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Can You Answer This?



Questions Youth Are Asking Today

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CAN A YOUNG TEEN-AGER LOVE AN OLD GOD?

Question. How is it possible for a teen-ager to identify with God when He is always pictured as an ancient figure with long flowing robes?

Answer. Get out your Polaroid and take a new picture of Him. I'll help you develop it in ten seconds.

Jesus said, "If you have seen Me, you have seen the Father." Jesus *left* the earth before He was thirty-five, as if to put an end forever to the "creaky old man" concept of God.

Jesus was popular with big crowds, faced danger unafraid, walked on water (compare *that* to mere surfing!), defied an entrenched establishment, knew how to be kind to little kids, hiked interminable miles on His preaching tours, and frequently had enough energy left over to stay up all night. If God is like Jesus, doesn't this help?

Incidentally, the Bible doesn't say that God is an old man. It calls Him the "Ancient of Days." Daniel 7:9. The term is an understatement. If God made the stars a billion years ago, He has been around for a very long time. If He were an old man, He wouldn't be merely wrinkled and bald; He'd be dead. But He is God, and He is just as strong and vigorous today as He ever was. That's why He sent Jesus to represent Him to us as a young man, always in the prime of life.

CAN GOD LOVE BAD PEOPLE?

Question. How can God love me when I do so many unkind things?

Answer. God doesn't love your unkind things; He loves you—like a father loves his children even when they aren't always good. See Psalm 103:13, 14.

But I wonder how that sounds to you? When I was a teen-ager and people told me that God loves wayward people just as a father loves his wayward children, it sounded pretty trite to me. I was bored.

But then I got a child of my own. My wife and I had to wait ten years for him, but he finally arrived while I was studying at Chicago University. There he was, in a little glass box, stark naked, splotted with purple and blue all over, redheaded like his mother, and yelling his lungs out. My kid!

A few hours later as I drove away from the uni-

versity hospital, the realization came over me that up on the fourth floor of that big stone building was a part of me, and I knew I loved it. This thing about loving your own child didn't seem boring at all anymore. It hasn't since, even when he has disobeyed me. And it never will.

When *you* get one of your own, you'll know that God loves you too—even when you're bad.

CAN AN INVISIBLE GOD HAVE AN IMAGE?

Question. OK, so we're made "in the image of God," like some of your writers say—quoting the Bible, to be sure. Well, doesn't the Bible say somewhere that God is invisible? How can visible people be the image of an invisible God?

Answer. The word "invisible" can refer to something we cannot see because it is totally transparent or to a thing that we cannot see because it is hidden or is too far away. Many stars are "invisible" to the naked eye but are very visible when looked at through a telescope. God is invisible to us, but this does not prove Him to be transparent, like air. The same Bible that says he is invisible (1 Timothy 1:17) also says that someday those who love Him will "see His face." Revelation 22:4.

WHY SATURDAY?

Question. I like a lot I read in the SIGNS, but insisting on the "seventh-day" Saturday Sabbath seems weird. What difference does it make in a world vexed about big things like racial prejudice and city crime? If we can't be rational, at least let's be relevant.

Answer. In a hundred words or less? I'll try. First, the seventh-day Sabbath isn't our choice of a day; the Bible says it's God's choice. Exodus 20:8-11.

The Bible tells us to keep the Sabbath because it is a reminder that God created the earth and that He made man "in His image." Genesis 1:26. This, I think, makes the Sabbath the most relevant thing in the world today. If God created all men in His own image, the Sabbath tells us that all men are brothers—and that says a lot against racial discrimination. And if God made our bodies, I shouldn't abuse mine or exploit someone else's. That gives us an answer to a

lot of current questions about sex. The Sabbath commandment tells us to keep the Sabbath by families, providing for family fellowship in depth, an antidote to juvenile delinquency. The Sabbath requires physical rest, helping us prevent tension and suicide. The Sabbath inculcates respect for God's law—the opposite of crime.

Say, what a good world this would be if everybody kept the Sabbath! Will you join me?

IS GOD ANTHROPOMORPHIC?

Question. Writers in the *SIGNS* make God sound so much like a man. Would you believe, sometimes they give Him arms and legs! . . . The most adequate concept of God is person divorced from all anthropomorphic overtones.

