

BIBLE ANSWERS FOR BIG QUESTIONS

BY BRIAN JOHNSTON

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QUESTION ONE: IS THERE MORE TO LIFE?

A friend was telling me a couple of years ago how his wife had got him a very special fortieth birthday present - it was the chance to drive a racing car round a racing circuit. It was looking good from the stand. His family was very impressed at the way he was handling the car. Wasn't he going fast! Then he got out and handed over the wheel to the resident, professional racing driver. And did he make that car go! When he was finished, there was smoke coming from all four wheels. The difference was then obvious - and it put Dad's performance into perspective. Even when life is good - even when we think we're performing well - it's still way short of life in all its fullness.

So could there be more to life than what you're already experiencing - even when things are going well? Or, is this all there is, and anything beyond is just wishful thinking, mere escapism? I think there are times in all our lives when we simply can't escape 'the God question' - does God really exist? For that's really what it boils down to, isn't it? That's really what we're asking when we allow ourselves to wonder if there's more to life. So, what are the clues?

Take the miracle of life itself. What happens in the labour ward is a big clue towards answering the God question. The arrival of a new life can dramatically re-focus our attention on something or someone greater than ourselves. The sight of that little wrinkled body can reduce a parent (or grandparent) to jelly as they're engulfed in waves of joy, gratitude and wonder. New par-

ents caught up in the wonder of the moment are likely to 'ooh' and 'aah' at the tiny miracle of design before them, which turns their thoughts - however briefly - to the someone who made it all possible.

By this time, the excitement has got a bit too much for poor old dad. He takes a walk outside to compose himself in the cool night air. He looks up and sees the stars twinkling like diamonds in the night sky. Wait a minute - isn't that another clue that somebody's out there? Just like a tiny baby's body, our planet too, and our solar system, our galaxy, even the universe beyond, are all filled with a sense of purpose and finely balanced design. Three centuries ago, an all-round scientist, called Leibniz, said our world was the best of all possible worlds. During the 300 years since, science has been finding out more and more reasons to support his view that the earth is exceptional. For a start, it's just the correct distance from the sun to keep temperatures on earth broadly-speaking in the range from 0 to 40 degrees which are the narrow limits required to sustain life as we know it. But the earth also spins on its axis at just the correct speed to even out temperature differences between day and night. And the length of the year suits our cycles of sowing and reaping. The earth is also just the correct size to allow it to retain its atmosphere, unlike the moon. And if our atmosphere had a lower or higher percentage of oxygen we'd either have a job getting a fire to light or a job putting it out! Above all our planet's a watery planet which is all-important, since without water no life of any kind could exist. Compared to the hot gases of the stars or the deeply frozen outer planets, we realize again just what a special place earth is. It's got to be a clue, hasn't it?

But even if we can put all this down to being just incredibly good luck, the next challenge we face, as we revel in our good fortune, is where our emotions come from, or come to think of it, where our conscience comes from too? Feelings of pity for others or concern at injustice could never have been essential, or even helpful, if we're thinking purely in terms of survival following some chance beginning. Some folks may say that what seems like an inbuilt sense of fair play or whatever has just come about by social conditioning. But doesn't that just push the problem back one stage further? If others have conditioned us, where did they get these ideas from in the first place?

What's more, and perhaps the most telling clue of all, is that humans always seem to have had a suspicion that there's a God of some sort. Ancient burial sites very often turn up some religious artefacts or show some attempt at preparation for an afterlife. Even the fact that our reflexes lead us to call out to God when we're in danger - or blame Him when things go wrong - seems to underline the likelihood of his existence. If there's no God, how come we've invented the idea?

QUESTION TWO: CAN WE REALLY KNOW WHAT GOD IS LIKE?

Living where we do we seem to get more than our fair share of spiders in the house, especially during summer. Sometimes they are large and obvious, conspicuously making their webs in the corners of rooms and windows. At other times, you can be in a room for hours before noticing them. Even if you were to check and clean a room quite carefully, it would be hard to be sure that there wasn't still a spider left in it somewhere. Now, if we can't even be sure of our answer to the question: 'Is there a spider in the room?', it would seem wise not to discount the possibility of God existing outside of our present state of knowledge.

It's like the story told of four blind brothers who were given the task of describing an elephant - an animal which they'd never encountered before. The first felt its tail and declared it to be like a rope. The second felt its body and described it as being like a wall. The third, who felt its trunk, disagreed again saying it was like a snake. While the fourth who had felt its leg thought they'd all got it wrong because it was more like a tree. That just illustrates for us what it's like to try to describe something that's beyond our ability to know, something outside our experience. And the huge God-shaped questions leave us way out of our depth. A little acquaintance with what the Bible says even might seem to lead to a confusing variety of impressions of God. If there's one thing we need to learn it's this: we can't resolve this

issue on our own - no more than a toddler can understand the answers to its repeated question: WHY?

Not only are we asking about something that's beyond us when we ask: 'Can we really know what God is like?', but in addition we've all got some kind of bias that goes against our better judgement. Let me illustrate what I mean. I remember once having an old car once which I'd patched up. When it came time for it to go in for its test of roadworthiness I was really hoping it would get a pass certificate. I was hoping against my better judgement, since the car probably wasn't all that safe. I was biased against accepting any view of the test inspector which was in conflict with my own self-interest - and anything that was going to cost me money to have it repaired properly was against my self-interest, or so I thought. In the same way, it's just as easy for us to be biased against accepting a view of God if it conflicts with our own self-interest. We may not always want a God who's fair - especially if we're conscious of our own shortcomings. That's just one possible bias against discovering the truth.

It's easy to be biased and it's easy to be cynical: one preacher visiting a school assembly to talk to the kids about God invited some questions afterwards. One lad near the back of the hall smirked as he asked: 'You ever seen God, mister?' The speaker paused for a moment, then said: 'No, but if I'd been around 2,000 years ago, I could have!' Jesus Christ did claim to be God. You might object and say: "Jesus never actually said the words: 'I am God.'" That's true, but imagine you're out driving one day and your car breaks down. You call George's Garage. Half an hour later a breakdown truck pulls up in front of you with George's Garage written over the cab. The mechanic's overalls and the bill you have to sign

both say the same: George's Garage. Very soon the car's fixed, but when you arrive home someone says to you: 'but did you ask the bloke if he was from George's Garage'? Well, no you hadn't, but everything about the man, in the circumstances, totally convinced you.

