

F.A.Q's: Frequently Asked Questions

Lesson 4—What Do You Believe?

OVERVIEW

Key Bible Passages: Matthew 6:8; 1 Thessalonians 5:17; Matthew 6:9-13

BEFORE CLASS

Preparation: *Your preparation will determine the direction your class will go.*

- What do you believe about prayer and why?
- What do you believe about God and why?
- Pray for each student by name.
- Use the Contact 1-2-3 system to follow up on students who have recently missed on Sunday morning.
- Try to remember your students' birthdays. It's a big deal when you call or send a card on a birthday—It says that you really care.

OPENING ACTIVITY

- *Go around the room and let everyone share one highlight and one low point from their week. (If you have a large class, just take a few volunteers but perhaps not the same ones who shared last week.)*

Discussion

- *Have you ever heard the statement, "God said it; I believe it; That settles it"?*
- *But what if someone doesn't believe it? (A person's belief doesn't change anything, so you could just as easily say, "God said it; That settles it—whether you believe it or not.)*

SAY: A person's belief can't change the truth. You can believe that you can fly but if you jump off a roof, the truth of gravity will not change no matter what you believe or how firmly you believe it.

- *Let's say you are witnessing to someone who says, "I don't believe the Bible." Do you still show them what it says? (Absolutely.)*

Consider the following illustration:

Let's say someone is being robbed at knife-point and they say, "I don't believe in your knife." Regardless of their belief, if they are poked with it, they're still going to bleed. Their belief can't change the truth. Likewise, a person's belief about God's Word doesn't change the fact that it is God's Word, that it is the truth, that it is the "Sword of the Spirit" (Eph. 6:17), and that it is very powerful.

SAY: God's Word is your answer book for everything in life and today we're going to look at some frequently asked questions about prayer and God.

BIBLE LESSON—part 1

If God already knows your needs, why pray?

Choose a volunteer to read—Read Matthew 6:8

- *If God already knows what you need before you ask Him, why do you need to pray?*
- *If God already knows the future and what He is going to do and what is going to happen, how do our prayers matter?*

SAY: The purpose of prayer is not just to give requests but is a means of pursuing a dynamic relationship with God. God's foreknowledge of your needs shouldn't effect your desire to lay them before Him and God's knowledge of the future in no way lessens the power or effectiveness of prayer.

One author writes:

To ask, "Why pray if God already knows what we need" is akin to asking, "Why get dressed in the morning and go to work?" For that matter if God is going to do what he is going to do anyway, why bother doing anything? God has ordained that the work we do and the prayers we utter both produce results. The fact that God knows the future does not imply that our futures are fatalistically determined any more than our knowledge that the sun will rise causes the sun to rise. ¹

What does it mean to pray without ceasing?

Choose a volunteer to read—Read 1 Thessalonians 5:17

- *How is it possible for a person to continually pray without ceasing? (The Greek word for "without ceasing" means something that is "not interrupted, but that which is constantly reoccurring." ²)*

SAY: Praying without ceasing is not referring to the fact that you are continually on your knees talking to God but that you are in a constant attitude of prayer—that your heart and mind are on continually fixed on Christ, attentive to His voice and ready for communication.

How should I pray?

SAY: It's interesting that Jesus' disciples never said, "Teach us to preach," or "Teach us to heal." Instead, they said, "Teach us to pray" (Luke 11:1) Why? Probably because they understood that everything Jesus did was born out of His relationship with the Father. Listen to what Jesus taught them:

Choose a volunteer to read—Read Matthew 6:9-13

- *Was Jesus telling the disciples to pray this prayer every day? (No. He was giving them a model to guide them in how to pray.)*
- *What are some other things the Bible teaches about prayer?*
- *Where do you find these things in the Bible—or is it something you believe just because that's what you've been taught?*

Here are some examples of what your students might list:

- God is always listening and answers prayer—Jer. 33:3
- Be genuine with your prayers—Psalm 24:3-4
- Don't pray for show—Matt. 6:5
- Don't pray with meaningless repetitions—Matt. 6:7
- Pray at all times—Eph. 6:18
- Pray and never give up—Luke 18:1
- Pray believing—Mark 11:24
- Pray according to God's will—1 John 5:14-15
- Don't pray selfishly—James 4:3

Topic: Why do people end their prayers with "Amen?"

- *Why do people end their prayer by saying "Amen"?* (If you noticed in the Lord's Prayer, or the Model Prayer, this is how Jesus taught the disciples how to pray, but "Amen" means more than simply signing-off or saying, "That's all." It means, "So let it be," or, "May it be so according to God's will." It's a great reminder that prayer begins and ends with an understanding that is based on us submitting ourselves to God's will and not the other way around. Prayer is not an attempt to get God to conform to our plans and desires but an attitude of surrender to His.)

