a lot of bad that comes from it. If more than one person has told you that you have a problem, you probably do and it's time to get help.

## Is drinking alcohol a sin?

So, what does the Bible say about drinking alcohol? The first thing we have to acknowledge is, anytime you drink and get drunk, it is a sin. The Bible says: “Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery.” Ephesians 5:18. Not only is getting drunk always a sin, but what happens after you get drunk often leads to more sins. Getting drunk is dangerous, it is wrong, and it is a sin.



On the other hand, we have to acknowledge that if you drink and you do not get drunk, that’s not a sin. Remember, Jesus changed water to wine. The bible also shows Paul telling Timothy, drink a little wine to help out with your frequent stomach problems. “Stop drinking only water, and use a little wine because of your stomach and your frequent illnesses.” 1 Timothy 5:23.

So, if you drink a margarita with your Mexican food, or a glass of wine with your meal, or have a beer every once and a while, it is not a sin. The bigger question we have to ask ourselves is drinking alcohol really beneficial? Paul said in 1 Corinthians 6:12, “Although everything is permissible for me – but not everything is beneficial.” So, when would drinking alcohol go wrong for you? Maybe when you go home with someone who is not your spouse; get someone pregnant when you didn’t plan to; get a sexually transmitted disease; maybe wrap your car around a tree; or lose the respect of your kids. It could be when you lose your marriage because you’re an alcoholic. Although everything is permissible, it’s obvious that everything is not beneficial. You have to ask yourself the question...is drinking alcohol right for you?

## How can we get God’s love through to those people who only know hate?

As you study the life and ministry of Christ, the disciples, and the early Christians, these people faced persecution from those who expressed hatred quite regularly. There are a few lessons that we can learn:

First, live by the golden rule as found in Luke 6:31, “Do unto others, as you would have them do unto you.” Second, remember that no one has ever been argued into the kingdom of Heaven; they have only been loved into repentance. There is something that is magnetic about love, and something that is polarizing about argument and hatred. After being beaten and scourged by people who hated Christ, and then hung on a cross by the terrorists of Rome, Jesus prayer to God was a message of love. He prayed, “Father, forgive them for they know not what they do.” Go out of your way to be Christ to them. You don’t have to agree with everything they believe, and you may even be offended by their words or actions, but love them. You may feel you are being persecuted for your beliefs, but James 1:2 reminds us to “Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds.”

## Why is church attendance important?

As a pastor I teach that faithfulness in your attendance is extremely important for many reasons. In Acts 2:42 and Hebrews 10:25, the Bible tells us we need to attend church so we can worship God with other believers and be taught His Word for our spiritual growth. Church is the place where believers can love one another (1 John 4:12), encourage one another (Hebrews 3:13), “spur” one another (Hebrews 10:24), serve one another (Galatians 5:13), instruct one another (Romans 15:14), honor one another (Romans 12:10), and be kind and compassionate to one another (Ephesians 4:32).

According to 1 Corinthians 12:27, at the time of salvation a person is made a member of the body of Christ. For a church body to function properly, all of its “body parts” need to be present (1 Corinthians 12:14-20). Likewise, a believer will never reach full spiritual maturity without the assistance and encouragement of other believers (1 Corinthians 12:21-26). For these reasons, I would argue that church attendance, participation, and fellowship should be regular aspects of a believer's life.

Weekly church attendance is in no sense “required” for believers, but someone who belongs to Christ should have a desire to worship God, receive His Word, and fellowship with other believers.

A bit of Thibodeauxology. I believe that the church is designed to assist you in reaching your oikos (the 8-15 people in which God has supernaturally and strategically placed in your sphere of influence). When someone brings a member of their oikos, the entire body needs to be there to love, and support them. The unbeliever needs to see us in unity worshipping the King of Kings. In the words of Rick Warren, “We are better together.”



## If I was baptized as a child do I need to be re-baptized as an adult?

There is much confusion about baptism in the various Christian denominations. However, I do not believe this is a result of the Bible presenting a confusing message on baptism. The Bible is abundantly clear on what baptism is, who it is for, and what it accomplishes. In the Bible, only believers who had placed their faith in Christ were baptized - as a public testimony of their faith and identification with Him (Acts 2:38; Romans 6:3-4).