That's like the way in which Jesus effectively claimed to be God. What He did, and everything about Him, speaks for itself. What He did wasn't done in a corner. The works which were His credentials were very public. People said at the time that no one could do the things Jesus did unless He came from God. As one of His followers, Peter, could summarize: "Jesus of Nazareth, a Man attested by God to you by miracles, wonders, and signs which God did through Him in your midst, as you yourselves also know" (Acts 2:22). That last point is important - Peter could say to a hostile audience: "... as you yourselves know". Even they couldn't dispute the facts. Whereas legends like that of King Arthur were built up over centuries, Peter was talking to Christ's disbelieving contemporaries.

Jesus came to make God known to us. It was up to God to open the communication. It's because, in Jesus, God came as man, that we really can come to know God - something that's otherwise beyond our ability. And you could say the kind of character Jesus displayed - in even loving His enemies, for example - is all that we could ever wish God to be like.

His was the most attractive human life ever, the ultimate. Faced with that - coupled with His astounding claims - we must make a stark choice and say either He was in fact exactly who He claimed to be, or he was bad or mad because he was a deceiver.

Born a Jew, Jesus endorsed fully the commandment: “You shall worship the LORD your God, and Him only shall you serve” (Luke 4:8). But, yet, at times, for example after healing the blind man in John chapter 9, Jesus allowed people to worship Him (v.38). Put these two facts together and what else can you make of them, but that Jesus was, in fact, claiming to be God? On another occasion, Jesus caused quite a stir by publicly saying to someone: “Your sins are forgiven” (Mark 2:9). The Jewish religious authorities who were within earshot were shocked and they protested: “Who can forgive sins but God alone?” Now if someone sins against my neighbour, it’s not appropriate for me to grant forgiveness for I’m not the offended party. But the Jews knew from their book of psalms (Psalm 51:4) that all sin is ultimately against God. To them, by claiming to forgive a man’s past sins, Jesus was unmistakably claiming to be God.

What’s more, He was showing us what God is like: He’s forgiving. But it was while hanging on the cross on the hill of Calvary, outside Jerusalem, at the end of His life 2,000 years ago that Jesus said: “Father forgive them for they don’t know what they are doing”. This forgiveness was very costly. The story is told of how, during the Korean war, American forces enlisted all the extra help they could muster to recapture their strategic position on Triangle hill. After a successful mission, a few marines walked over to where one of their number was standing with tears rolling down his cheeks. He motioned to the corpse of a US army major lying at his feet. ‘He didn’t have to be here’, he said, ‘He didn’t belong on this hill’. Jesus Christ didn’t have to be here, He most certainly didn’t belong on Skull hill among the crim-

inals there. But He was there! History and the Bible tell us so. And He died for our sins, the Bible adds.

QUESTION THREE: HOW CAN WE BE EXPECTED TO BELIEVE WHAT HAPPENED SO LONG AGO?

Previously, we said the choice about Jesus was between considering him to be Lord or else a lunatic or liar. But I want now to clear up another possibility: could He have been a legend? Well, certainly not in the same sense as Robin Hood, because there's precious little evidence that he ever existed. It's not like that with Jesus. In His case, historians who were around in the first century - both Jewish and Roman - people like Josephus and Tacitus - give clear support from outside the Bible that Jesus did exist as an historical character.

So Jesus existed, but was He all that was claimed? We're familiar today with what are known as 'spin-doctors': people who project a certain image. Was Jesus simply a larger-than-life personality whose PR got out of control? Were modest and explainable exploits simply exaggerated out of all proportion? Is it really credible that first century spin-doctors took the working-class son of Mary and Joseph and spun him into the awesome Son of God? Could the Jesus of Christian belief have been very different from the Jesus of history?

How do you check out things that happened in the past? Suppose I say I had a meal out in a restaurant last week, and you said to me: "Prove it!" How do I prove it, at least to your reasonable satisfaction? It's like what happens in a courtroom. I need

to give you legal and historical evidence in support of my claim, and then you have to judge whether it's reasonable or not. So I could show you my receipt; I could ask you to contact the friend I had dinner with; I could possibly take you to a shirt in the laundry basket and say 'go and analyze these soup stains, and compare recipes!' Notice the kind of evidence - eyewitness evidence - the friend; written evidence - the receipt; and circumstantial evidence - the stained shirt. Now let's try to do exactly the same with the claim of Christianity.

Well, for a start this whole Christianity thing wasn't something dreamed up in a backroom somewhere without witnesses 2000 years ago. Jesus received a tremendous amount of attention. The things which He did weren't done in a corner. We're talking about a national phenomenon. And, what's more, very shortly people were putting pen to papyrus and getting it all down in writing. People who earn their living by studying these things argue that the gospels - that's the 4 biographies of Jesus' life - were written during the lifetime of people who knew Jesus personally, and certainly within 60 years of the events themselves. Sixty years - at first that might seem like quite a long time, but don't forget that writers like Matthew and John were themselves eyewitnesses and others like Mark and Luke got their information from interviewing eyewitnesses.

And for these eyewitnesses, the dramatic events they were reporting would have been etched on their memory, for we're not talking of everyday events but about very exceptional happenings. I remember doing an experiment with a group of 50 young people. Very few of them could tell me what they'd eaten for dinner a few days before, but nearly all of them could still remember

in vivid detail exactly what they were doing when they first heard the news of Princess Diana's death. In the same way that it's true for us today, those dramatic events which Jesus' eyewitnesses had personally experienced would have been etched in their memories - precisely because they were dramatic. In fact much more so for them than with us, because the medium of storytelling was then the television of their day.

Having thought about the testimony of the witnesses, eyewitnesses of unforgettable events who wrote it down quickly, we can now turn to look at the quality of the written evidence - the Bible itself. We can notice one thing about those who did the writing, they didn't always cast themselves in a good light in what they wrote. There's the ring of truth about it as we read of them writing about their own misunderstanding of Jesus' teachings, their display of ugly pride among themselves, their running away, denying and deserting their Leader, then cowering away in fear. They admit to initial and total disbelief after the crucifixion of Jesus. The place they gave to women in the resurrection account was extraordinary. Did you know that there, in the 1st century, the testimony of women wasn't acceptable in a court of law? So why use them as witnesses, if it wasn't simply because that's exactly how it was? What's more, I can't imagine anyone being prepared to die for something they'd just made up - but yet many of these writers became martyrs.

And soon hundreds of copies of what they'd written went into circulation. Nowadays none of the original writings of the New Testament books and letters still exist. The same, of course, holds true for all ancient literature - the originals have long since gone. So it's worth asking: 'How do the people who study these things

decide that ancient copies are trustworthy - things like Julius Caesar's reports of his Gallic Wars, for example?

