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Can You Answer This?

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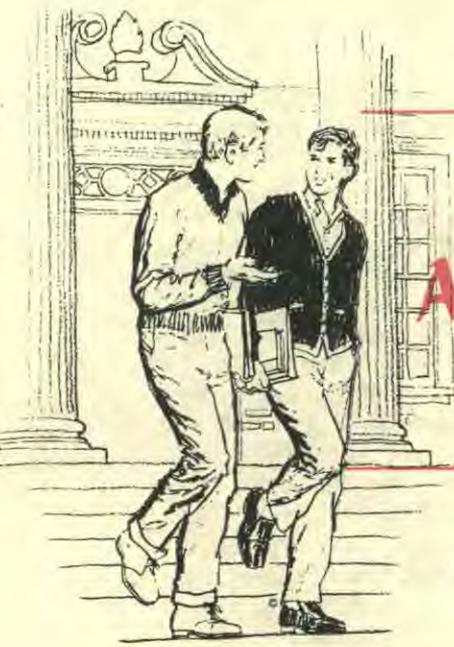


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Recommended Citation

Maxwell, C. Mervyn, "Can You Answer This?" (1970). *Faculty Publications*. 3859.
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CAN YOU ANSWER THIS?

Questions

Youth Are Asking Today



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WAS PAUL AGAINST SEX?

My parents are very strict Christians. I could never be like them; but I have been trying to read a bit in the Bible lately. But I can't really take it seriously. Paul says somewhere that we shouldn't get married. My problem—if it is a problem—is, how can I take seriously an old book that says crazy stuff like this?

You would be greatly relieved if you could find time to read the chapter where Paul speaks about this. It is 1 Corinthians 7.

In it Paul does say, "It is well for a man not to touch a woman," and "It is well for them [unmarried people] to remain single." (I am quoting from the Revised Standard Version, verses 1 and 8.) But Paul also says, in verse 38, "He who marries . . . does well!"

Paul wasn't against marriage; in Ephesians 5 he compares marriage to the love of Jesus and says that men should be willing even to die for their wives if necessary: "Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave Himself up for her." Verse 25, RSV.

When Paul suggests that some people would be better off single, he gives us his reason: "I want you to be free from anxieties." 1 Corinthians 7:32, RSV. He knew troubled times were coming (verse 26) and that married people with families to care for would be in greater distress than single people. But, of

course, *not* being married can be a cause of anxiety in itself! Paul knew this too and said plainly, "If you marry, you do not sin." Verse 28.

From verse 7 it appears that Paul himself had a kind of "gift of celibacy," a special talent for being single. It left him free to preach in many places too dangerous to take a family to, and this freedom to serve God anywhere meant so much to him that he wished others could enjoy it too.

Today if Paul could see young people planning to get married before they finish college, causing the girl to drop out before earning the diploma she may seriously need some day, might he not say, "I want *you* to be free from anxieties. Please, don't get married—yet?"

ADAM'S COLOR

So much is said about different races of people, especially the black race. What color were Adam and Eve? If they were of one race—as they obviously must have been—why do we have so many races now?

The Bible traces all races back to one common ancestor: God "hath made of *one blood* all nations of men to dwell on all the face of the earth." Acts 17:26.

But just what the skin color of our common ancestor was, it does not say and nobody knows. Recent anthropological studies, however, have shown that racial skin color is the result of selective genetic

adaptation to available sunlight. Northern Europeans, who live where sun intensity is low, have blond complexions in order to take in more of such sunlight as is available to them. Races inhabiting equatorial areas have dark skin to protect the underlying layers from ultraviolet radiation. Among Negroes skin cancer caused by exposure to sunshine is very rare and sunburn virtually nonexistent.

It is one more evidence of the forward-looking grace of God (Jeremiah 10) that when He created man sinless and in a perfect world, He gave him the capacity to make genetic adjustments like these to enable him to live in a sinful and imperfect world.

It is my private guess that Adam and Eve were a tan color, midway between black and white, possibly resembling the North American Indian. What's your guess?

ARE PREACHERS ANY GOOD?

The people running the church are merely human and not divine. Do they actually care about holding the church together rather than just giving sermons or putting on a religious front to impress others and ease their own consciences?

When I was a full-time pastor, I normally put in a sixty- to ninety-hour work week, only six or eight hours of which were spent on the preparation and delivery of my weekly sermon—not nearly enough.

Nonetheless, on those occasions

when I invited a guest minister to preach for me at the worship service, there was always some well-disposed person to make the remark: "Pastor, I believe you *deserve* a whole week's vacation now and then!"