Answer. If you're right, don't you think God made a mistake when He sent His Son to represent Him in the form of a man?

Was it not the case that God had so long revealed Himself through nature ("the heavens declare the glory of God," Psalm 19:1) that too many people had come to think of Him as a mere force, or power, or substance, or pure intelligence? If any of these concepts had been adequate, the omnipotent God could surely have revealed Himself by sending to man as His personal representative a "perfect power" or some sort of visible "pure intelligence." Instead, He chose to reveal Himself as a man.

As a man, indeed, who gave a lot of presents to people who asked Him for things. Who told stories. Who even set little children on His lap. At this His disciples protested. "No," they said in effect, "our God isn't like that. He isn't an anthropomorphic grandpa God. He doesn't have time for boys and girls." But Jesus rebuked the disciples and took the little children on His lap and later said, "Anyone who has seen Me has seen the Father." John 14:19, NEB.

Of course, God isn't *just* a man. He is Creator and Redeemer too—but a Creator and Redeemer who, paradoxical as it may seem, has chosen to tell us that He can best be understood as a Person with a great many human characteristics.

I'D LIKE TO LOVE GOD BUT—

Question. It is said that God loves us, but how can I be sure His love is meant for me? I want to love Him, but for some reason I just feel rejected. In your column, please touch on this problem.

Answer. For one thing, what about your prayers? Are they stiff? Memorized? Even nonexistent? If so, let me suggest for one thing that you try talking to God as if He were a good friend. Then He'll soon seem to be one.

Here's the kind of prayer you might send up to Him when you kneel down for a moment by your bed at night:

"Hello, God. It's been an OK day in lots of ways, I guess, but I can't figure what's happened to Bill. He's been so different lately. I do wish You'd help us to be special friends. Of course, if You don't think it's best—
"Oh, yes; my kid brother is having an awful time

with his language homework. Could You please help him to do better? Or maybe I ought to say, Could You help *me* to help him understand it better?

"And then there's Ray and Rosy. They've been talking a lot about not getting their rights. They're Negroes, You know, God. Help me to be good to them and to get other kids to love them better too.

"Well, I have to go to sleep now. I'm very tired. It's been nice talking to You for a while. I'll see You again in the morning. Amen."

SHOULD PREACHERS HAVE FLASHY CARS?

Question. Don't give me a phoney answer; level with me. Do Adventist ministers really believe Christ is coming soon? They don't seem to put much money into their own church, judging by their flashy cars. The Adventist preacher in my town has a very small congregation, but he drives a better car than any other minister in town, and he changes models every year too.

Answer. I think we all *believe* Jesus is coming soon. I certainly do. But I'm not sure we all *realize* it as we should. I know that often I don't.

But as for the money and the cars: If you would visit the minister you are speaking of and ask him about his church contributions, you would probably learn that he gives at least 15 to 20 percent of his income in offerings. Some give as much as 30 percent.

Adventist ministers with small churches frequently pastor several small congregations in different towns—and drive as much as twenty or thirty thousand miles a year. Because of this they find that trading cars annually is cheaper than paying for repairs.

CANNED FOOD THAT DIDN'T CACKLE

Question. I traded lunches with an Adventist girl at school a few days ago. Her mother had fixed her a "Linkette" or something. Looked a dead ringer for a weiner, and tasted almost like one too, yet she insisted it wasn't made of meat at all. But when I asked her what it was made of, she couldn't tell me. I'm curious. Can you?

Answer. Because of the disease animals are subject to, many Adventists prefer to eat vegetarian-protein foods rather than meat. Three main sources of protein are used in these foods, peanuts, wheat, and soybeans. Wheat flour is washed until the high-calorie starch is removed from it and only the high-protein gluten is left. Soybeans are sometimes treated by a patented process to produce "fibrotein," which has a texture remarkably similar to meat. According to the label on the can, Loma Linda Linkettes are made of gluten and soy flour, with various other ingredients including the amino acid lysine to guarantee a "complete protein."

Repeated scientific tests have shown that these foods can provide twice as much protein per ounce as meat, and are even more digestible than beef, lamb, and eggs. Some of them are flops as meat substitutes. (They're nutritious but they're tasteless.) Others are fantastically successful. The Worthington Co. makes a soybean chicken ("Soyameat") that you could swear cackled before it was canned.