Two of the main things they do are work out how many copies there are in existence and then work out how big the gap in time is between the oldest copy and when the original would've been written. The more copies that exist, and the smaller the gap in time between the oldest copy and the original, then the more trustworthy the writings are reckoned to be. Take the case we've mentioned about Caesar's reports of his Gallic Wars. Today we have about ten copies and these date to about 1,000 years after his death. However, historians still believe them trustworthy. Now compare the evidence for the Bible record of Jesus. Thankfully, lots of really old copies of what was written still survive - there are literally thousands of copies made from the original and dating back to only about 100 years after Christ's death. If any ancient record can be judged by these standards to be authentic and an accurate record of events, then it has just got to be the Bible in all that it has to tell us about the life of Jesus.

But for millions of people in the world today, the best evidence for believing the story of Jesus, and all that goes with it, is something else. For millions, the best evidence for the Bible is simply the fact that it works. A friend of mine has just passed her driving test. To do that, of course, as well as being able to control the car, she had to make sure she knew pretty well everything that's contained in the Highway Code, the instruction book for users of the roads. Just imagine for a moment what would happen if that particular book came with lots of mistakes in it. Road-signs could be misunderstood and various rules we agree to follow when driving could be disrupted. We'd be facing chaos on the

roads. If the instruction manual was faulty, it simply wouldn't work, it wouldn't be much use in keeping us safe on the roads. Now compare that with the Bible. Today, and for centuries, all kinds of people all over the world have put the message of Jesus to the test and found that it works. They've discovered a richer experience of living, and are enjoying a peace, joy and contentment they never knew before. Life on the basis of Jesus' message has proved to be more fulfilling and rewarding than it had ever been before for so many people.

And archaeologists have done their bit too in checking out the Bible's record. Sir William Ramsay, one of history's greatest archaeologists, devoted 25 years of his life to using archaeology to disprove, or at least discredit, the Bible book of the Acts of the Apostles which describes early Christianity. In the end his conclusion was that its writer, the doctor Luke, was among the first rank of historians and there was every reason to trust his record of events, events which formed the sequel to the crucifixion of Jesus Christ. Now if the Bible passes all the tests which we can reasonably apply, and if we're satisfied, on a purely factual and historical basis, that it's authentic and trustworthy, then surely now it's worth considering its claim to be God's communication to us. Near the end of the fourth Gospel we read: "And truly Jesus did many other signs in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name" (John 20:30-31).

QUESTION FOUR: THE RESURRECTION – YOU’RE KIDDING, RIGHT?

I was interested to read the words of British journalist Mark Tully. He had been revisiting the scene of Jesus’ life to interview people for a BBC TV series on Jesus. He ended with his own view in which he said Jesus ‘taught in strange riddles. He didn’t convince his fellow Jews. And he didn’t overthrow Rome. From that failure I have come to what, for me, is the most important conclusion of all. That the hardest ... article of Christian faith, the resurrection, must have happened. If there had been no miracle after Jesus’ death, there would’ve been no grounds for faith... No resurrection ... no church.’

But since you may still be wondering if it really can be true, let’s try to imagine what all the other possibilities are. Perhaps the first idea that occurs to you is that perhaps Jesus never actually died in the first place. Could it be that in the cool of the tomb He revived? Well that would mean that the execution crew of Roman soldiers that day, with the centurion in charge of them, somehow got it wrong. But they wouldn’t have dared to leave anything to chance, not in this politically-charged case. They were experienced professionals; they knew their job well, grim though it was. Although they didn’t feel the need to break Jesus’ legs – as they were so sure that He was already well and truly dead - they did certify Him dead by thrusting a spear into His side and drawing blood and water in a separated mass: the evidence of death.

Next, Joseph of Arimathea took charge of the burial in typical Jewish fashion. After the body was washed, it was wrapped foot to head in linen grave clothes. Then, because it was the custom, what they did was apply aloe and myrrh - a really gooey tree resin. In this way, the grave-clothes were in a very real sense glued on the body. With the spices these grave-clothes weighed as much as a hundred pounds (John 19:39)! And then, of course, there was the small matter of a two-ton stone rolled against the mouth of the rock-hewn tomb, which the authorities had sealed and guarded with soldiers. With so many people that day wanting Him dead and buried, and with all the precautions that were taken, first to establish death, and then to secure the tomb itself, it's simply beyond belief that Jesus somehow revived and escaped.

Okay then, someone might say: 'But isn't it possible that the followers of Jesus who reported the empty tomb on the third day, the women folk, actually went to the wrong tomb - after all, they were in a state of shock? They went to a different tomb by mistake and it so happened that that tomb was empty. Think about it - how could anyone mistake the tomb of someone who was really important to them, especially when that tomb had been sealed and further identified by having an armed guard posted at it! In any case, they recognised the grave-clothes lying just as they'd left them in the now empty tomb.

OK, let's suppose the body was stolen, then. If the culprits were supposed to be Jesus' disciples, then they'd first have needed to overpower the guards. The authorities had taken effective measures against exactly this kind of thing being attempted. But even if you were to persist in thinking this might still have happened,

what we would then have to believe is that the disciples would later be martyred for something that they knew full well was a lie and a hoax. Someone might die for something false if they sincerely believe it to be true. But that's not the situation here. What we're having to suppose in this theory is that the very people who fabricated the evidence gave their lives for their own made-up lie - not very realistic.

And if either the Jews or the Romans had contrived the disappearance of the body of Jesus, then at any time afterwards, they could have killed off this annoying new upstart religion by simply producing the body and parading it down the main street of Jerusalem. But what possible motive would they have for stealing the body in the first place?

There again, you might say it was all in the mind of these early disciples. It was mere wish-fulfilment, or perhaps it was an illusion - you know those alleged appearances of Jesus in resurrection. After all, there are some weird enough stories around today that someone somewhere knows someone who thinks they saw Elvis on some porch in Hawaii. Doesn't fit the evidence either. The disciples don't seem to have had the remotest thought of any such thing as resurrection, despite the fact Jesus had given them clues earlier. After the shock of Jesus' being taken and crucified, they were in disarray and depression. Without any prospect of anything beyond, they went through with performing the full Jewish burial ritual. Yes, they really expected then that Jesus was going to stay dead. When the news of His resurrection broke and He began to appear to them, they were slow to leave their state of disbelief. Nor were Jesus' resurrection appearances fleeting, isolated visions claimed only to have been seen by a few. No, with-

in a few weeks hundreds of people had seen Him alive. But you know what the most significant thing of all for me is? It's the transformation that then took place in the lives of these previously demoralized followers.

