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Can You Answer This?

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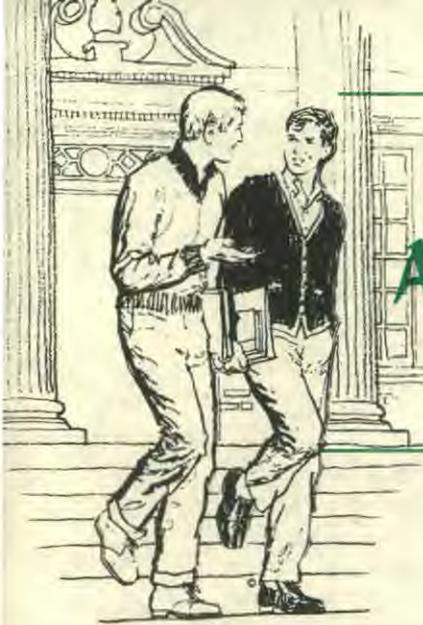


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CAN YOU ANSWER THIS?

Questions
Youth Are Asking Today



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WHEN CAN A B-GIRL GET BAPTIZED?

Q. I used to be a B-girl in night clubs. I did everything. A year ago a terrible accident made me stop and think. I started to go to church for the first time—an Adventist church. Reading the Bible kept me from coming apart. Starting to pray and giving up my bad habits was hard to do; but God's Spirit helped me, and I made it. But keeping on praying, and keeping on being honest and clean, I find is much harder. I seem to be faltering. One day it dawned on me that almost everything in the house, even every article of clothing I was wearing, had been stolen at different times and places. I want so much to be baptized and be a real Christian. Tell me what to do about the hundreds of things I have stolen. Anything you say will be appreciated.

A. The Bible says, "If the wicked . . . gives back what he had taken by robbery, . . . he shall surely live, he shall not die." Ezekiel 33:15, RSV. If someone who had stolen something from you later claimed to have become a Christian yet made no move to restore what he had taken, you would doubt the sincerity of his conversion. According to the Bible you should make a sincere attempt to set things right with the different stores from which you have taken things. This will be difficult to do, and it will take time and be expensive.

You will need to lean hard on God. Don't worry; He'll help you.

I don't think you need to wait until you have made everything right with everyone before you are baptized and acknowledge yourself by God's grace to be a Christian. The Bible says, "If the readiness is there, it is acceptable according to what a man has, not according to what he has not." 2 Corinthians 8:12, RSV. God, who reads our hearts, will know of the sincerity of your intention to make things right and will accept you in Christ at once just as if you had never sinned.

Discouragement always comes when we start thinking about the difficulties that beset us. Our help is in Jesus, and like Peter when he attempted to walk on water, we will have victory only as we look to Christ. We will sink only when we start thinking about our-

selves and turn our minds away from Jesus. "When assailed by temptation, look not to circumstances or to the weakness of self, but to the power of the Word. All its strength is yours."—*The Desire of Ages*, page 123.

WHY DOESN'T GOD HELP SOMETIMES?

Q. I'm a little below the age I think your column is meant for, but I see you have answered questions for other kids like me before. What I want to know is, if I lose a knife, and if when I ask God to help me find it again He doesn't answer my prayer, is this because He knows I would use the knife wrong and He wants to keep me from hurting somebody? I want to see an answer in your column, if I may. Thank you.

A. I can think of three reasons why God might say No to a request like this.

1. Your own suggestion is good; God may know it's best for you not to get the lost thing back.

2. God may be helping you to watch carefully where you set things down. If He always helped us find everything we lost, we could become very careless, couldn't we?

3. God may be wanting to teach you something about how to pray. Some people pray only when they want something. God likes us to keep up a friendly conversation with Him every day and not come to Him only when we want things.

THE UNPARDONABLE SIN

Q. What is the unpardonable sin? My minister tells me it is saying that God is evil, or that the Holy Spirit is of the devil. I have held such thoughts. Though I am sorry now, I am very sure I have committed the unpardonable sin and am going to go to hell. Please answer in your column or personally. I am very concerned.

A. The unpardonable sin is not so much an act as an attitude. God dearly wants to save us; but He has given us freedom of choice, and if we persist in rebelling against Him, He respects our choice and finally leaves us alone. See Hosea 4:17. 1 John 1:9 says that if we confess our sins He is faithful to forgive

us. Any sin that we confess is "pardonable." Any sin that we refuse to confess is unpardonable. The unpardonable sin is willful refusal to confess a sin.