Water baptism by immersion is a step of obedience after faith in Christ. It is the wedding ring of the Christian faith. It does not make you a Christian, but it proclaims to the entire world that you have placed your faith in Christ. This is a statement of submission to Him, and identification with His death, burial, and resurrection.

The Bible does not record any infants being baptized because an infant is not capable of making such a claim. If Christian parents wish to dedicate their child to Christ, then a baby dedication service is entirely appropriate. However, even if infants are dedicated to the Lord, when they grow up they will still have to make a personal decision to believe in Jesus Christ in order to be saved.

So yes, I would say that you need to be baptized, because baptism is for believers. If you were baptized as an infant, or baptized as an unbeliever than you need to follow the command of Christ and commit to water baptism.

## Is it a sin to cuss/swear/curse?

Scripture does not directly come out and condemn cussing with the exception of taking the Lord's name in vain. In Exodus 20:7 the scripture says, "You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in VAIN." Therefore, if you use God's name in vain, you have violated one of the 10 Commandments, and you would be sinning.

However, although scripture doesn't specifically condemn swearing, in Colossians 4:6, the apostle Paul tells us to, "Let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man." Our speech should contain wholesome, pure, kind, and beneficial words. Words that encourage and build up a person, instead of tearing them down. In Ephesians 4:29, Paul tells us, "Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen."

Luke 6:45 says, "The good man brings good things out of the good stored up in his heart, and the evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in his heart. For out of the overflow of his heart his mouth speaks"

I would argue that if you have a 'potty mouth' you are offensive to those around you and do not edify them and you would be sinning. If you 'slip' up every now and then, that is not a reflection of a hardened and defiled heart and that is not a sin.

## What is the mark of the beast (666)?

As a child there was an evangelist who came to our church that taught on the end times, and I specifically remember his sermon on the mark of the beast, better known as 666. He had some interesting theories, and many of his predictions are coming to pass. His prediction was that every child would have a microchip placed in them at birth. The recent breakthroughs in medical implant chip and RFID technologies have increased interest in the mark of the beast spoken of in Revelation chapter 13. However, as I study this, I don't believe this will be something 'given' to everyone, but only those who worship the Antichrist.

If you read Revelation 13:15-18, 14:9, 11, 15:2, 16:2, 19:20, and 20:4 this mark acts as a seal for the followers of Antichrist and the false prophet (the spokesperson for the Antichrist).

If my research is accurate the false prophet, which is known as the second beast, is the one who causes people to take this mark. The mark is literally placed in the hand or forehead and is not simply a card someone carries.

According to Hank Hanegraaff, the mark of the beast will be an end-times identification required by the Antichrist in order to buy or sell, and it will be given only to those who worship the Antichrist.

There are many theories besides the implanted chip view. Other speculations include an ID card, a microchip, a barcode that is tattooed into the skin, or simply a mark that identifies someone as being faithful to the Antichrist's kingdom. This last view requires the least speculation, since it does not add any more information to what the Bible gives us. Anything is possible, but I would urge you to recognize these concepts are simply speculation. I wouldn't recommend spending a great deal of time speculating, but spend that time investing into your oikos.

The meaning of 666 is a mystery as well. Some have speculated that there was a connection to June 6, 2006—06/06/06. However, if you read Revelation 13 it appears that the number 666 identifies a person, not a date.

Revelation 13:18 tells us, "This calls for wisdom. If anyone has insight, let him calculate the number of the beast, for it is man's number. His number is 666."

To be honest, no one really knows the exact meaning of 666, just that it will identify the Antichrist. According to 2 Thessalonians 2:3-4 when the Antichrist is revealed it will be clear who he is and how the number 666 identifies him.

## Is it OK for a Christian to read their horoscope or visit a psychic?

I will be the first to admit that I have no idea what someone means when they ask, 'What's Your Sign?' When I was single it was used as a cheesy pick up line, and today people use it many times to determine compatibility in relationships. I have even heard someone in our church state that she would never date a Virgo. You have to be really cautious here. So many people have questions about their future, and many times their inquisitiveness is quite innocent. But is this innocent fun or potential danger? I am going to argue there is potential danger.