At first, they thought Jesus had been defeated. It reminds me of how Wellington's victory over Napoleon at Waterloo was announced in England on the 18th June, 1815. It was by a system of flag signals from the tower of Winchester Cathedral. The message was spelt out letter by letter. Onlookers read WELLINGTON DEFEATED... before a dense fog rolled in and they lost sight of the flags. The incomplete message spread gloom and despair all the way to London. When the fog finally lifted all the flags were now visible and the full message read: WELLINGTON DEFEATED THE ENEMY. The good news spread like wildfire and lifted the people from gloom to gladness. That story closely parallels the story of the great battle that took place on the cross 2,000 years ago when Jesus Christ endured 3 hours of suffering and then death, while bearing the punishment for our sins. From Friday evening gloom descended over Jesus followers. As they dealt with His body the message really seemed to them to be reading: JESUS DEFEATED. But come Sunday morning the gloom had lifted - there was the empty tomb: the full message was JESUS DEFEATED THE ENEMY.

That wasn't only good news then - it is for us now! - for He was dying to pay for our sins. "The wages of sin is death" but Jesus Christ has defeated death. God invites us to share the victory of His Son. How? He "commands all ... to repent, because He has appointed a day on which He will judge the world in righteousness by the Man whom He has ordained. He has given assurance

of this to all by raising Him from the dead.” God gives fair warning then, and the opportunity to escape if we turn to Him and “Confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, [and] you will be saved” (Romans 10:9).

Lawyers who are in the business of studying evidence declare themselves satisfied with it. A Professor of Modern History says: ‘... I know of no one fact in the history of mankind which is proved by better and fuller evidence of every sort, to the understanding of a fair enquirer, than that Christ died and rose again from the dead.’ This evidence is demanding a verdict from you.

QUESTION FIVE: WHY IS THE WORLD IN A MESS? AND HOW COME JESUS GOT EXECUTED ANYWAY?

In 1989, the Exxon Valdez oil tanker ran aground in Prince William Sound, off Alaska. Within hours the beautiful snowy-white coastline of this previously unspoilt wilderness was transformed by a coating of thick black sludge as 232,000 barrels of oil spilled out from the hold of the stricken tanker. But there was worse to come. Three-quarters of the salmon population that normally migrated to the area didn't return the following season. Thousands of seabirds and otters died in this ecological disaster. A place that was originally beautiful had been spoilt by a human blunder.

Can you imagine gardens that never grew weeds? Or streets that were always safe? A world where nations were at peace and resources were happily shared? A world without racism, ageism without abuse of any kind? Too good to be true? Well that's how it was meant to be. If you've been following through these pages, you'll have already thought through issues like whether God exists or not; and what He's really like anyway - and also considered the evidence for Jesus, His death and resurrection. I hope you agree that as we look more closely at it, the more reasonable and believable the positive answers become. That there really is a God - a God who's made Himself known in and through Jesus Christ and communicated with us in the Bible. But it's only reasonable to ask: 'If that's the case, then why is this world now

in such a mess, and how come Jesus ended up dying like He did anyway?

What went wrong? The answer is 'we did'. From the beginning of the creation God made (them) male and female (Mark 10:6). Everything in the garden was lovely, until our first parents chose to go their way, not God's. The result was much more than an ecological disaster. The original beautiful world was spoilt. Spoilt by human blunder. The key word the Bible uses in describing this is 'sin'. It tells us that 'through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin' (Romans 5:12). 'Sin' is what caused the mess in the first place and continues to do so. And to sin is to refuse to live the way God intended for us.

Our sinfulness is our habitually choosing to go our own way, not God's way. Let's try to explain that further. We've probably all had the experience at some time or other of doing our supermarket shopping with a shopping trolley that seemed to have a mind of its own. You want to go down the fish aisle; it starts to head off towards the soft drinks. The harder you push your way the more it seems determined to go its own way. Of course, you realise it's doing this because it's got a buckled wheel. Whoops, now it's gone and collided with that display made of tins of baked beans, knocked a few over, and dented them. It just seems to be one bump, one mess, one embarrassment after another. Why? Because, with that buckled wheel, it's in the nature of the thing to go the wrong way. You just can't do anything with it, any more than we can do anything with our own corrupt nature. It's in our nature to go our own way, rather than God's. Time after time, that spoils our lives as we become aware of our self-centredness,

our uncharitable attitude, our meanness ... or whatever. Remember though it's not really a list of things, it's the state we're in.

Because of this condition of ours, we can never match up to what God requires of us. Remember the last time you went into a shop for a new pair of shoes? Chances are you were still feeling pretty good about the old pair, although you felt it was probably about time you had a new pair - just for best. Yes, these old shoes weren't too bad yet. 'You should see the state of some peoples' shoes', you're busy thinking to yourself. Just then the assistant brings out a shiny brand new pair. All at once you can see how shabby your old pair have become. Most of the time perhaps we feel pretty good about ourselves. Compared to others, 'we're okay, thank you very much.' But God has a different standard: it's His 'new shoes' standard. It's one to match who He is and what he's created. It's against that standard of absolute moral goodness, and purity, and perfection that we're measured. We were trying to understand what sin really is. 'Sin' is about not matching up, it's all about missing the grade.

So 'sin' is the state we're in, and it's our failure to match up to God's standards, but, obviously, sin does involve breaking God's rules: doing 'our own thing' instead of doing what God asks us. God's rules are not of the 'Keep off the grass' variety - but they're designed with our own best interests in view. Nowhere are they expressed better than in the Ten Commandments. Most of us know some of them at least: don't steal, don't lie, don't commit adultery. The problem is we tend to treat them as Ten Suggestions by doing things the way we want. Well, that's sin, and when we break God's wise rules we end up damaging ourselves.

Our sinfulness entices us to choose our own way, and when we do our own thing in breaking God's rules we end up spoiling and damaging ourselves. Picture it like the oil-spill from the Exxon Valdez that we began by thinking about. But the worse thing is that sin separates us from God. The Bible puts it like this: "Yours sins have separated you from your God; your sins have hidden his face from you" (Isaiah 59:1,2). Like oil and water, our sinfulness and God's purity don't mix. As a stinking mess offends our nostrils, our sin is just such an affront to God, to His very nature.

I heard of someone who was very proud of his lawn. A neighbour offered him some surplus 'Weed & Feed', and thinking it could only make a good lawn better, he applied it to the whole of his lawn. He was horrified as large brown patches started appearing all over his precious lawn. You see, unlike him, the 'Weed & Feed' could tell the difference between green grass and green weeds! And one day we're due to stand before our Maker, the Judge who knows the difference between what looks good and what really is good.

But if you picture God as being like some over-eager traffic warden just itching to put the wheel clamps on you, someone who's happiest when making people miserable, then the really good news is you've got it totally wrong! The reason I can be sure you've got it wrong is the death of Jesus. The importance of Jesus' death for each one of us is all bound up with who He was and what He'd come to do. To help you understand what Jesus did for you, let me first tell you the true story of two brothers in San Francisco.

