

PARACLETE

ADVOCATING FOR THE TRUTH OF THE CHRISTIAN FAITH



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Questions Students Ask Christians: Back to School Sampler

By Dr. Don Bierle, *FaithSearch* President

As kids and young adults head back to school this fall, a variety of questions students ask Christians is sure to arise. Some are even likely to challenge your own faith. Why not anticipate them and **prepare biblical answers?**

On our Web site I have posted more than fifty questions and answers (Q&A) on topics such as:

- Creation and evolution
- The existence of God
- New Testament reliability
- Life after death
- Comparative religions

Check them out. I have included some revised selected samples in this issue of the *Paraclete*.



Why would I want to be a Christian when they are all hypocrites?

First, you are to be commended for not wanting to be a hypocrite. That is the sin which greatly offended Jesus. He said, “*Woe to you scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites!*” (Matthew 23:23-33).

Hypocrisy is pretending to be what we aren’t—a sham, a phony, often parading a superficial superiority. That is what Jesus condemned.

We must not confuse hypocrisy with personal failure or sin. All Christians (and non-Christians) fail and sin, but not all Christians are hypocrites. Often the person who is judging all Christians as



hypocrites imagines that anyone claiming to be a Christian is indicating they are better than others, even perfect! That is a misunderstanding. In fact, to become a Christian includes admitting you are a sinner (1 John 1:8-10).

Second, the Christian faith is not invalidated by the actions of specific Christians in history or today. The truth of Christianity stands or falls on the genuineness of the person of Jesus Christ, which is demonstrated in my book *Surprised by Faith*. Since He was not a hypocrite, we are not excused from becoming His follower just because we can find someone whose behavior is inconsistent or turns us off.

Third, hypocrisy is universal. Corrupt people have been revealed from every walk of life and vocation, whether teacher, salesman, farmer, lawyer, etc. When that person is exposed, we do not condemn and reject all in the education, marketing, agriculture, or legal professions. We recognize that one bad apple doesn’t mean they are all rotten, especially when evidence shows otherwise. Likewise,

“Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.”

—Ephesians 4:31-32 NIV

because it is demonstrated that someone who claims to be Christian is playing a phony game with his/her alleged faith, doesn’t mean that all Christians are hypocrites, nor that Christianity is false.

Finally, as important as hypocrisy-related questions students ask Christians are, the problem does have a cure. Only Jesus Christ was without sin (Hebrews 4:15). He took our sin upon Himself as our substitute on the cross so that forgiveness could be extended by grace through faith (Ephesians 2:8-9). He asked that His followers extend that message to the world (Luke 24:47). There is humility in repentance. Experiencing His forgiveness and love leads to the freedom to take off our masks and become “real” people – honest, transparent and genuine.



continued on page 2

More Q&A at www.faithsearch.org

- What evidence is there that God even exists?
- Can you be a Christian and believe in the Bible, and still believe in evolution, too?
- What do we mean by “proof” when testing whether something is true?
- How was it decided which books should be included in the New Testament?
- Why does God allow so much suffering and evil in the world?
- What happens to those people who have never heard of Jesus?
- How do the writings of other religions compare to the integrity and historic reliability of the New Testament?
- Is Christianity more exclusive than other religions by claiming that Jesus is the only way to God?
- And MUCH, MUCH MORE!



Back to School Sampler

continued from page 1

How can I be sure I will have life after death?

When asking this question, you join millions of others who also wonder about it. The British scholar C.S. Lewis once wrote,

...a continual looking forward to the eternal world is not (as some modern people think) a form of escapism or wishful thinking, but one of the things a Christian is meant to do (*Mere Christianity*, p. 118).

Many “wish” or “hope” for eternal life after death but don’t know if it is really true. Others think they will live forever for an erroneous reason – perhaps they have tried to be “good.” They think eternal life is earned. Both of these views are unsatisfactory, even just plain wrong! Where, then, does assurance come from?

*“I am the way,
and the truth,
and the life;
no one comes to the Father,
but through Me.”*

–Jesus (John 14:6)

Some turn to medical studies of the relation between body and spirit, primarily by studying near death experiences (NDEs). Others look at physiological studies on the brain which indicate there seems to be a separate identity and existence apart from the body. Still others suggest that unsatisfied longings or unfulfilled desires point to the afterlife, which explains why passages like Psalm 23 and Revelation 21:1-5 are so meaningful.

All three of those provide only **circumstantial evidence** and cannot lead to confidence or assurance. There is, however, a direct evidence for life after death. A real person in human history demonstrated it to be true! **The bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ 2,000 years ago**—supported by the facts of His empty tomb, of at least ten post-resurrection appearances, of eyewitness testimony, and of the transformed lives

of His disciples—is the basis for certainty about life after death.

Jesus died and then spent forty days physically on earth after He rose from the dead, appearing at one point to more than 500 people simultaneously (1 Corinthians 15:5-8). He said, *“I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in Me will live even if he dies...”* (John 11:25). Jesus’ promise to His followers is that He is preparing a place for each one in Heaven, saying also, *“I will come again, and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also”* (John 14:2-3).

That’s the condition for certainty – **personal faith in Jesus**. That’s the promise you can count on!



Is there anything new in the tension that has existed between creation and evolution. ?

Many common questions students ask Christians relate to this issue. Scientists who are committed to **methodological naturalism** (that truth is by definition limited to explanations from the natural world) reject God and purpose in nature. They say, “All is explained by chance—random mutation and natural selection.” The Bible says that they are *“without excuse”* (Romans 1:20) because the evidence for God’s wisdom and power is actually revealed in nature. That truth is now being manifested in the discoveries of science itself.



Earthrise over the moon, as seen from Apollo 8 on December 24, 1968. (Image courtesy: NASA.)

In his book, *The Privileged Planet*, astronomer Guillermo Gonzalez identifies at least **seventeen physical constants that are fine-tuned to make life on earth possible**. As far as we know to date, earth alone can sustain life in the universe. Science has no answer to explain how or why earth is the way it is.

The Bible’s explanation is that the intelligence of God specially created it

“What biologists of Darwin’s day thought was a ‘simple little lump of albuminous combination of carbon’ (the cell) – pretty much just a microscopic piece of Jell-O – has turned out to be a fully automated, nanoscale factory, sophisticated beyond human imagining.”


–Michael Behe, *Darwin Devolves*

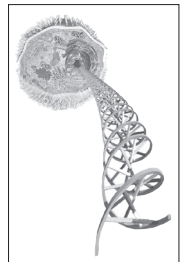
to be inhabited (Isaiah 45:18; see also Psalm 115:16).

Recent biological research on the complexity of the cell has also led to astounding discoveries. Planthoppers with “gears” in their legs; bacteria cells with “tank tracks” for movement on a hard surface; and single cells with “motors” to spin flagella as propellers in a liquid medium; all are pointing clearly to an origin in a superior intelligence and power.

Information systems for heredity like the DNA molecule are **only known from intelligent activity**. The chance mechanism of evolution is totally inadequate to account for the 3.1 billion highly specified chemical letters, words, and sentences making up the precise blueprint to make a baby. Like software, DNA is so highly ordered that it **could not have arisen by chance**. Rather, it is created.

Today, the conflict is not between science and the Bible. Rather, it is between evolutionary science (relying on an undirected cause) and intelligent design inference (relying on a directed cause).

This is new. 



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