

Andrews University

Digital Commons @ Andrews University

Faculty Publications

10-1-1970

Can You Answer This?

C. Mervyn Maxwell
Andrews University

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.andrews.edu/pubs>



Part of the [Biblical Studies Commons](#), and the [Practical Theology Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Maxwell, C. Mervyn, "Can You Answer This?" (1970). *Faculty Publications*. 3867.
<https://digitalcommons.andrews.edu/pubs/3867>

This Popular Press is brought to you for free and open access by Digital Commons @ Andrews University. It has been accepted for inclusion in Faculty Publications by an authorized administrator of Digital Commons @ Andrews University. For more information, please contact repository@andrews.edu.



CAN YOU ANSWER THIS?

Questions
Youth Are Asking Today



by C. Mervyn Maxwell

Chairman, Department of Church History
Andrews University

HOW CAN I HAVE PEACE WITH GOD?

It always sounds attractive to me when I hear ministers speak of having peace with God. I would like to have this peace, but how can I? I know I am jealous and selfish, and I often give in to a bad habit of mine. (I try hard not to, of course; I pray a lot about it.) With so many things wrong with me, how can I feel at peace with God? I think I'd just be kidding myself if I tried.

All men are sinners. If God's peace is only for non-sinners, none of us can qualify.

And yet God certainly does offer us His peace. Even though the New Testament epistles were written to church members who were far from perfect, they usually say near the beginning, "Grace be unto you, and peace, from God our Father." (See 1 Corinthians 1:3 and 1 Peter 1:2, for examples.) Jesus, you remember, said, "Peace I leave with you, My peace I give unto you," to disciples who that night He knew would desert Him, and even to Peter, who He knew would deny Him! John 14:27.

Try looking at it this way. The universe is at war. There is a continual battle raging between good and evil. Sinners who are in active rebellion against God obviously are not at peace with Him. They cannot realistically claim God's peace.

But sinners who have accepted God as their Partner and (if I may) as their Commander-in-chief in their private battle against sin, are rebelling against evil, not against God. They're on God's side!

When you are "at war" with evil, you can be "at peace" with God.

In fact, your very awareness of your own sinfulness and your hatred of it, so far from disqualifying you from God's peace, actually qualifies you for receiving and enjoying it.

"Grace be unto *you*, and *peace*, from God our Father!"

HOW CAN I STOP OVEREATING?

I'm overweight—because I overeat. And I know the reason why I overeat. Although my teachers like me and I'm smart enough to get good grades, I'm lonely. I know I'm not an attractive or interesting person, so there's no use of my trying to make friends. But I don't like being overweight. I ask God to help me quit eating so much, or at least to help me remember not to take so much food at the school cafeteria. But it doesn't do any good. Why doesn't God help me?

If I am not mistaken, the real reason you don't try to win friends is that you want them so badly you know that if they would shun your overtures, you would be heartbroken. To protect yourself, then, you avoid the very people you admire the most and go off by yourself. Then you comfort yourself with an extra dessert or two as a sort of consolation prize.

I gather that you have tried numerous frontal attacks on Calorie Hill; this time, why not try a sneak attack on the rear?

Your solution lies in having friends. You're afraid to approach

smart and successful people; well, ask God to show you other girls as lonely as yourself. On your knees think about your acquaintances, especially fat ones. Pray for ideas as to how you can bring joy into their lives.

When you get involved in their joys and sorrows, including their overeating, I predict you'll gradually forget about your own loneliness. And then you'll forget about needing candy consolations.

Perhaps these words of the Bible are meant for you: "The Lord restored the fortunes of Job, when he had prayed for his friends." Job 42:10, RSV.

IS TITHING PASSÉ?

I am interested in what you have said from time to time about tithe paying. Why do you make such a big thing of it when it is so clearly an old-covenant law? Jesus didn't consider tithing to be adequate. Why do you?

Tithing is very important, but it certainly isn't "adequate." A Christian should, if possible, give other offerings beside his tithe—if possible, as much as a second or a third tithe.

You speak of tithing as belonging to the "old covenant," a term that is sometimes difficult to define to everyone's satisfaction. Paul spoke of circumcision as being part of the old covenant and said that Christians shouldn't practice it anymore, but did he ever say we shouldn't tithe? Certainly Christians don't want to go opposite to everything in the old covenant, just because

we don't practice ritual circumcision. For example, just because the old covenant forbade idolatry, would we install idols in our churches? Hardly!