The younger brother ran with a street gang. One night during a fight the knife in his hand met the soft flesh of a rival. Death was swift. The young man ran home to swap his blood-stained clothes for clean ones, then he disappeared into the night. The older brother arrived home soon afterwards to find the clothes lying where they'd been abandoned. The sound of police sirens was in the air. By the time the police knocked on the door, he, the older brother, was wearing the stained clothing as though it was his own. He was charged, tried and eventually executed for murder. During all this the younger brother witnessed the love of his older brother - who died in his place and paid his penalty. Finally, it became more than he could bear. Overcome with remorse, he turned himself in and made a full confession. But the police sent him away. There could be no charges because his brother's death had satisfied the demands of the law. And that's what God has done for us. He's dealt with our sin in a way that's both just and loving, by taking our punishment upon Himself. He came in person as Jesus to do exactly that at the cross - and that's why His death is unique.

It took a lot to clean up the pollution in Prince William Sound, where the Exxon Valdez ran aground and spilled its cargo of oil. The bill for the clean-up operation was two billion dollars. Sin is a far worse pollutant in our world, and the cost of our cleansing was the priceless sacrifice of Jesus on the cross. Jesus' death was God's plan to rescue us from the consequences of going our own way. On the basis of that death, God's forgiveness is now freely on offer to all who will turn from sin to Him and respond to God's love in simple, personal faith.

QUESTION SIX: BUT WHY SO MANY RELIGIONS? AND WHO WANTS BORING OLD RULES?

If you've ever been out driving and mistakenly got yourself off the route you thought you knew, you soon discover that all roads don't lead to London, or whatever smaller place you're trying to get to. And yet there's a rumour around that says: 'all religions lead to God'. In the supermarket of world religions, there are certainly plenty to choose from: all attractively packaged and advertising themselves as a way to get to God. Sometimes you hear people say that these different religions are all complementary to each other in some way - just coming at things from different angles. They can all accommodate each other, or so they say. But sometimes in a supermarket it's best to read the small print on the label so as to be sure of what's inside. One famous brand name says that if you don't see their name on the outside of the box, then what's inside really will be quite different from their own product.

Now if we were to look more closely at some of the world's different religions, we'd find some that accepted there were any number of gods; some that don't seem to go in much for the idea of a god at all, but appear to be more like a philosophy for getting through life; and still others that say there is a god, but you better not expect to ever be able to get to know him. Beneath the surface, they're all very different. And in contrast to those points we've featured, the claim of Christianity is that there is a God, just one God, and we really can get to know Him.

So just by looking at a few of the different religious ideas around, it's easy to see that they can't be made to sit comfortably together, nor can they be combined with Christianity without there being basic contradictions. The differences really are much more than just in the packaging. Well, does it really matter, some folks may say. Even if there are basic contradictions, all that really matters surely is that you're sincere in whatever it is you believe. Which reminds me of the bloke who had a dispute with one of his colleagues over the spelling of the brand name of some foreign food product. His colleague went out to the local supermarket, bought a sample from the shelf, and came and showed it to him. The chap, recognising he'd lost the argument, commented afterwards that he was disappointed that the spelling on the labelling had not somehow rearranged itself to accommodate his sincerity! In other words, we can be sincerely right, but we can just as easily be sincerely wrong. Like those people who appear to sincerely believe the holocaust never happened or that Hitler was a good man.

There are lots of very sincere people practising many different religions which tell them to do different things if they want to get God on their side. The sort of things they might do are: praying a certain number of times a day or not eating anything for a given time. Again, there's a basic difference between this and the teaching of Christianity, which says is not about anything we can do, but all about what God Himself has done for us. We were thinking about that last time, when seeing the death of Jesus as God's rescue plan for us.

While we're on the difference between Christianity and religions, we might just say that religions could survive with or with-

out their religious leader or founder, since it's the teaching of these religions that their adherents follow. Christianity, too, has its teaching, of course, but the difference is that a Christian, basically, is a follower of a Person, with that person being Jesus Christ, of course. Take away Jesus - prove somehow that He's an impostor - and the whole thing is worthless, certainly as far as securing a place in heaven is concerned. Having mentioned Jesus Christ, let's check out the astounding claim He made one day. It's recorded for us in our Bibles in the Gospel by John chapter 14 and verse 6: Jesus said ... "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me."

Jesus tells us that there is a road that leads to God. Let's just take that on board for a moment. That means that God - God the Father - is reachable. He really is knowable. What's more Jesus actually spoke about 'the way' to God. Not many ways, not all ways leading to God, but just one way. And, that way, He claimed, was Himself, when He said: "I am the way, the truth, and the life." You'll notice how Jesus linked 'the way' with 'the truth'. There's no mention of sincerity here, only truth, the real article. I suppose someone might say: 'Wasn't that arrogant of Jesus to claim to the way to God?' Let me ask you a question. Is it arrogant for someone to claim 2 plus 2 is 4? What's wrong with 5 or 7? You see, the issue is truth. And if Jesus could truthfully say: "I am the way, the truth and the life, no one comes to the Father except through me", then that settles it as a matter of fact.

Now what is it that makes Jesus so different? First of all, He doesn't ask us to earn points in order to qualify for heaven by doing this or that; no, He tells us that He's paid the price all by Himself. That's a major difference. Only because Jesus has died

for us on the cross - and if we've trusted in Him - can we come to the Father. Secondly, while religions tell us how to live, Jesus gives us the power to live a new life. And not only has Jesus died to pay for our debt of sins, not only does He give us the power to live for God in a way that really satisfies, but thirdly, He offers us a living relationship with God. Not just religious rules, but a real personal relationship with God. You see, God is a personal God, one God in three persons. God exists in a relationship. And we can only know Him through having a spiritual relationship with Him. Christianity is basically about relationship, not rules.

Perhaps it might help to think of it this way. If you've ever been married, on your wedding day you would've been asked: 'will you take this man to be your husband, or will you take this woman to be your wife ... to love and to cherish?' Marriage is to be all about a love relationship. You weren't asked, for example: 'will you take this person if they promise to wash the dishes, or iron the clothes, or be the bread-winner?', or anything else like that. Again we're talking about relationship, not rules. Marriage isn't about rules, it's about relationship. The Christian's commitment in faith to God is like that. By faith we enter into a new life, into a spiritual relationship with God which is based on love. Of course there are rules, just as there are basic ground-rules in the best of marriages, but these are things we're motivated to do because of the love we have for the one we're in the relationship with. 'I will', Jesus says to us, 'I will be your Saviour and Lord', but we for our part must say to Him, in turn, 'I will - I will take you as my personal Saviour'.