Let's begin by looking at the definition of astrology. According to the dictionary, astrology is the study of the positions of celestial bodies in the belief that they have influence over the course of human affairs. I gather from the definition alone that it is belief in something besides God to have control.

Isaiah 47:13 says, "Let your astrologers come forward, those stargazers who make predictions month by month..." Sound like your horoscope? "Surely they are like stubble; the fire will burn them up... Each of them goes on in his error." The spirit world is very real. You can read in Acts 16, about a slave girl, who would predict the future. The apostle Paul came up and

saw her making money using this demonic gift, and he cast out of her a demon. Innocent fun? I would argue a door to danger.

My take is psychics are either incorrect, guessing, manipulating you with their question, or are demons so I'd say, stay away from psychics. Horoscopes can be dangerous as well if you are reading them to spiritually guide you...that's the job of the Holy Spirit. If you have a relationship with God then pray to Him for advice, read the scriptures, and listen to the Holy Spirit. That's all of the spiritual guidance you need.

What about Ouija boards, palm readings, and séances? Deuteronomy 18 says, "Let no one be found among you who practices divination or sorcery, interprets omens, engages in witchcraft, or casts spells, or who is a medium or a spiritist or who consults the dead. Anyone who does these things is detestable to the Lord." Remember, the spirit world is real. There's the kingdom of darkness, and there's the kingdom of light. As for me and my family, we will live by Isaiah 8:19, "When people tell you to consult mediums and spiritists, should not people inquire of God?" I will seek God and keep the door to darkness closed.

## Why do we stick with a church structure that sucks away resources from the needy, even though it wasn't put into effect until hundreds of years after the New Testament was written?

When evaluating a good local church structure, it's good to remember that, just like the people in them, no church is perfect. Every one will have a different opinion of where the church should spend its money. I believe the answer to this dilemma is not difficult. A church should have a clear mission, and the finances that are contributed should support the mission. I believe the church, although it looks much different than the New Testament days, is the body of Christ. As the body of Christ, we should be about His mission which can be found in Luke 19:10, "For the Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost."

I agree there are plenty of churches that are not wise stewards of the money that God has blessed them with. Feeding the hungry and clothing the poor are core ministries of any church, but I am not convinced that we have a biblical mandate to use any and all of our excess funds for this endeavor. I am more interested in giving them the 'bread of Life,' than I am giving them wheat or white bread.

Jesus was definitely an advocate of helping those in need, and the early church would sell all of their possessions and give to those in need (Acts 2:42-47). However, this was one of their evangelistic strategies as the very next sentence states, "and the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved." As long as I am a pastor, I will commit the finances of our church to reaching the lost and will do anything short of sin to make that happen, including helping the needy.



## Is it a spouse's duty to have sex with their partner, even if they don't want to?

Throughout the Scriptures, God has taught husbands and their wives to enjoy sex. In Proverbs 5:15-21 Solomon tells husbands to be exhilarated by their wives' love. Her body is to satisfy him always. The relationship was so important that under the Old Testament Law a newly married man was excused for one year from all obligations that would take him away from his wife.

During this time, the husband is to focus on bringing happiness to his wife. Notice that the emphasis was on the husband bringing sexual gratification to the wife and not the other way around. The Bible doesn't tell us how often a married couple should have sex, it does tell us that a couple is to abstain only when it is a mutual decision. 1Corinthians 7:5 says, "Do not deprive each other except by mutual consent and for a time, so that you may devote yourselves to prayer. Then come together again so that Satan will not tempt you because of your lack of self-control." So, mutual consent is the "rule" for how often a married couple should have sex. The "rule" is that abstaining from sex must be agreed upon, and that even when it is agreed upon, it should only be for a short time. **Sex should not be withheld or demanded.**

If one spouse does not want to have sex, the other spouse should agree to abstain. If one spouse wants to have sex, the other spouse should agree. It is all a matter of compromise. We must remember that our bodies belong to our spouses, as 1 Corinthians 7:4 tells us, "The wife's body does not belong to her alone but also to her husband. In the same way, the husband's body does not belong to him alone but also to his wife." Obviously, the "sexual compromise" in marriage must be reasonable. If one spouse desires sex every day, and the other spouse once a month or less, they will have to lovingly and sacrificially agree to a compromise, a middle ground.

