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Look at It This Way

Questions Youth Are Asking Today

Mervyn Maxwell

SHOULD WE PRAY FOR THE DEAD?

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?

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 labours." 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.

DO I NEED TO BE CONVERTED?

A lot of the kids in my grade have been going to Jesus meetings and getting converted. They testify at church fellowships about not using drugs anymore, and they seem to be very happy. They are all praying for me to get converted too, and they say that when I do I'll be happy like they are. But I've always gone to church and wanted to be good. Not that I'm perfect or anything, but I've always believed in God and I've always thought of Jesus Christ as my Saviour. Do I need to be converted?

As you know, Jesus told Nicodemus that everyone has to be "born again." John 3:5. Jesus explained that this means to be "born of the Spirit" or to be "born from above"; He did not, however, tell Nicodemus at what age this new birth ought to take place.

Most Christian youth, however, tend to be Christians during their childhood as a result of their parents' influence rather than because of their own personal decision. They are Christians by persuasion but not by conviction. When they become teen-agers they begin to think for themselves and to ask questions about their religion. This is good, for God wants their religion to be their own choice. The Bible says, "Choose *you* . . . whom ye will serve." Joshua 24:15.

You are old enough to make this decision now. When you do, you may have a feeling of joy such as your friends feel, or instead you may feel a quieter sense of inner peace. Remember, both "joy" and "peace" are equally the "fruit of the Spirit." Galatians 5:22.

IS GOD A SLAVE?

God seems to answer everybody else's prayers, but He hardly ever answers mine. In fact, He usually does not answer my prayers. The Bible says, "You can pray for anything, and if you believe, you have it; it's yours!" (Mark 11:24, Living Bible). Then why doesn't it work? Sometimes I wonder if the Bible really tells the truth, or even if there is a God.

A person who is expected to do everything exactly the way someone else wants him to is called a slave. Do you suppose that God, the Creator of the universe, has promised to be your slave?

Probably you never thought of the matter this way.

Now, what has God promised? Look at the context. The verse immediately following the one you quoted says, "But when you are praying, first forgive anyone you are holding a grudge against." Have you done this? Is it possible that you are holding a grudge against God Himself?

In the verses just before the one you quoted, the Bible says, "If you only have faith in God," then you can pray for things and expect to get them. To have faith in God is more than merely to have faith that He will give you what you request. It means to trust God—all the time. It means to have an attitude about God that recognizes Him as your wise and wonderful heavenly Father, a Person whom you can trust to do what is best for you.

If when you pray, you truly trust God, you won't expect Him to be your slave. Of course not! Instead, you will place your life trustingly in His hands; and when you ask Him to do something for you, you will manifest your trust by adding, "But if You know that this isn't best for me, then I trust You to answer my prayer in some other way. In fact, the thing that I really want is whatever You know is best for me, and I am willing to trust You to give me *that*."

This kind of prayer always receives an answer.

GOD AND A LONG-HAIRED HIPPIE

This isn't from a youth but it is about one. Some time ago I lost my wife and child in an auto accident. I was at home when I got the news of the accident. Some young long-haired hippie driving like crazy was in the other car—and came out of the accident with no marks at all. I have ministered in 49 states. My wife and I traveled for Jesus because we loved Him. I cannot understand why God left me to suffer with loneliness. I live from day to day anymore; I have lost all interest in life and sometimes feel like ending it. "O God," I pray, "why don't You let me die too?" My wife and I loved the young people of our church, and so many young folk came to the funeral that other people couldn't believe it. I have com-

forted a lot of church members when they lost loved ones; but when the shoe is on your own foot, it is different. What should I do? I have wanted to attend the Adventist church in our town, but most folk in this small place know me. Please help.

When Lazarus died, Jesus wept. Evidently it is not a sin to cry. You are not sad because you doubt God but because you loved your wife—and God put that love into your heart.

As Jesus died on the cross, He cried out, "O My God, why?" So it is not wrong to ask God sincerely why sad things happen.

One answer as to why they happen is found in the first two chapters of Job. It says there that Job's great afflictions, including the loss of nearly all his family, were brought about by Satan—and that God permitted Satan to do it because He knew that Job would remain faithful.

Job suffered terribly, but still he cried out in faith, "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him." Job 13:15. "When he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold." Job 23:10. Job's patience helped him become an even better man; it has also helped millions of people ever since to be patient when things go wrong.

God permitted Job's trials because He knew He could trust him to set a good example that would help others. I believe God trusts you too. And as your Christian friends in 49 states see you keep the faith even though sadly disappointed, they will be encouraged to keep the faith too. In the end, you and they also will "come forth as gold."

LOVING AN UNLOVABLE

I got married too soon. Three months simply wasn't long enough to get acquainted in. If I'd put our marriage off even for one more month, I would have seen what a mismatch we were going to be and could have saved myself all this trouble. I've been married less than a year, but already I am very, very

unhappy. You can't imagine how many things he does that irritate me. . . . What can I do?

People ought to realize that marriage is not an alliance between angels. (As a matter of fact, the Bible says that real, heavenly angels never get married. Matthew 22:30.) Marriage is something that human beings do—and human beings are sinful, selfish creatures. Even good Christians are usually a long way from being perfect.

Since you and your husband are human beings, shouldn't you *expect* him to be less than perfect?

In spite of human frailty, many marriages become increasingly happy as the years go by. This is not the result of two perfect beings marrying each other; it is the result of two imperfect people (the only kind of people there are) forgiving, understanding, helping, and loving each other in spite of their faults.

And since people are all different, in any marriage one partner is always somewhat more imperfect and the other one somewhat less imperfect. It follows that the one who is more nearly perfect is the one who must do the larger amount of loving or forgiving.

God, who is love, can help you forgive your husband, and then love him into happiness with you. He really can. The Bible says, "Let us practice loving each other, for *love comes from God* and those who are loving and kind show that they are children of God, and that they are getting to know Him better." "As we live with Christ, our love grows more perfect and complete." 1 John 4:7, 17, Living Bible.

CHRISTIANITY IS OUT OF SIGHT

I've just got to tell you about how happy I am since I found Christ. I used to go to church only to see my friends. I thought all Christians were phonies and hypocrites. But then one afternoon I had a real bad trip. Something inside kept saying, "Go out into the highway and let a truck roll over you." Man, I was really scared. Then I remembered the things the minister said about going to hell and

about God coming back soon. I phoned for him to come and help me. He came right over and talked to me for hours. At first I gave him a hard time in spite of my being the one that called him. But he kept talking about the love of God and asking me to give myself to Jesus.

He put a Bible in my hand and tried to get me to read some of the promises. All of a sudden I knew I really wanted to give up drugs, and I started to read the Bible, and then I was crying like crazy. Now everything is different. I don't have any hassles with my parents anymore. I don't want to get high on pills and grass. Some of my friends have learned about God from me, and now they've got the "old victory smile" on their faces all the time too. Life is really different from what it was before; it's cool, man—really out of sight! Now I want to see everybody else get ready for heaven. Please tell everybody about this. Thank you.

Your question may have been answered in Mervyn Maxwell's latest book, "Look at It This Way." Why not order a copy today? Just fill out the coupon below. For each copy enclose \$1.00 (which includes postage, handling, and sales tax) and mail to:

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