But I hear you say: 'What about those in all the different religions? How does God view them?' Well, the God I know, the

God of the Bible, is fair and the words of the Bible reassure me again here: 'Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?' It's none of my business really to wonder about others who may or may not have understood, or even heard, the message of Christianity. I can safely leave the issue to God, but what about you - now that you've heard and, I trust, understood. Have you taken the only way to God that there is? It's the way proclaimed in the Bible, when Jesus said: "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me."

QUESTION SEVEN: IF GOD IS SO WONDERFUL, WHY DOES LIFE HURT SO MUCH?

When gunmen enter a school - whether it's the Infant School at Dunblane in Scotland or Columbine high school in Denver, USA - and shoot at children and leave behind them a scene that eyewitnesses have compared to some medieval depiction of hell, then it can understandably seem to many people that God has gone 'AWOL' and some naked evil has taken over the reins of the universe.

The photographic image of the tiny corpse of one year old Baylee Almon cradled in the arms of fire-fighter Chris Fields as he carried her away from the Oklahoma bombing still chokes me. My son, Michael, was about the same age when the attack took place on that US government building. It's not difficult to understand why, to many people, there's apparently plenty of evidence for the absence of a loving God. And we haven't yet mentioned genocide in Rwanda, so-called ethnic cleansing in the Balkans, hurricanes in Central America, life-destroying drought in the Sudan and floods in Bangladesh. We live with the media images of the victims, and we can't solve it just by flicking to another channel. For as you scan your own address list of friends and relatives you're sure to be reminded of pain closer to home in the shape of illness, accidents, family break-ups ... Pain unites them all, making the question seem reasonable: 'If God is so wonderful, why does life hurt so much?'

When my daughter was three years old, sometimes she'd present me with a colouring she'd done from a colouring book. The colours went all over the lines and usually the only way to make any sense of what it was, was to start by looking for any part of the original printed outlines that were still visible. In the same way, any investigation of the unknown needs to begin by starting with what's known. What conclusions have we come to in this series as we've faced up to life's big issues? Is God really someone who enjoys inflicting pain on those who can't fight back? Or is this world, as Van Gogh put it, 'one of his sketches that turned out badly'? That wouldn't fit with what we've already seen in Jesus, would it? So let's assume as our starting point that God does care very much - even if you don't feel it just now - and see where it leads us.

After all, a lot of the suffering we see around us is down to ourselves. Someone must have left the doors open on the car deck of the Herald of Free Enterprise, someone's responsible for planting the vicious landmines that are blowing childrens' legs off in various parts of the world right now, someone bungled to bring about the world's worst nuclear disaster so far at Chernobyl.

But sure, God could stop all this foolishness, just like a mother might snatch away scissors from the hands of a toddler before he hurts himself. God could deny us human choice, but who would want to be robbed of that basic dignity of humanness? We can't have it both ways. God could catch the bullet from the gunman's weapon, could take out all murderers, remove from society all rapists, all child abusers, all who have ever lost their temper, who've ever told lies or cheated - ah, but that's the problem,

where does the line get drawn? And, more to the point, how can I escape?

The Titanic, before it collided with an iceberg and sank killing more than 1,500 people, had received repeated radio warnings from another ship, but the we'll-do-it-our-way crew told the would-be helpers to 'shut up'. Disaster could've been avoided if only those instructions had been followed. That's been the way of the world. Suffering wasn't in the original script, we had a choice.

It's a popular misconception that there is no room for the existence of both suffering and God. But, as we've mentioned, that's to ignore the fact that God gave us freewill. As the LONDON TIMES leader column said the day after the Scottish infant school shooting: 'Christ was born among innocent slaughter and died on the Cross to pay the cost of our terrible freedom - a freedom by which we can do the greatest good or the greatest evil'. Any illustration is imperfect, but we might be helped just a little to think of God as being no more responsible for suffering in this world than careful parents are responsible for the fall of their child to whom they have just given the present of a new bicycle.

There's even a sense in which pain is good. If you think for a moment of how your body feels, pain can signal to us that's something's wrong and it can be very helpful in the diagnosis. If you've ever had the experience of taking a hurt child into hospital, and had any part to play in physically restraining him while he's given an injection - an injection that's he's struggling against because he's frightened and he knows it'll hurt even more - then you'll have felt awful, I'm sure, just knowing that he thinks that you, his lov-

ing mum or dad, let's say, that you are actually making his suffering worse. 'How could you?', his eyes seem to be shouting. But, however traumatic it is for you, you understand better that he can, that the pain of that injection is necessary for his eventual well-being.

Maybe, just maybe, that can help us, if we think of ourselves as like the child, and God as the one who cares for our well-being in the longer term - cares so much that He's even prepared to use pain when necessary. The author C.S. Lewis, who lost his wife to cancer early on in their marriage, put it like this: 'God whispers to us in our pleasures, speaks in our conscience, but shouts in our pain.' That may not be the reason for your pain, but many would say they'd be poorer without it. But even if God can use it for good purposes, He Himself still does know what pain feels like. When Pan Am flight 103 was blown out of the sky in 1988 by a suspected terrorist bomb over another Scottish town, Lockerbie, a reporter on the scene for a BBC Radio 4 interview turned against the local minister: 'Where is your God now? What comfort can you offer these people?' I shall never forget his reply: 'Our God has joined us in suffering'.

Yes, in the death of Jesus, He certainly has. In my poetry collection, I find the words of Edward Shillito helpful. He wrote, while viewing the destruction of the Great War: 'to our wounds only God's wounds can speak and not a god has wounds' except He who 'did stumble to a throne', even 'Jesus of the scars'.

Pain and suffering is at the heart of the Christian message, but it's not only human pain: it's also the pain of God. What do we mean by that? Firstly, God's anger against sin causes pain. Com-

pare our feelings of revulsion and righteous indignation upon hearing the news of Dunblane. Then there is the fact that God loves the sinner whose sin He hates. Every parent has known this tension when disciplining their child: the 'this hurts me more than you' syndrome. And, of course, the physical pain of the Cross experience, where Jesus died to pay the price of human rebellion - rebellion which has brought nothing but misery upon ourselves. God is the God of Calvary. He chooses to empathize and to join us in suffering by a deliberate act, so that He might offer us forgiveness for our sins and a place in an unending future when pain and suffering will be a thing of the past.

God has responded to a world of suffering. He could not have identified Himself more strongly than through the cross. If we meet Him there, as He wants us to, He offers not debating points, but practical support and resources.

QUESTION EIGHT: IS THERE AN AFTERLIFE?