BIBLE LESSON—part 2

- *When does one plus one plus one equal one?* (When you are talking about God—The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit who are three but One.)

What is the Trinity?

- *What if someone said to you that the Bible talks about three Gods instead of one: The Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit? What would you say to this person?*
- *What is the Trinity?* (Trinity is a combination of “tri” for three and “unity” for one, thus it literally means “three in one” and refers to the three: The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit who are eternally distinct but who is One God.)

SAY: The word Trinity, like the words “incarnation” and “rapture,” is not actually used in the Bible but it is referred to in hundreds of Scripture passages. However three things must be understood about this aspect of God’s nature: ³

- (1) *There is One God*—Deut. 6:4 says, “Hear, O Israel! The Lord is our God, the Lord is one!” Isaiah 43:10 says, “Before me no god was formed, nor will there be one after me.”
- (2) *The Father is God; the Son is God; the Holy Spirit is God*—For example, in 1 Cor. 8:6, Paul writes, “...there is but one God, the Father.” But the Father, speaking to the Son in Hebrews 1:8, says, “Your throne, O God, will last forever and forever.” And when Ananias “lied to the Holy Spirit” in Acts 5:3-4, Peter points out that he had “not lied to men but to God.”
- (3) *The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are one in nature but eternally distinct*—For example, the Father and Son love one another and speak to each other as is seen in Jesus’ prayers (i.e., John 17:1-26), and together they send the Holy Spirit (John 15:26). Also, Jesus lists that He and the Father are two distinct witnesses and two distinct judges (John 8:14-18).

- *How would you explain or illustrate the idea of the Trinity?*

Here are some examples:

Example #1—When water is frozen, what is it? Ice, a solid. When water is at a normal temperature, what is it? A liquid. When you heat it, what happens? It becomes a vapor. All three are water but in three distinct forms: solid, liquid, and vapor.

Example #2—Let say you have an apple pie and you cut it into three separate pieces, what do you have? You have three pieces but one pie and you can point to each of the three pieces and say, “This is apple pie.”

Example #3—Who am I? To my parents, I’m a son (or a daughter). To my spouse I’m a husband (or a wife). To my children I’m a dad (or a mom). I’m each of these individuals but I am only one person. This is how I relate to others. God relates to us in the manner of the eternal Father in heaven, the Son who died and rose again to redeem us and the Holy Spirit who is our guide and constant companion.

How can God hear everyone's prayers at the same time?

- *How can God hear everyone's prayers at the same time?*

SAY: First of all, He is God who is all-knowing and to whom nothing is impossible. Second, God is not like you and I, in that we live in one moment at one time. God is outside of time. He is eternal and infinite with no beginning or ending. He sees the past and the future just as clearly as this one "present" moment, nor does time change Him. Thus, the Bible says, "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever" (Heb. 13:8).

Consider this idea:

Let's say you are reading a book when the doorbell rings. You put the book down, go to the door, and find out that your best friend has come for a visit. You eat lunch together and talk for over an hour. After your friend leaves you go back to your book and pick up at the same place you left off. Not one second has passed in the book. Why? Because you are not inside the book's time.

SAY: When you spend time with God it is not as if God is juggling you between ten thousand others who are spending time with Him at the same time. God is not inside time in that way, so when you spend time with God, it is you and He—no distractions, no interruptions, just the two of you. This is how important you are to God and how special your time with Him should be.

Topic: Can God create a rock so heavy that he cannot move it?

- *Can God create a rock so heavy that he cannot move it?* (This is a question that some non-Christians like to ask as a way of "stumping" believers but the answer is not "stumping" at all.)

Concerning this matter one author writes:

"First, there is a problem with the premise of the question. While it is true that God can do anything that is consistent with His nature, it is absurd to suggest that he can do everything. God cannot lie (Hebrews 6:18); he cannot be tempted (James 1:13); and he cannot cease to exist (Psalm 102:25-27).

Furthermore, just as it is impossible to make a one-sided triangle, so it is impossible to make a rock too heavy to be moved. What an all-powerful God can create he can obviously move. Put another way, God can do everything that is logically possible.

Finally, we should note that a wide variety of similar questions are raised to undermine the Christian view of God. Thus, it is crucial that we learn to question the question rather than assuming the question is valid.⁴

WRAP IT UP

Prayer Time

Pray specifically today that your students will know what they believe and why they believe it and that they will always turn to God's Word for the answer to any question. Pray that they will be firm in their faith and always stand strong.

List prayer requests below and on the back of this page and pray for your students throughout the week. *Ask if any of your students want to pray today.*

Prayer Requests

¹ Hank Hanegraaff, "The Bible Answer Book" (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 2004), 47-48.

² Vine's Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1985), 94.

³ Hank Hanegraaff, 180-1.

⁴ Ibid., 176-7.