Studies show that taking into account all age ranges, a typical married couple has sex 2 times per week. Some of you are saying, "Wow, that's not that often." Others are saying, "Twice a month, I'd like to do it twice per year." Everyone is different.

For me, it all goes back to submission: In Ephesians 5:21-33 the Bible outlines for us the hierarchy and roles of submission in a marriage. I would encourage you to read this.

Although the scripture says a wife is to submit to her husband, this is a voluntary submission. Husbands do not have the right to ask for submission from their spouse. If a husband loves his wife as Christ loved the church it is implied that submission will be given. The same is true in sex. If a man is loving his wife as Christ loved the church, if he is adoring her, if he is truly meeting her needs, I don't know of a woman in the world who wouldn't give herself to that man.

Wives, you don't have the right to hold your husband hostage with sex. If you are using sex as a game, or as a tool, then you are wrong. Your body does not belong to you it belongs to your spouse. However, it's not to be abused or misused. It's a voluntary submission.

## Why would God allow bad things to happen to good people?

I just want to start by acknowledging that there is so much pain in this world and many of you reading this book are facing very painful circumstances. I am going to answer question the best that I can, but let me just say upfront, that what I'm going to say will not be the perfect answer, nor will it be complete, because I am not God. He is the only one who can answer this in a complete way. So what I say may not make you feel better about what you are going through, but I do believe what I say to be true, and yet not complete.

First, some people say, 'Well I don't believe in God and so who determines what's bad and what's not bad. Bad things just happen.' That's one view.

Some people say, 'Well there's karma. You do good things, you get good things back. You do bad things, you get bad things. So, obviously if there are bad things happening to you, you did bad things.' Let me give you the Christian perspective.

The reason this is such a big problem is because I would argue there are a lot of unintentional false advertising when it comes to Christianity.

Let me explain.

There are many churches that I love, many Christian radio stations that I love, many Christian organizations that I love, that have a slogan that says, 'Life is better with God'. Life is better with God. This is definitely true if you have a proper definition for the word "better." The problem is that so many people today define "better" as I'll never get cancer, I will always get the promotion, and nothing bad will ever happen to my kids.

That is simply not true at all. In fact, Jesus said in John 16:33, "In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world." There is not a promise that says if you do life with God; it's always going to be trouble free, and always going to be better.

**Why would God allow bad things to happen to good people?**

If you believe that, you are going to have a problem when you talk to Job, who was blameless and upright in every way, and yet lost everything that mattered to him for a season in his life. You are going to have a problem with John the Baptist, who prepared the way for Jesus, and yet, was beheaded in prison while Christ was near by and did nothing about it. You are going to have a problem with Paul who was as faithful as anybody in Scripture and yet was beaten and stoned and left for dead over and over again. And you are going to have a problem with Christ who did nothing wrong and suffered for our sins. Life is not always better with God if you define better as problem free.

So let me give you the Christian perspective of why bad things happen. There are five major reasons.

- 1) The first reason is because our world is stained and corrupted by sin. This world is not what it was in the Garden before sin. We are under the curse of sin in this world, therefore sinful things happen.
- 2) There are times when God may be testing us. God may allow or cause, depending on your theology, challenging things to happen in your life because the testing develops perseverance, develops character, and develops your faith.
- 3) There would be times when our spiritual enemy, Satan, is attacking. If you are a Christian, you have an enemy. His mission is to steal, kill and destroy anything that matters to the heart of God. We are in a spiritual war and there is an enemy on the attack.
- 4) There is a thing known as free will. For us to truly love God, we cannot be robots programmed to love. We have to have the free will to choose to love or choose to reject God. Because of free will, there's the possibility of us doing good, there is also the possibility of us doing evil. Without free will, there is no love, but with free will comes the possibility of doing things wrong.
- 5) The final thing though, I believe is the most important. The foundational problem with this question is the question is flawed.