Unless in every conversation you've ever had, death's been treated as the ultimate taboo subject, you'll know as well as I do people's different opinions about what happens after we die. They range from those who hold to the view that says 'when you're dead you're dead'. El Finito. No wake-up call ever. Then there are those who think we come back here again in some shape of form depending on how well we did first time round. And then there are those who do believe we have some conscious experience somewhere else after death - even if their culture regards heaven as the happy hunting ground or whatever.

How can we know anything about an afterlife? While some draw support from the sense the ancients had of an afterlife; more recently some have cited the strange case of near death experiences ("NDEs"), in which heart attack victims have the sensation of either floating upwards or being pulled downwards. Whatever you make of these, we really need to be considering what Jesus said on this subject. Having thought through His claim to be the Son of God, what He has to say about life after death is all-important.

To a man being crucified next to Him, Jesus said 'you'll be with Me'. But He also spoke of the need for pre-registration - the need for our names to be written in heaven while we're still alive here. (And by the way, the way the Bible describes the hereafter it's anything but eternal boredom!) But when Jesus said all these things He wasn't talking to just anybody, He was talking to people who were following Him. We can't assume it's for everybody.

The Bible tells us this: “it is appointed for [men] us to die once, but after this the judgement.” In the rural communities where He taught Jesus likened the judgement that we must be faced after death to separating sheep from goats or separating wheat from chaff.

It wasn't because the sheep were better behaved than the goats that they were to be preferred, instead it was a question of what they were by nature: they were sheep not goats. So it is with us. God doesn't look to see how many sins we've done or who's not done too many really bad ones, but whether or not we've been forgiven.

Have you ever been warned to take a waterproof, but you said 'Oh, I'll be all right!' And home you came soaked to the skin and dripping wet. Who could you blame but yourself? You'd been warned. It definitely wasn't the rain's fault you got wet. And neither can it be God's fault if our sin keeps us out of heaven one day. We've been warned. Jesus spoke a whole lot about the judgement our sins deserve. Just as we once rejected the waterproof and got wet; if we reject the cover of forgiveness available to us through Jesus' death, our sin will keep us out of heaven. Who will blame but ourselves - for not having believed?

But what is faith or believing? It's not as one little boy put it: 'believing in something you know isn't true'. That's not at all what faith is. Nor is it like a placebo pill, simply a psychological device - true faith is something with a realistic foundation. We probably use the word in at least three different ways. There's the run-of-the-mill kind of faith, for example the kind we all employ every time we sit down - we believe the chair will take our weight. But

that's not Bible faith, nor are we thinking about the sort of faith that millions of people appear to have in the lottery - one of these times they just might win it, but statistically it's more of a forlorn hope. What we're talking about is saving faith, like leaping into the arms of the fire-fighter to escape the burning building. That's the kind of faith that transforms your life.

Above all, it's what we place our faith in that matters. My friend Joanne's mum does parachute jumps for charity. Imagine she had a choice of which parachute to use: there are three to choose from - one with blood stains all over it, labelled 'second hand, previous owner deceased'; another packed by a group of sweetly smiling Girl Guides who say they've done it in order to raise funds; or an expertly packed parachute being offered to you by your professional instructor. I think I know what you'd choose. I know I wouldn't swap a little bit of faith in the right equipment for a whole lorry-load of faith in the wrong equipment.

I think we should also say that faith involves action. I've read the illustration of someone whose hands and face were caked in mud and they were saying 'I believe in soap'. Ask what they mean and they explain: I believe soap is a good thing, much to be admired. I believe soap has made a great difference in world history. It has a lot to offer. I believe soap would get me clean if I were to use it." That's a silly example, perhaps. But I do know people who say: "I believe in Christianity. I believe Jesus Christ was a good man, his teaching is really much to be admired. There's no question but that the influence of Christianity has shaped world history. It has a lot to offer people as a point of view." But that's not saving faith in Jesus Christ and His sacrifice for you!

The best illustration I know of the type of action God's looking for is a Bible one. It comes from a story by Jesus in Luke's Gospel chapter 15. The one in which a young man demands his inheritance money early and then goes away and blows it all. When he's reduced to feeding pigs, he realizes his need, decides to ask for forgiveness, turns from his past mess, and returns home to throw himself on father's mercy. His father receives him and he accepts the welcome, with the relationship restored. Those are the simple steps to putting saving faith into action: to realize our need because of sin which has broken our relationship with God; to decide to ask God for forgiveness; to turn from the mess of our past; to throw ourselves on God's mercy; to accept His welcome through Jesus back into a relationship with Him.

But lots of folks wonder if it can really be that simple. We know this world we live in. There's no such thing as a free lunch, we say. But, let me tell you, this is the way it's got to be. We must never think we could even so much as contribute to the cost of our forgiveness. Have you heard of the world's least successful kite-flyer? He was a Californian whose kite hit a high voltage power cable. It caught fire and came crashing down to earth where it started a fire that damaged 385 homes, 740 acres of brush, and caused 3,000 people to be evacuated. The bill? Twenty million dollars. Now what does your average guy do? Reach for his chequebook - no I don't think so; nor is it realistic to offer to come every weekend with your paintbrush and tools. Meeting that kind of debt is overwhelmingly beyond us. In terms of our spiritual bankruptcy, we're in the same kind of mess.

QUESTION NINE: SO HOW DO I BECOME A CHRISTIAN?

The Christian message of Good News is a message about accepting the truth about four things – God, sin, Jesus Christ, repenting & believing:

1. News about God...

... that He's our creator (Acts 17:24) - and so we owe our very existence to him

... that He's all-knowing; all-powerful and, of course, we find ourselves totally in his hands

... a gracious & loving being who will by no means leave the guilty unpunished (Exodus 34:6,7)

... having famously revealed His perfect standards for us in the 10 commandments (Exodus 20:1-17)

2. News about sin...

... that it's more than mere shortcomings as judged by our own, or society's, best standards

... and more than merely something we have a conscience about

... rather, true conviction of sin is an awareness:

... of our specific sins (Psalm 51:1-4)

... of our inherent sinfulness (Psalm 51:5,6)

... of our wrong relationship with God (Psalm 51:7-10)

... in short, it is seeing ourselves as God sees us; totally corrupted; exposed to his wrath; and needing to be created anew.

3. News about Jesus Christ...

... as one now living

... having once come from God into humanity to die for us

... his crucifixion actually being his work of salvation as predicted in the Bible

... that we are to 'believe in the Lord Jesus' (Acts 16:31 - to receive the blessings his death has secured)

4. News about repenting & believing...

... Repenting - more than regret about our past, a far-reaching change of heart & mind leading to a true disciple spirit (Luke 9:23)

... Believing - more than optimism for our future, entrusting ourselves to, and resting fully on, the promises of God's grace (John 3:16)

Have you responded?