Malachi 3:8-10 promises that God will open the windows of heaven and pour out a blessing on those who bring "tithes and offerings . . . into the storehouse." Countless case histories document the fact that God still remarkably blesses those who claim this promise today. If God is still prepared to pour out blessings in response to the faith of the tithe payer, then let's pay tithe!

I honestly think this is what Jesus wants us to do. In the famous passage where He discusses tithe paying (Matthew 23:23), He rebukes the Pharisees for paying tithe *while neglecting real godliness*—and then instructs them that they ought to do both—that is, be godly and upright *and* pay tithe.

HOW LONG SHOULD I PRAY?

How long should a person pray for something he wants very much? I tried praying for an hour once, but after a few minutes it was all "vain repetition," like the Sermon on the Mount condemns. So I gave up. I didn't get what I wanted, either.

The answer is, I think, surprisingly simple: Pray until you have faith and a clear channel.

We all want to see changes happen when we pray, and Jesus promised that these changes (or "answers") will come according to our faith. Matthew 9:29. The Bible explains that "faith cometh by hearing . . . the Word of God" (Romans 10:17); so, as you pray, call Bible promises to mind that fit, and apply them to your specific need. Be sure, too, you are praying for something God has promised and that you are praying "according to His will," not your own. I John 5:14. Pray until you have faith.

Pray also until you have a clear channel. It would be unwise of God to entrust special blessings to people who would misuse them. It would never do for Him to answer selfish prayers, any more than it would be right for a mother to give a loaded gun to an angry child, just because he demanded it! The Bible quite properly warns, "If I regard

iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me." Psalm 66:18. Since faith wavers and sins return day by day, repeat your prayer of faith and confession at least once or twice every day.

So, "pray until you have faith and a clear channel." It may take two hours, or it may take thirty seconds. Whichever it is, that is how long you ought to pray.

YOUTH AND WAR

After reading "Signs of the Times" for several months I have been impressed with its message of love, hope, and holiness; one of your answers in a recent issue, however, disturbed me very much. Instead of taking an uncompromising attitude against the war in Vietnam, you spoke of the persecution that Christians would suffer if troops were suddenly withdrawn, and recommended fasting and prayer instead of marching and demonstrating. I believe in fasting and praying, but how can you adopt a Moslem idea that force must be used if truth is to prevail? The true religion of God will prevail in spite of persecution! But perhaps I have misunderstood you.

It was good of you to suggest a misunderstanding, because apparently there is one.

My main point was not that the war should be prolonged (certainly not!), but that Christian youth should seek its conclusion in a manner different from the one most popular today. I suggested that if all Christian youth in America would unite in a great movement of prayer, fasting, and rededication to God's service, very likely He would bring about a just peace in Vietnam in a short time.

My other point was that most Christian youth are, I fear, somewhat superficial in their demand for troop withdrawal, and that their superficiality arises from the fact that the potential consequence to Christian missionaries in South Vietnam has not been called to their attention. If it had been, they would not seek *merely* a military withdrawal but a much deeper solution to the current conflict.

YOUTH AT KENT STATE

Most of the kids I run around with felt very deeply when the four students at Kent State College were shot [last May]. We held a candle-light prayer service and wrote letters to their parents. I feel awful about the killing too, but I find myself wondering if the news media have been fair in laying all the blame on the National Guard. Weren't the soldiers pretty well provoked by violent radicals into doing what they did? Can Christian youth condone what these radicals did? Which side are you on?

As I see it, the Kent disaster was not a simple case of youth versus the Establishment. Actually there were three groups of youth involved, and I find myself concerned for all three.

First there were those who, like Jeffrey, Sandra, Allison, and Bill, were demonstrating peacefully or not even demonstrating at all, peace-loving American youth.

The second group of youth, surprisingly enough, was the National Guard! That's right. A large number of National Guardsmen are college-age youth—*young men who sign up with the Guard to avoid being sent with the regular army to Vietnam!* In their own way National Guardsmen are very often opposed to participation in war!

The third group at Kent was the activist minority who threw rocks and rhetoric at the guards until, young as they were, the youthful guardsmen lost their tempers and fired their guns.

At Kent, then, there were three different groups of young people all seeking peace, and not one of them finding it. How sad!

Christian young people know that Jesus Christ is the only source of true peace. In receiving His forgiveness comes the peace of freedom from guilt. In dedication to Christ's service comes the peace of release from selfish ambition and aimlessness. In accepting Christ's promises comes peace and certainty about the future.

May every Christian youth who reads these words seek to bring the peace of Christ to non-Christian youth before another week goes by.