Why do bad things happen to good people? And the answer is bad things do not happen to good people, because in reality none of us are good. Many of you are going to fight back right now and say, 'No, but there are good people. I'm a good person.' In the eyes of God, none of us are good people and we have to understand that.

*Continued on the NEXT PAGE*

**Why would God allow bad things to happen to good people?**

Our heart is deceitful above all things. We are flawed, we are sinful. In the eyes of God, our best attempt at righteousness is as filthy rags. We are not good people. Bad things do not happen to good people, bad things happen to bad and sinful people. Still, many of you are going to fight against this and you'll be tempted to say, but God is not fair.

And I'm going to say, absolutely He's not always fair. He is always good, but He is not always fair. He is always good and you must start with the goodness of God, not the goodness of man, because man is sinful, God is good. When you start with the goodness of God, then you will thank Him that He is not always fair.

Because instead of asking why do bad things happen to good people, you'll ask the better question, which is, why do good things happen to bad people? That is the essence of the Gospel. God is always good, He is always just, but He is not always fair. If He were fair, He would give us what our sins deserve. If you are a Christian, you do not get what your sins deserve, you get eternal life through Christ.

Psalm 103:10-12 shows how God is not always fair. The Bible says: "God does not treat us as our sins deserve or repay us according to our iniquities." He is good, but not always fair. For as high as the Heavens are above the earth, so great is His love for those who fear Him. As far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us.

If you want to say, 'Well, bad things should only happen to bad people,' Jesus is the perfect example of the best person who ever lived, and yet the worst thing happened to Him. Why? So that the best thing that could ever happen would happen to us, the worst people who have ever lived. Our sins could be forgiven and we could spend eternity in Heaven with God, something we do not deserve and could never ever earn.

If you are facing tragedy right now, and you do not see the goodness of God, let me just say this. The goodness of God is not as easy to see when times are going the way you want.

The goodness of God is always most evident when tragedy strikes.

If you are hurting right now and do not see the goodness of God, it could be because you do not truly know God. It's in tragedy and human suffering that the presence of God becomes most real. If you are hurting and don't understand, or not experiencing His goodness, it could be because you don't know Him. You don't have to understand everything that happens on earth and you never will. But His presence is with you and will comfort you in ways that only He could do.

## Is homosexuality a sin?

In the Old Testament, we are told that when a man lays with another man as a woman, the Bible says it is detestable. In the New Testament, Romans 1:24 says: *Therefore God gave them over in the sinful desires of their hearts to sexual impurity for the degrading of their bodies with one another... Even their women exchanged natural relations for unnatural ones. In the same way the men also abandoned natural relations with women and were inflamed with lust for one another. Men committed indecent acts with other men, and received in themselves the due penalty for their perversion.* Scripture is very, very clear; this is a sin.

## Is a person born gay?

To be completely honest, I'm not sure. I'm not a doctor or scientist, so I don't feel qualified to answer from that perspective, but from a pastoral perspective, I feel completely qualified to answer and say that all people were born sinners. We are all born bent towards sin. Just because we are bent toward a sin, doesn't mean we have license to engage in that sin.

For example, there is a history of alcoholism in my biological family, and science would tell you that I am born bent toward, with a propensity to become an alcoholic. Does that mean I have a license to become a drunkard? Again, I would say absolutely not! No matter what I am bent toward, Scripture is our standard of truth.



## Can a gay person be a Christian?

My take is...yes, they can. Just as someone who struggles with adultery or lust, or lying, as they are pursuing Christ and maybe still tempted. To be tempted is not to sin and even though we do sin, our sins can be forgiven as we continue to pursue Christ. I personally believe that someone who struggles and yet is pursuing Christ can be a Christian.

