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Look at It This Way

Questions Youth Are Asking Today

Mervyn Maxwell

MUST I FORGIVE MY DAD?

My real dad divorced my mother five years ago when I was ten. They have both remarried, and my stepdad is very good to me. My dad drinks a lot, or at least he used to, which is why Mother divorced him. Now all of a sudden he has written to say he wants to come and see me in a few days at the boarding school I attend. It doesn't seem right. For five years he hasn't done anything for me, and now he wants me to forgive him and be nice to him on a moment's notice. Shouldn't I make him wait awhile until he knows how it feels to be ignored?

In the Lord's Prayer Jesus taught us to say, "Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors."

In order to be forgiven, we have to forgive. And—have you ever thought of it this way?—the only people we can forgive are those who have been unkind to us. The only "debtors" we can forgive are people who "owe" us something!

When the prodigal son came home, his father was so eager to forgive him that he ran out to welcome him. Now your prodigal father is coming home.

If you will put on your most at-

tractive dress, invite him to eat with you in the school dining room, and introduce him to your friends, he may learn for the first time what God's kind of forgiveness is all about. It may make him want to become a Christian.

You'll feel pretty good about it too.

HELP FOR TROUBLED SOLDIERS AND SAILORS

I have just run across a February issue of your paper and noticed your advice to a young Navy man who was deeply discouraged by his failure to pass basic training. It is good that you advised him to have faith in God; but I must point out to you, in the strongest possible terms, that he'll have to do more than that. I certainly hope your personal reply to him was more comprehensive than your short printed response.

It is most essential that such individuals seek help within the military structure. First they should speak with the chaplain of their faith, or with the base psychiatrist, or with someone at the base legal office (JAG). They should also always speak with their commanding officer at the first possible opportunity, even if the officer is not sympathetic—which he is not likely to be.

I personally have devoted hundreds of unpaid hours to answering questions of people who need help in military situations. May I refer you and your correspondent to an agency that has been giving impartial counsel to troubled servicemen for twenty-five years? It is the CCCO, an Agency for Military and Draft Counseling. The Western Region headquarters are located at Suite 201, 140 Leavenworth Street, San Francisco, California 94102. Telephone, (415) 566-0500. Counseling services are free, and cooperating attorneys often charge reduced fees.

IS BASKETBALL BAD?

Somebody has told me that it's wrong to go to basketball games, or even to play basketball in a park. Do you agree? If so, could you tell me the reason?

There can be nothing wrong in playing a simple game with other boys, but there *can* be something wrong when we get so wrapped up in a game that we get angry with our friends when things go wrong, and shout at them, and swear.

It's a pretty good rule to say that if the game is just a happy time together with your friends, and if it doesn't keep you from work that you ought to be doing at home, then it's probably all right—whether you're watching it or playing it. But if you get so involved that you develop bad feelings, or don't come home in time to help your family when they need you, then the game has become bad for you.

BEAUTIFUL SOPHOMORE

When someone at school says something against God, I want to speak up and say that it isn't true; but I am a little shy at times. Could you tell me the difference between a religious fanatic and a beautiful person who preaches and teaches the Word of God and lives a godly life?

Even a beautiful Christian can seem to be a fanatic to a person who doesn't want any religion at all. "Fanaticism is often in the other person's eye."

But a genuine fanatic is a person who is religious in an unreasonable and ungracious way. He doesn't really follow the Bible but instead goes to extremes on one or two things, and then criticizes other people who don't do the same.

You can be a beautiful Christian if you are careful to live a balanced life, trying to follow *everything* in the Bible that you understand. Re-

DO YOU HAVE A QUESTION?

Would you like to ask Mervyn Maxwell to help you find an answer? If so, send your question to:

Mervyn Maxwell
"Signs of the Times"
1350 Villa Street
Mountain View, California 94040

It is not possible to answer all letters in the "Signs"; and publishing procedures being what they are, answers published in this column may not appear until several months after you send in your question. If you want to be sure of receiving an answer to your particular question, be certain to give your address when writing.

remembering that Jesus loves everybody (including you), be courteous even when people are not nice to you. Be cheerful when things go wrong. Be more interested in showing other people happiness than in finding it for yourself. Help others to be popular and to get over their hassles and hang-ups. When appropriate, mention Jesus in a natural, pleasant way, telling people that He can help them as much as He has helped you.

DRUG BATTLE

I have been twice to an Adventist sanitarium for help to get off drugs. The first time worked for a while. The second time didn't work at all—I made sure I took some pills in with me for when I would need them.

Right now I would like to get off permanently, which is why I'm writing you. But man, I couldn't quit cold, like some people tell me. When I don't take them, I can't study or work. When I do, I feel great and can get things done. I've quit praying for help, because it doesn't do any good.

Your prayers don't work because although you say the words with your mouth, and somewhat with your heart, you don't say them with *all there is of you*.

You have one terrific battle to fight, and it's going to take all you have got. You could begin by thinking through the pros and cons and coming to a clear-cut decision one way or the other. If you decide

definitely to quit, get in mind all the reasons why you want to. Know clearly and for certain that it will be very much better for you to drop out of "the drug scene" than to drop out of life.

Then fight. Fight with all your mind, constantly reminding yourself of the advantages of quitting. Fight with your commonsense too. DO NOT keep any pills or other drugs on hand. You cannot take a drug you don't have.

Fight with all your body. Eat, drink, exercise, and sleep intelligently.

Fight with all your soul. Choose to believe that God is with you. Choose to think of how Christ suffered to save you. Choose to think of the rewards He will give you. Choose to have faith. "Fight the good fight of faith." 1 Timothy 6:12. "This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith." 1 John 5:4. If you fight the fight of faith with all your willpower, you will conquer.

CAN WE MARRY IN A CATHOLIC CHURCH?

I am a Protestant, of age to get married. My parents have met a Catholic family who are religiously minded. The negotiations are being carried on. I like the girl and she likes me. The elders of the two parties like each other too. After careful study they have decided to request that if this negotiation is finalized the marriage should be celebrated in their church and that thereafter the couple can decide to

have their own choice as to church affiliation. Personally we feel this cannot be such a serious matter, and it is certainly better than getting married before a heathen registrar. But we feel like writing and getting to know your feelings. The girl is of course to be indoctrinated and baptized into my Protestant church. The alliance should eventually bring her whole family into the Protestant faith, which is our object. [India.]

The church you get married in is not too important, but the church you and your girl belong to is.

Before your girl can become a Protestant she must make many changes in her thinking. She will even have to believe that some religious concepts are true which she has been sincerely taught all her life were error.

Every year hundreds of thousands of Catholics make this change, but most who are invited to do so refuse. Your girl is, you say, very religious. This may mean that she will be easy to win over to Protestantism. But it may also mean that she will always remain a Catholic. Until she has studied your religion thoroughly, even she cannot know what decision she will make.

It would be much better for both of you if she would receive thorough instruction and make her decision before the marriage.

In matters of religion, the Bible says, "Be ye not unequally yoked together." 2 Corinthians 6:14.

D. TANK

