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# Can You Answer This?

## Questions Youth Are Asking Today

by C. Mervyn Maxwell  
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### DOES GOD CHOOSE OUR JOBS?

**Q.** I have read your correspondence about God's helping people find jobs. Do you think He has one certain place chosen for each of us to fill, or do you think He can use us wherever we happen to be? Personally, I think it's the latter.

**A.** The God Jesus taught us to worship is a heavenly Father who notices even the sparrows that fall, and who knows the number of hairs on our heads. See Matthew 10:29, 30. Don't you think that a God who takes such deep and detailed interest in His creatures knows the place where we can live and work for Him with the greatest satisfaction and success? I do. But such a God is also a very patient Person, one who will not leave us however halfhearted we may be about finding out His plans for us. So while I think you are partly right, I still believe that He has a certain "best" place where He would like to put us if we would only give Him a chance. I cherish the thought that He is silently planning for us in love.

### TERRIBLE TREADMILL

**Q.** In my teens I had to get married. After the baby came, we got a divorce. I married again; and it isn't working out very well this time either. My husband's gone all week on his job. I work too, but the more we make the more things cost. There's never a dollar over to buy anything extra, or a day free to go anywhere for fun. I get up every morning and go to work, come home every night and go to bed—always the same, round and round. I get scolded on Saturdays when my husband's home, left behind on Sunday when he leaves, and struggle to raise our four children all week. I feel like I'm tied with a rope. There must be a way to get off this terrible treadmill and live like other people. I don't feel like committing suicide, but I have never faced such despair and loneliness. I don't think you can do anything, but it does help me to write it down.

**A.** Little mother, you're tired. Raising four children taxes any woman's nerves. Physical-fitness exer-

cises and keeping Sabbath as a day of rest will help.

Ephesians 5:20 will help too: "Giving thanks always for all things unto God." You aren't really "tied to a treadmill"; you are the mother of four growing, changing children. Thank God for them all. Watching them, guiding them as they grow, storing up memories of the little things they do and say, helping them to love each other and to become useful members of society, this is the noblest work anyone can do. Thank God for making you a mother. Make it a rule to see the colors in the sunrise as you go to work, to thrill to the softness of your children's hair as you comb it, to thank God for the smell of fresh ironing and the chatter of your little flock. Get your children to plan surprises for Daddy when he comes home. Teach them to sing Christian songs as they work around the house. What a difference it will make! Soon your prison will be a palace, and you will be its happy queen.

### IMMORTALITY, WHEN?

**Q.** You seem to be all mixed up about eternal life. In one issue you say that people have to wait until the second coming of Christ to receive immortality. But in the next you say we are to believe that when we confess our sins we are forgiven and saved right away. If we are saved right away, then we have immortality here and now. The second position reverses the first.

**A.** I have never said in my column that when we confess our sins, we are then and there "saved," as though there were nothing more to it. While Ephesians 2:8 speaks of Christians as being already "saved" ("by grace you have been saved," RSV), Matthew 24:13, 44 teaches that only those who remain faithful Christians throughout their lives and "endure unto the end" will be "saved." When we confess our sins we are immediately "saved" from the guilt of sin. But we will be "saved" for eternity when Jesus comes only on condition that we continue to live close to Him after our conversion and remain faithful to Him unto the end.

## STOLEN GOODS

**Q.** I became a Christian two years ago. It is wonderful to know Jesus as my personal Saviour. But as I grow spiritually, I'm becoming worried about the things I did before my conversion. I stole some small items, and of course I didn't pay tithe on the money I earned. I want to make everything right, but when I think of the overwhelming task of tracing all these things down and stirring up controversies that have been over with for so long, I get confused. I love my Lord because He did so much for me. But what should I do?