## Can a gay person change?

The Apostle Paul says yes. In 1 Corinthians 6:9-12, not just speaking about homosexuality, but speaking about things that virtually every single one of us would deal with at one point in our lives or another. He said: *Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor male prostitutes, nor homosexual offenders, nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor slanderers, nor swindlers, will inherit the kingdom of God. And that is what some of you were. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.*

No matter what sin you are bound by, you can be set free. Jesus said, "Whoever the Son sets free is free indeed." Can a person change from any type of sin and the answer unquestionably, by the power of Christ you can!

## Will we recognize each other in heaven?

The Bible doesn't speak directly to this anywhere. There is evidence that we are going to have some sort of a memory of what took place on earth, because we'll give an account for our actions. There's a great story in Luke 16, where there was a rich man in a place called Hades, and he looked up and saw Abraham far away with Lazarus by his side. If you read this story, you'll see that the rich man in Hades was concerned about his brothers that were still left behind on earth, giving us some indication of memory. My guess is, that people will recognize each other in heaven.

## Can people see us from heaven?

A lot of people say, 'Grandma is my guardian angel', or 'Grandma's watching me'. Those who say that they might be able to see us, will often quote Hebrews 12:1, that says: *'Since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses...'* And they will say that the cloud of witnesses are actually witnessing what goes on here on earth. I think the cloud of witnesses witness the glory of God and can't see what's going on on earth. In Luke 16, the story about the rich man and Lazarus indicate they probably cannot see us, because if they could see us, they would be filled with grief in seeing what's going on. There's no grief in heaven, so I don't think people can see us. God is all knowing and thankfully, Grandma is not.

## Will we be married in heaven?

Jesus said, Matthew 22:30, He said: "At the resurrection, people will neither marry, nor be given in marriage." We are not going to be married in heaven. This was Jesus' answer in response to a question concerning a woman who had been married multiple times in her life —whom would she be married to in heaven? Evidently, there will be no such thing as marriage in heaven. This does not mean that a husband and wife will no longer know each other in heaven. This also does not mean that a husband and wife could not still have a close relationship in heaven. What it does seem to indicate, though, is that a husband and wife will no longer be married in heaven.

It's just my opinion, but my guess is that marriage won't be needed in heaven. God ordained it on earth to fulfill a need. When God looked at Adam after the creation He said that it was not good for man to be alone, and created Eve to be his companion. Also, God used marriage to procreate the earth. Therefore, there is no purpose for marriage in heaven since there is no procreation or loneliness.

## If God forgives your sins, why is He going to judge us for our sins after we die?

That's an important question, and if you are a Christian, God is actually not going to judge your sins when you die. God has already judged your sins when Jesus died on the cross. Your sins are forever forgiven. After we die, there will actually be two different judgments. You can read about one in Revelation 20, and it's known as the Great White Throne Judgment. At this judgment, there will be the unbelievers, those who are not Christians, and they will be judged for their sins. When their names are not found in the Lamb's Book of Life, they will be punished eternally for their sins. If you are a believer, you won't be judged at the Great White Throne Judgment for your sins, because your name will be found in the Lamb's Book of Life.

There's a second judgment you and I will be at. It's called the Judgment Seat of Christ. At the Judgment Seat of Christ, your eternal destiny will not be judged, that has already been determined on earth; but you will be rewarded and judged for your works on earth. If you did good works, you'll receive eternal rewards.

Here's what the Bible says in 2 Corinthians 5:20, *We must all appear before the Judgment Seat of Christ, that each one may receive what is due him for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad.*

At the Judgment Seat of Christ, your salvation is not determined, your sins have already been judged. There you will be judged for your works, and hopefully you'll receive a lot of rewards.

## Does the Bible mention dinosaurs?

This is a BIG topic...pun definitely intended. There is a lot of debate on this subject. Those who believe in a young earth often say the Bible does mention dinosaurs. Here are some examples. There is a Hebrew word, the word 'tannin'; it's translated sea monster, dragon, or serpent, or some type of a giant reptile. It's mentioned 28 times in the Old Testament.

In Job 40, there's a creature called the behemoth; and in Psalm 104 and Isaiah 27, there's a creature called leviathan. If you want to research more about dinosaurs in the Bible, I suggest you Google creation science.