By acknowledging:

... You have sinned (Romans 3:23)

... You can do nothing to make yourself acceptable to God (Ephesians 2:8,9)

... Jesus Christ, God's Son, did what you couldn't do
- He paid the price of your forgiveness before a holy God by His death on the cross (1 Corinthians 15:3)

... Your readiness to repent and receive by faith Jesus Christ as your personal saviour (Acts 20:21)

“For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.” (The Gospel by John 3:16 NIV)

QUESTION TEN: WHAT HAPPENS AFTER I BECOME A CHRISTIAN?

God wants us to continue in the discipleship pathway. Acts 2:41,42 clearly show what have been called the “seven steps” that all the early Christians did and practiced. The first three steps are one-time acts and the last four steps are intended to be lifelong for all Christians in a church of God.

Step 1. They received His word

... The word preached: the word of the cross

... By receiving the word in faith, they received Jesus Christ as their personal Saviour

... All that’s required for an eternally secure salvation

Step 2. They were baptised

... As an expression of their love to the Lord (see John 14:15; Matthew 28:19; Acts 10:48)

... As a picture of death and resurrection (by immersion); so to count themselves as dead to sin and alive to God (see Romans 6:11)

... As a public testimony of their commitment to - and identification with - the Lord Jesus

Step 3. They were added

... To the number of the disciples already called out and gathered together in that locality

... They received their place in the local Church of God fellowship

... The addition was 'by' and 'to' the Lord (see Acts 2:47, 5:14, 11:24)

Step 4. They continued steadfastly in the apostles' teaching, ...

... This was the mould of teaching to which they were delivered - as molten metal is delivered to a mould (see Romans 6:17)

... Known also as 'the Faith' - as in the body of teaching - it was also said to have been 'once for all' delivered to them (Jude 1:3)

... Replaces the 'blueprint' or pattern instructions in Moses' Law for God's (now spiritual) house on earth (see 1 Peter 2:5)

Step 5. ... in the fellowship ...

... The original sense being the fellowship - as something concrete - not casual, but demanding commitment

... The New Testament vision clearly shows local Churches of God linked together on a regional and overall basis

... Throughout the New Testament, the people of God were in the one inter-linked Fellowship of churches

Step 6. ... in the breaking of the bread ...

... The 'gem' was first given in Matthew 26:26

... Then the 'gem' was placed in its setting in Acts 2:42

... Its observance is always a corporate function of a Church of God - being the collective worship of God's people together in the Holy Place every Sunday morning

Step 7. ... and the prayers

... These being the regular Church prayers (e.g. Acts 12:1-25)

... Responding to the invitation to 'draw near with boldness' to God's throne of grace collectively (see Hebrews 4:16)

... Women, as part of the praying company (1 Corinthians 11:5) pray silently (1 Corinthians 14:34) with heads covered (1 Corinthians 11:2-16)

Don't miss out!

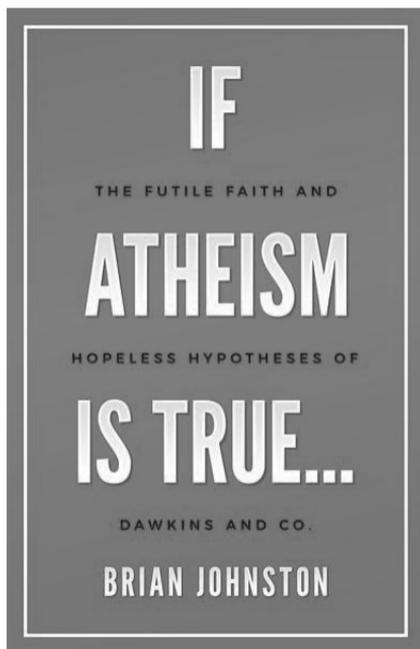
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Did you love *Bible Answers for Big Questions*? Then you should read *If Atheism Is True...* by Brian Johnston!



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The short chapters in Brian's usual conversational style serve as an ideal entry-level primer for anyone wanting to get to grips with one of the most important of today's debates - or to use as an effective witnessing tool.

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8 Amazing Privileges of God's People: A Bible Study of Romans 9:4-5

Learning from Bible Grandparents

Increasing Your Christian Footprint

Bible Answers for Big Questions

Christ-centred Faith

Mindfulness That Jesus Endorses

Amazing Grace! Paul's Gospel Message to the Galatians

Abraham: Friend of God

The Future in Bible Prophecy

Unlocking Hebrews

Learning How To Pray - From the Lord's Prayer
About the Bush: The Five Excuses of Moses
The Five Loves of God
Deepening Our Relationship With Christ
Really Good News For Today!
A Legacy of Kings - Israel's Chequered History
Minor Prophets: Major Issues!
The Tabernacle - God's House of Shadows
Tribes and Tribulations - Israel's Predicted Personalities
Once Saved, Always Saved - The Reality of Eternal Security
After God's Own Heart : The Life of David
Jesus: What Does the Bible Really Say?
God: His Glory, His Building, His Son
The Feasts of Jehovah in One Hour
Knowing God - Reflections on Psalm 23
Praying with Paul
Get Real ... Living Every Day as an Authentic Follower of
Christ
A Crisis of Identity
Double Vision: Hidden Meanings in the Prophecy of Isaiah
Samson: A Type of Christ
Great Spiritual Movements
Take Your Mark's Gospel
Total Conviction - 4 Things God Wants You To Be Fully Con-
vinced About
Esther: A Date With Destiny
Experiencing God in Ephesians
James - Epistle of Straw?
The Supremacy of Christ
The Visions of Zechariah
Encounters at the Cross

Five Sacred Solos - The Truths That the Reformation Recovered
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Five Woman and a Baby - The Genealogy of Jesus
Pure Milk - Nurturing New Life in Jesus
Jesus: Son Over God's House
Salt and the Sacrifice of Christ
The Glory of God
The Way: Being a New Testament Disciple
Power Outage - Christianity Unplugged
Windows to Faith: Insights for the Inquisitive



About the Author

Born and educated in Scotland, Brian worked as a government scientist until God called him into full-time Christian ministry on behalf of the Churches of God (www.churchesofgod.info). His voice has been heard on Search For Truth radio broadcasts for over 30 years (visit www.searchfortruth.podbean.com) during which time he has been an itinerant Bible teacher throughout the UK and Canada. His evangelical and missionary work outside the UK is primarily in Belgium and The Philippines. He is married to Rosemary, with a son and daughter.



About the Publisher

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