Preaching is a small part of a minister's work. Most of what he does never meets the public eye. One elderly lady may absorb his attention for hours two or three days a week after her husband dies and she is transferring, full of tears and fears, to a rest home or the county hospital. A single young couple may nearly exhaust him emotionally as he strives his utmost to save their marriage.

Unquestionably there are lazy men in the preaching profession. I think I know some of them. And there are some who are proud and overbearing; and some who are crashing bores. But if sometime you could get better acquainted with most ministers, I think you would find they are really trying their best to help people.

SABBATH GAMES

Some months ago you gave a young mother like me some suggestions to help her child enjoy Sabbath out of doors and at zoos. My boy, however, couldn't care less about shells, rocks and animals. He wants to play with his building blocks and little cars, and I'm afraid that if I forbid him to do this week after week, he'll get so he hates Sabbath. What can I suggest so that he will enjoy the day as much as I do?

In Isaiah 58:13, 14, God forbade doing "thy pleasure on My holy day," making it evident that games which are purely for play, such as baseball and croquet, don't belong on the Sabbath. But children cannot be made as sedate as grownups.

A major purpose of the Sabbath is to direct our thoughts to God and divine things. Much child play is imitative of adult action. People drive to church on Sabbath; your boy could build a church with his blocks, then drive his toy cars to it and park them in neat rows outside. Or he could build a mission station in Africa and drive people to it in his jeeps and pickups.

Child play can also be educational. On Sabbath your little laddie could build the city of Jericho and have the walls fall down after the Israelites march around it. Or he could build Jerusalem and have Nebuchadnezzar attack it; or Bethlehem, and have Jesus be born there. Or, with your help, he could build a Jewish sanctuary with its furniture and two rooms inside and courtyard outside. (See Exodus 25 to 27.)

THE MAN YOU MARRIED

Jim and I got married last May. It seems like a million bad trips ago. We dated almost a year before the wedding and were as happy as could be the first few weeks after it. Then we had a bad flap over something I can't remember now, and things went from bad to worse. He's so stubborn; he always wants to have his own way, even in little things. I still want to stay married, and I think he does too. But we've nearly had it. He's certainly not the man I married.

Did you know that most young people don't wed the person they marry?

That's right!

When we first fall in love, it is with a person whom we don't really know very well. Obviously we don't know him as well as we will years later. And yet we think he's nearly perfect! How can this be? The answer is that we fill in the details about him with nice items from *our own imagination*. To put it in other words, we fall in love with a person who is to a considerable extent a projection of ourselves.

As we come to know each other better after marriage, we discover sooner or later that the husband or wife we married is a person in his own right, an individual with a will and habits and preferences all his own.

It is at this moment when we find that our spouse is a "somebody else" that the acid test takes place. Can I, within marriage, love my neighbor as myself?

Mature people, and especially mature Christians, *can* love another person for his own sake, for his good qualities, for his unique char-

acteristics, and even, by the grace of God, for his faults. When we need help to do so, God, who "is love" (1 John 4:8), will help us if we ask Him to.

NO MARRIAGE IN HEAVEN?

If God is love (1 John 4:8), and if marriage is a sacred symbol of Christ's love for His church (Ephesians 5) and "a holy institution bequeathed on man at creation," as the minister usually says it is at weddings, then why isn't there going to be any marriage in heaven? This is the one thing about heaven I don't like.

It is true that Jesus said there would be no marrying in heaven. Matthew 22:30. Just why this is so, I cannot say. The only reason I can think of is that He evidently has something better to take its place.

You know, it is interesting to reflect on the fact that you yourself haven't always wanted to get married. When you were eighteen months old, the thing you wanted to do most of all was to get into your mother's bedroom and empty out all her drawers! When you were four, I dare say, your supreme ambition was to race your trike smack into your Daddy's legs. When you were ten, if anyone had suggested that someday you would marry one of your playmates, you would likely have replied, "What? Me marry one of those things?"

Then as your biological-psychological makeup changed once again, you found yourself falling in love. This was good. Falling in love is a nice thing—something so good that only God could have created our capacity to do so.

But in heaven, we are told, we are to have a brand-new biological-psychological makeup—a new body "fashioned like unto His glorious body" (Philippians 3:21)—a wonderful part of a wonderful new life so marvelous and good that "the former [way of life we now know] shall not be remembered, nor come into mind." Isaiah 65:17. Personally I find myself very curious about whatever it may be that God is keeping up His sleeve for us—something that is going to be even better than a loving marriage.