## Does the Bible forbid interracial marriages?

Great question! And the answer is no, it does not. Some people will try to say that it does and they'll quote Deuteronomy 7:1-4 when one group of people took over another group and God said, 'Do not intermarry with them, do not give your daughters to their sons, or take their daughters for your sons. Some say that God was saying don't marry interracial. But, verse 4 gives the key to the verse where it says: *"For they will turn your sons away from following me to serve other Gods."*

God wasn't talking about other races as much as He was talking about other faiths. In fact, there are many examples in the Bible. Solomon was not judged for marrying a foreign woman, but a foreign woman who worshiped false Gods.



Also in Numbers 12, when Moses married an Ethiopian woman. Mariam and Aaron, they were upset, but God wasn't. And finally, Rahab and Ruth were both Gentiles and yet they are mentioned in the genealogy of Christ who obviously is a Jew. God isn't concerned with skin color, or where someone was born. He wants to know if they have placed their faith in Christ."

## Will I be surprised when I get to heaven to learn that people I went to church with EVERY Sunday aren't there?

Not everyone you go to church with will be in heaven. Going to church doesn't get you to heaven anymore than serving in the church, being a really good person, being nice to your friends....even being a pastor won't get you to heaven.

In Matthew 7:21-23, scripture says, "Many will say to Me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?' And then I will declare to them says the Lord, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!'"

Only those who call upon the name of the Lord will be saved.

## Is tithing biblical?

Many Christians struggle with the issue of tithing. I do not. In some churches tithing is over-emphasized. At the same time, many Christians refuse to submit to the biblical exhortations about making offerings to the Lord. I will never 'guilt-trip' someone into tithing because it is intended to be a joy and a blessing. It is an act of worship. Sadly, that is sometimes not the case in the church today. Tithing is an Old Testament concept. The tithe was a requirement of the law in which all Israelites were to give 10 percent of everything they earned and grew to the Tabernacle/Temple. As you continue to study you learn that there were actually three tithes which added up to around 23.5% of a family's income.

The New Testament nowhere designates a percentage of income a person should set aside, but only says it is to be "in keeping with income." Many theologians believe that Paul is referring to the Old Testament 10% in this passage, but truthfully we do not know.

Tithes and offerings should be given as an attitude of worship to God and service to the body of Christ. You should give out of obedience, and allow the elders, pastors, and leaders of the church to make the decisions on how to spend the money.

Those who would argue against 10% giving quote the apostle Paul in 2 Corinthians 9:7, *"Each man should give what he has decided in his heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver."*

Micah 3:10 says, *"Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. Test me in this," says the LORD Almighty, "and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that you will not have room enough for it.."*

Although I can't for certain tell you that tithing 10% is a New Testament rule it definitely is a biblical principal. I have always taught, and will always teach that tithing 10% is biblical. We teach to give the first 10% to the church, the next 10% to savings, and live off of the rest.

My family lives off of Micah 3:10, and God has opened the floodgates of heaven for us and has poured out so many blessings. I'd rather live off of 90% that God blesses than 100% that He doesn't.

## Should I tithe off of my inheritance?

Absolutely, that's an increase and you return 10% to the Lord.

## Should I tithe off of my student loans?

No, that's a loan, you do not tithe off of your loans.

## Why do people who do not believe in God all their lives, suddenly at the end of their lives begin calling out to Him?

The Bible does not deal with this specifically. However, I know when Christ was hanging on the cross, there was a thief that called upon the Name of the Lord and was saved. I know many personal examples of people accepting Christ just moments before their last breath, and only God knows if these people are truly saved. I believe that if this call is sincere that God will honor His Word, and accept them into His kingdom.

There are many people who do not believe in God, or they worship other false Gods. However, typically in times of trouble they will call out to Elohim. My guess is that when people are in the final moments of a plane crash they are not screaming out the name of Buddha or Hare Krishna, they cry out the name of God!

**Romans 14:11** It is written: "As surely as I live," says the Lord, "every knee will bow before me; every tongue will confess to God."

