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### Can You Answer This?

C. Mervyn Maxwell  
*Andrews University*

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# CAN YOU ANSWER THIS?

Questions  
Youth Are Asking Today



by C. Mervyn Maxwell  
Chairman, Department of Church History  
Andrews University

## PRISON WITNESS

I recently joined a "prison concern" group that visits our local county jail once a week to witness for Jesus Christ among the inmates. I enjoy the musical part, but when we break up to visit with the individual prisoners, I'm embarrassed because I'm afraid I won't know how to answer their questions about religion. What really bothers me, though, is this: Don't you think a person who's been a Christian all her life (I'm in college now) ought to be able to answer easily any question about knowing Jesus Christ?

To meet everyone's spiritual need on the spur of the moment is an ability few people, if any, possess. It takes years of experience to come anywhere near it. These hints, though, will help:

1. Jot down on a sheet of paper what it is that Jesus really means to you, and why you think He can mean a lot to others. This will help you to express what you feel but cannot yet readily articulate.

2. Get acquainted with a few of the chapters in the Bible that are the most helpful to people in hard situations, such as Psalm 103 and Romans 8, so that you can always have some selected passage ready to read to them. Better yet, read something in your Bible every day, praying specifically for your prison people, and God will get you excited about passages that you will discover for them on your own.

3. Keep on trying. Experience

helps wonderfully. The Bible's ideal is worth the effort: "Be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you." 1 Peter 3:15.

## SHOULD MEDICS HELP THE WOUNDED?

I just read in an old copy of the "Signs" (February, 1969) the comments written by someone who believes it is hypocrisy to tell young men that it's wrong to shoot enemy soldiers, but right to aid wounded soldiers—who will, of course, as soon as they are well again, kill enemy soldiers. I agree with him. Your denomination has been brainwashing your young people to disobey one of God's commandments ("Thou shalt not kill") in order to abet the slaughter waged by Establishment capitalists. . . . The medic is like the driver of a getaway car for a gang of bank robbers; he is as guilty as the men he helps, even though he only drives their car.

If you wish all wars would go away, so do I. This is easier said than done, however, and the question remains, "What should the Christian do when he hears a wounded man cry for help?"

You say you hate hypocrisy, and I believe you. Let me then ask you a question. If you could not be an army medic in wartime, could you be a civilian doctor in peacetime? If you became guilty whenever your patients did something wrong, would you be able to treat anyone?

You couldn't treat policemen, I

am sure. They carry guns and sometimes shoot and kill.

You couldn't treat schoolteachers. (At least, not until you had investigated them.) Some schoolteachers rape the minds of their students with radical atheism, and you wouldn't want to become a party to anything like that.

You couldn't risk treating married people. A third of them sooner or later get divorces and turn their children into semi-orphans, maiming them psychologically for life.

All too many youth become dropouts from society, even drug pushers and sexual profligates. To keep your hands clean, you'd certainly want to wait until they were past their teens for fear you'd be responsible for the mistakes they made after they left your office.

Many businessmen foul up our air and water. For that matter, every man who drives a car, every woman who uses a detergent, contributes to the ecological downgrading of our biosphere and, hence, to the ultimate extinction of the human race. You couldn't honestly treat any of them and become an accessory to genocide!

Who, then would be good enough for you to help?

Let me put it another way: If the wounded man on the Jericho Road had been a member of the robber gang and not a victim of it, would Jesus have represented the Good Samaritan as a hypocrite because he helped him, and praised the priest and Levite instead because they passed him by?

## NONCOMBATANT HYPOCRITES?

Count me among the many youth of our time who oppose all participation in war. Choosing medical noncombatant status does not clear a man's conscience; it compounds murder with hypocrisy. If Christ were here today He would accept the persecution and humiliation of a little time in jail rather than join forces with the money-grabbing rulers of this or any other country in their bloody massacres of foreign peoples.

Rescuing a man in jungle warfare, I understand, does not lack for excitement. There are bullets and hand grenades to dodge, and trip wires and booby traps, and I don't know what else to look out for, not to mention endless heat, sticky mud, and ubiquitous parasites.