Jesus said that it is part of the work of the Holy Spirit to show us our sins. John 16:8. Therefore, when we persistently refuse to confess our sins, we are in that refusal sinning against the Holy Spirit.

This does not mean that the first time we say No to the Spirit we are lost. Not at all. Genesis 6 tells us that God continued pleading with the sinners in Noah's day for one hundred and twenty years, even after the thoughts of their hearts were "only evil continually." God is very patient with us. It is persistent refusal to yield to this patient pleading of His Spirit that brings us to the place where He can do no more for us.

If you are sincerely sorry for your sins, and I believe you are, this is evidence that the Holy Spirit is still pleading with you. Thank God for it! If you will respond in faith, asking God's forgiveness *and believing you receive it*, you can know that your sin is pardonable and that you have been forgiven.

IS THERE A HELL?

Q. As I see it, the person who makes it as a Christian has it made. I mean, he gets heaven and all that. But for anyone who doesn't make it, it's pretty hairy. He has to burn forever in hell. I've thought quite a bit about converting to Christianity, but if I have to believe in hell, I'd rather not.

A. If there were an ever-burning hell, refusing to believe there was wouldn't make it go away, would it? But there is no such hell. Incurable rebels against the peace of the universe will, for the good of everyone else, be destroyed. But they won't be kept burning forever. The Bible says they will be "burned up," turned to ashes, totally removed from existence. See Malachi 4:1-3; Psalm 37:10, et cetera. The fire will be "eternal" in its effects, not in its burning. Sodom and Gomorrah are used in the Bible as examples to us of wicked cities that suffered "eternal" fire (Jude 7; 2 Peter 2:6), because, once destroyed by fire, they have never again been inhabited. The God of the Christians is not a torturer! You can safely trust your future to His loving hands.

SAME OLD TUNE

Q. Where I spent my childhood, in Allegan County, Michigan, the old-timers said there used to be so many Adventists living there a hundred years ago that the area was known as "the Advent Huddle." I see by the "Signs of the Times" that Adventists are still preaching that Christ is "coming soon." After so much time has passed, how can you keep up the same old tune? It's really amazing.

A. It was Jesus Himself who taught His followers to live continuously in the belief that He was coming soon. "Be ready for action, with belts fastened and lamps alight," He said. "Be like men who wait for their master's return. . . , ready to let him in the moment he arrives and knocks." Luke 12:35, 36, NEB. The passage of time does not push the second com-

ing farther into the future; reason shows that it only makes it closer. If Adventists have been looking for the second advent for a hundred years, this means that Christ's return is a hundred years nearer now than it was a century ago. If the Christian church has been waiting nineteen hundred years for His promised return, the second coming is today nineteen hundred years nearer than it was in New Testament times. Do you see what I mean? If it was imperative for Christians to live in daily expectancy of the second coming then, how much more vital is it for us to do so today, who live so much closer to the event?

GOD GAVE ME TWO JOBS, TOO.

Q. What you said about Miss Handicap [February "Signs"] just fitted me! Hoping to move back from California to my home state, I received an offer of a job there and accepted it eagerly as an answer to my prayers. Within a few months, however, I found myself without a job. Now I have another job I like much better than the first and that allows me more time and energy for the Lord's work in the church. I believe God gave me the first job to pay my moving expenses but had the second one in mind for me all along. Please tell Miss Handicap that I happened to read your answer to her question during those three weeks I was unemployed, and it was a real encouragement to me. I don't belong to your denomination, but the same Lord works for us all.

A. Praise the Lord. Thank you. And I shall certainly pass the good word on.

BLACK AND BLUE

Q. I've been married five years. If I could show you my back and arms you'd see that they are black and blue. I never thought it could happen to me. Bill was as courteous as you please before we got married. It's usually at bedtime that he beats me. I'm about a nervous wreck. Because he's been out of work several times I've got a job so we can have a steady income. I make more than he does. My minister told me to leave him in self-protection, but I don't want to. What can I do?

A. There is no easy solution. Job and income status mean much to a man. Because you make more than he does, he may feel inferior to you and want to prove his dominance. Your fears, based on previous unhappy experiences, and your weariness based on the hours you put in working, keep you from being a loving wife in response to his overtures, and this serves to increase his sense of frustration and inferiority. It may well be that making up your mind to be a loving and interesting wife at bedtime, no matter how tired you are, would do wonders to your husband's ego and thus to your own happiness.

On the other hand, your husband may be one of those men who find it impossible to make love without first being cruel. If so, there is very little you can do to change him. A clinical psychologist could explain this to you after you give him more details. I recommend that you go to see one. ◇◇◇