Sometimes God uses seasons in our life to focus our thoughts and attention on Him. As people get closer to death they begin thinking about eternity more. It could be in these tender moments of life someone will soften their heart and hear the call of God upon them.

## Those who don't believe in Christ, do they get another chance after death?

While the idea of a second chance for salvation is appealing, the Bible is clear that death is the end of all chances. Hebrews 9:27 tells us that we die, and then face judgment. So, as long as a person is alive, he has a second, third, fourth, fifth, etc. chance to accept Christ and be saved (John 3:16; Romans 10:9-10; Acts 16:31). Once a person dies, there are no more chances.

If you do not know Christ, I would encourage you to follow Him today. Refer to the first question in this booklet for information on how to become a follower of Christ.

## Should a Christian protest the overturning of Proposition 8?

I'm probably in the minority on this topic, and after hearing this answer you may vote me out as your pastor, but let me see if I can reveal my heart to you.

First, let me say that I believe the biblical viewpoint of marriage is between a man and a woman. Whenever the Bible mentions marriage, it is between a male and a female. The first mention of marriage, is in **Genesis 2:24**, "**For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh.**" The first descriptor of marriage is between a man and a woman.

In passages that contain instructions regarding marriage, such as 1 Corinthians 7:2-16 and Ephesians 5:23-33, the Bible clearly identifies marriage as being between a man and a woman.

Biblically speaking, marriage is the lifetime union of a man and a woman, primarily for the purpose of building a family and providing a stable environment for that family.

I believe that marriage is between a man and a woman and was God's original design, and it is in this context that He is glorified. He created marriage to be a Holy union. Refer to page 17 of this book for the purpose of marriage.

I also believe that Homosexuality is a sin. There's not a question about that. Refer to page 58 of this book for my opinion on this topic.

However, so is lying, stealing, cheating, gluttony, not tithing, and failing to give God the worship that He deserves. In fact, scripture has some pretty harsh words to say about people who commit these sins. Jesus says in **Matthew 7:3**, "**Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother's eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye?** People who commit to the lifestyle of homosexuality are sinners just like you and I, and they need a Savior just like you and I, and they need grace just like you and I. Sin has people who are straight in bondage, and sin has people who are homosexual in bondage. Someone loved you enough to invest their life into you, and to present you with the love of Christ.

I submit there is only one thing that can overcome the stronghold of homosexuality: radical, undeniable, unconditional, selfless, sacrificial love. We must ask God to give us an opportunity to lay our lives down for the people that He has put in our path. If we love our gay and lesbian neighbors in a way that truly costs us something, it becomes very difficult for them to discount our love for them.

*Continued on NEXT PAGE*

**Should a Christian protest the overturning of Proposition 8?**

So I am going to answer the question by asking a question. When you are protesting, are you for marriage, or are you against homosexuals? This needs to be extremely clear. I believe in the sanctity of marriage and believe that as Christians we should preserve marriage to be only between a man and a woman. This has nothing to do with the constitution, but everything to do with God's Holy Word.

**The best way to preserve marriage is to have a good marriage.** I don't think you are preserving marriage by holding a sign and screaming at people who disagree with you at the top of your lungs. You are simply polarizing them. My guess is that God's love isn't showcased, and you won't be leading anyone in the sinner's prayer right after you tell them they are an abomination to God. God doesn't call for us to protest he calls for us to love.



**So what should a Christian's response to the overturning of Proposition 8 be?** First, know there are millions of dollars that are being invested into this argument. There are organizations that are lobbying the biblical view, and there are lawyers who are presenting it before the courts. There is not one lawyer, one judge, one congressman that can do anything about Proposition 8 that is going to see you protesting on the sidewalks. But there is a good chance that people who need the love of Christ will believe that the church is against them.

So get out to the polls and vote for men and women you believe will be the best advocates for this stance. Write a letter to your congressman, to the judges, the white house, and to anyone else where you believe your voice would make a difference. You should pray about this situation that God would be sovereign and that His will would be done. Then you need to show an extraordinary amount of love to those you disagree with, and let them see the love of Christ in you, and leave the wrath of God to the only one who is perfect.