**A.** Thank God for your tender conscience. As for the tithe, it is enough for you to have tithed your income since your conversion. James 4:17 says, "To him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin," and Romans 5:13 says, "Sin is not imputed when there is no law." From these passages and others I think it is generally held among mature Christians that God does not expect one to worry about the tithe he didn't pay before he became a Christian. All such omissions He forgives freely. If this were not the case, an old person who became a Christian after his retirement would be saddled with an impossible situation!

As for the things you stole from other people, these should be returned with interest. Ezekiel 33:15 speaks about giving back what a person has robbed. Letters accompanying things you are returning do not necessarily have to be signed, but if there are persons whom you have wronged, your fear of arousing controversy should not keep you from bearing to them your apology and testimony. Ask these persons to forgive you as if you alone were to blame, and at the same time explain the reason why you are writing—that your awareness of Christ's wonderful love in forgiving you has made you want to be in complete harmony again with those from whom you have been estranged. Such letters have sometimes been the means of helping the people who received them to want to be Christians too.

## THANKING GOD IN ADVANCE

**Q.** My pastor keeps telling us—it's one of his hobbies—that when we pray we ought to believe that God answers our prayer immediately and thank Him for the answer right away. He says this is "faith" and is the way to be sure our prayers will be answered. I want to have my prayers answered, of course, and I'm willing to do anything that's necessary; but how can I thank God for something I obviously don't have?

**A.** Your pastor is right. The New English Bible translates Christ's words in Mark 11:24 as, "Whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that you *have* received it and it will be yours." Several other modern translations agree. It is, in fact, what the Greek says.

This way of praying applies to the things God has promised and that He knows are best for us.

God doesn't have to wait until a heavenly committee meets to consider our requests and vote on them!

He answers our prayers at once, even before we can say, "Amen." If we need the thing right away—like forgiveness, or a change of attitude—we can experience this forgiveness and change of attitude right away. We can say, "Thank You, God; I believe my sin is forgiven," or, "I believe You have made me feel better about my parents," and as we do so, the thing becomes a reality to us on the spot.

If, however, it's money we need to go to school some six months from now, we are to believe that God in His own marvelous way *immediately* "sets that money aside in our name." Then as we look for a job, go to work each day, and continue to pray, we can do it with the positive assurance that, if it's best for us, that money "which we already possess by faith" will be in our possession in cold reality by the time we need to pay our school bills. Praying the way Jesus taught us makes such a difference in our own hearts that God can respond to it with His miracles.

## SHOULD WE PRAY FOR THE DEAD?

**Q.** My grandmother taught me as a good Catholic to pray for the dead. She hoped I would pray for her after she passed on. But since the Vatican Council so many Catholic teachings have been questioned that I am beginning to wonder about this. Do you believe in praying for the dead?

**A.** People who die believing in Jesus do not need our prayers: "Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord . . . that they may rest from their labors." Revelation 14:13. They are assured of a part in the first resurrection when Jesus comes. Revelation 20:6. On the other hand, people who die without Christ cannot be benefited by our prayers: "Death cannot praise Thee; those who go down to the pit cannot hope for Thy faithfulness." Isaiah 38:18, RSV. Pray for your loved ones before they die. Ask God to help you in kindly, winsome ways to lead them to their Saviour while they still live.

## RENT NOW, TITHE LATER?

**Q.** My husband and I are buying several houses. The rent on them meets the bank payment. Our question is, Should we try to determine an annual profit and pay the tithe on this, or should we wait until we sell the houses some years from now and then compute our gain—or loss—for tithing purposes? We don't want to leave anything undone in case we should be killed in an accident, or the Lord should come, before we sell them.

**A.** Tithe represents both gratitude and faith. The Bible often speaks about bringing to God our "first-fruits" (as in Proverbs 3:9). *In response*, God will open "the windows of heaven." Malachi 3:8-11. So don't wait for years. You need to show both gratitude and faith now, so that you can have God's blessing now. Calculate your gains at least once a year. The appropriate income tax form will help. You will be glad you did.