Are you sure it is Christian bravery that motivates a man to opt, instead, for a clean safe prison term?

As for the example of Christ—have you ever noticed that when Jesus saw a man wounded by Peter's sword, He healed that man, thus advancing his health and welfare at the very moment when he was committing the terrible crime of helping the Establishment murder the Son of God?

If Jesus hadn't wanted to be kind to sinners, don't you think He would have stayed away from this world altogether?

But please see my other comments on this subject elsewhere in this column.

## VISITING WITH GOD

Someone who definitely did not agree with what you had written showed me your suggested prayer that begins, "Hello, God." To tell the truth, I rather liked it. I think I would like to be able to pray that way. It makes praying seem like talking to a real person instead of to a Something Up There. Still, what really is the use of telling God things that happened during the day when you know He knows about them all already? I guess I've been told too often that prayer is chiefly "asking and thanking."

Let me suggest another "visiting with God" kind of prayer, and as I do, will you notice how the narra-

tive provides a natural way to introduce "asking and thanking"? One great advantage of this kind of praying is, in fact, that it reminds us of situations and persons we would overlook in a stereotyped prayer and stimulates us to "ask and thank" about a greater proportion of life's experiences.

"Dear God, it's so good to be back kneeling before You again. What a day it has been! The mountains with the light slanting sideways on them when I looked out the window just at sunrise! The sunshine sparkling on the swimming pool. The sky when the sun went down—afire with colors. What a beautiful world You made! Thank You so very much for it. And, dear God, if You can make the world so fine, I believe You can make me a better person. Please do it.

"But it wasn't a perfect day, God. Mr. Fritz really let us have it in chemistry. I've never seen him so mad. Still, it was not all his fault. Tim was really rude to him, and I guess I snickered as much as the other kids when Mr. Fritz first teed off. Forgive me, Lord; forgive us all. And please forgive Mr. Fritz. Help us to cooperate with him better. I am sure he means to be a good teacher.

"And there's something else. I read an article today about the poor children who ought to get free lunches but don't because of corruption in the public school system. Help even us teen-agers to find a way—a truly Christlike way—to see that these youngsters get what they need so much."

Now do you see what I mean?

## CAN GOD LAUGH?

Religion always seems so solemn. Especially prayer. Sometimes I don't want to be solemn! I feel too good, too young, too full of fun to stop suddenly at bedtime and kneel down and be serious and glum. How can I pray when I'm too happy to? And why should I, when I feel so good I don't want anything more than I've got already?

Why not share your pleasure with God? Or do you think that He's too solemn to laugh? Did you ever watch monkeys playing in a zoo—and remember that God made

them? God made playful puppies too—and playful children. In fact, many of His creatures play, and "the Lord God made them all." The sense of humor was His idea in the first place!

Next time you feel too joyful to be solemn, pray anyway, but try something like this:

"Dear God, it's been such fun today living in Your world. I feel almost too good to be true. For one thing, Jim and Sue and Phil planned the nicest surprise for me. [Then tell Him what it was.] And for another, the funniest thing happened. [Tell Him about that also.]

"But come to think of it, God, if I feel full of energy and joy and friends tonight, I know it's all because of You, and what You've done for me and for this sinful world. I want You to know how grateful I am. I thank You very much.

"And, Lord, I wonder if I've been anywhere near as good to other people today as You have been to me. I'm sure I haven't. Please forgive me.

"And tomorrow please help me to find someone sad or lonely and show me how to get him to feel as good about You as I do right now."

## STOLEN ADDING MACHINE SENT BACK

Today I received back an adding machine that had been stolen. With it was a short letter and also a typewritten copy of an answer published in "Can You Answer This?" for January, 1969. The letter was unsigned, and it said, "About a month ago I was offered this adding machine by a boy who said he had stolen it from your high school. I bought it from him for one dollar. The enclosed article explains some of my reasons for wanting now to return it. Please forgive me, and please return it to the teacher to whom it rightfully belongs. Thank you for helping me correct my wrong."

I hope whoever the boy was who wrote this letter will read this issue of the *Signs* and notice these words of Jesus: "There will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance." Luke 15:7, RSV.