



Unanswered Questions from the Message Series, “YOU ASKED FOR IT”

1. Why would God allow bad things to happen?

God gave you free will to make your own choices. Just as you have the free will to make good choices, you also have the free will to make poor choices. There are always consequences to every action you make. The result of a poor choice is that God will allow suffering and bad things to occur:

1. So that you realize you need Him
2. To teach life lessons
3. To help you communicate the Gospel to someone who is in trouble
4. To teach you to depend more on Him

1 Peter 5:10, Romans 8:18, Romans 8:28

2. With my life blessed with so much love in my marriage, great friends, and more, I have a hard time "living in the light of Eternity" and I fear that disappoints God. I love the life He's blessed me with here. If I'm honest, I don't eagerly await His coming. So how do I reconcile that with my Father in Heaven?

The first thing to do is to acknowledge this question personally with God. The second thing is to reassure yourself not to feel guilty just because you are experiencing all these tremendous things on earth. The third thing I would do is to look up every verse in the Bible about Heaven and begin to meditate on those verses to get your mind on things above. The last thing is to pray and seek out a lost person in your family, friendships, workplace, or school and share your faith with them. God gave you a wonderful life so that you will share with others that it all comes from Him, and Jesus came for everyone to know Him. Even though you have this great life, there is still a need and a void in every heart to know God on earth now, and when we die.

Hebrews 13:14, Revelation 22:1-5, 1 Corinthians 2:9

3. It seems the Church in America will soon experience persecution like never before. Besides prayer and being in the Word, how should we best equip ourselves for what's ahead?

You are correct. The Bible teaches us that during the last days, we will experience persecution from the world. This is how you can best prepare:

1. Know the Word of God – this is the standard we live by
2. Develop a strong prayer life
3. Practice how not to allow fear to overwhelm you
4. Be involved in ministry now in preparation for reaching out to people as persecution intensifies

Matthew 10:17, 2 Timothy 3:12, 2 Corinthians 12:9, Psalm 46:1-3

4. Why do children have to die or suffer from disease or violence or whatever? What good can come from that?

One of the most heartbreaking of all is the suffering or death of a child. Children are as close to innocence as we ever see in this world, and for them to suffer or die is truly tragic. The reality is for some situations, we may not know the reasons why on this side of Heaven. Sometimes, innocent children suffer because of the sin of others: neglect, abuse, drunk driving, etc. In those cases, we can say that the suffering is the result of personal sin (just not theirs), and we learn the lesson that our sin always affects others around us. Other times, innocent children suffer or die because of what some might call “acts of God:” natural disasters, accidents, childhood cancer, etc. Even in those cases, we can say that suffering or death is the result of sin, generally speaking because we live in a sinful world.

The good news is that God did not allow children to suffer or die pointlessly. Yes, the innocent suffer or die, (Job 1–2), but God can redeem it. Our loving and merciful God has a perfect plan to use that heartbreak and pain to accomplish His threefold purpose. First, He uses pain and suffering to draw us to Himself so that we will cling to Him. Second, He proves to us that our faith is real through the suffering and pain that are inevitable in this life. How we respond to this, especially when we the innocent face wrongdoing, is determined by the genuineness of our faith. Finally, God uses a child’s suffering or death to take our eyes off this world and turn them to the next.

Genesis 50:20, Romans 8:28

5. Why would God finally bind satan only to release him after 1000 years to cause havoc on mankind again? Rev. 20:1-3

God gave us free will, just as He gave satan and the angels’ free choice. God’s timing is so different from our timing. Part of walking with God involves – TRUSTING His timing! Learning to trust God when you do not understand is a mark of growth in a believer’s life. God wants every person to be saved (2 Peter 3:9), and so He will allow certain things to happen if it gets you to recognize your need to surrender your life to Christ. The main thing to remember is that God is always in control, even though it may not seem like He is at the time. When Satan is bound and banished, the Lord will throw Him into the lake of fire and he will not be able to influence, harm, or hurt anyone for eternity. This life is like a mist (James 4:14). You are only here on earth for a short time, so you must remember that this life on earth is not your reward – heaven is your reward.

James 4:7, Ephesians 4:27, Revelation 20:10

6. Are all of our sins forgiven from the past, present & future, if we are born-again Christians but knowingly continue to sin?

God made it very clear in His Word that when we receive Christ as our savior, He forgives us of all sin (Romans 5:1; 1 John 1:9). We will always have the struggle of temptation to sin because we still have a sinful nature (Galatians 5:19-22). Even the Apostle Paul struggled with sin (Romans 7:15-20). The difference is, now that we have accepted Christ, our goal is to “walk by the Spirit and not the flesh.” This requires disciplines that help us to stay away from sinning (fellowship with other believers, regular worship with others, developing a life of prayer, study of the Word of God, giving and witnessing to others about our faith in Christ).

Ephesians 1:7-9, Ephesians 1:9-14

7. When does God give the gift of the Holy Spirit? How do you know when you have received the power of the Spirit?

Acts 2:38 tells us to “...Repent and be baptized, every one of you ... for the forgiveness of your sins. And you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.”

Ephesians 1:13 tells us, “...you were included in Christ when you heard the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation. When you believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit...”

Romans 8:11: “...If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies because of his Spirit who lives in you.”

If you have received Christ by faith, He has given to you the gift of the Holy Spirit. If you do not “feel” the presence of the Holy Spirit, it does not mean he is not within you any longer. An example of this would be a marriage between a husband and wife. There are times in a marriage that you may feel like you are in love with the other person and there are some times when you do not have that feeling, but you are still married to one another for life. So it is, with the gift of the Spirit in us.

8. Is it possible to change God’s mind and His plan through prayer? If not, then why do we pray?

No, I do not think you can change God’s mind. God has a will and He is sovereign, and I believe prayer can change circumstances and change you. God moves in mighty ways through the prayers of His people. Through prayer at MVCC, we have seen people get healed, delivered, and set free from the power of darkness. We have also seen God bring salvation to those who have been prayed for and many circumstances that seemed impossible with men became possible with God. God and His Word, I believe, give you the directive, and there is freedom with limits, and within those limits our prayers can then change things. The Bible tells us that Elijah prayed for rain and it did not rain, but he was not discouraged from praying, but rather kept on. God loves it when we pray because it deepens our relationship with Him, and it changes our desire to live in His will.

1 John 5:14, Philippians 4:6-7, James 5:16

9. How is it possible to follow a religion that denies recognition to the LGBTQ+ community that Jesus himself—who helped the lepers—would have compassionately embraced?

It is human nature to judge others from a human, broken perspective. Some want to judge according to their sins, but for those who have allowed the grace of God to change their hearts, they then can see people through His eyes. Jesus loved everyone in whatever state they were in and empowered them to change into His likeness. This is our passion at MVCC.

Jesus came to earth for one purpose. Jesus came to reconcile man to God. Jesus brought the Good News of the Gospel. He brought an invitation to everyone—EVERYONE who would receive Him as the Messiah (John 1:12). Jesus atoned for all sins (by his sacrifice on the cross) 1 John 2:2. This provided access into a covenant relationship with God (Hebrews 13:20).

People are not separated from the grace of Jesus because they identify as LGQTB+. Just as people are not denied salvation because they are unforgiving, grumblers, idolaters, murderers, liars, thieves, sexually immoral, chemically dependent, or unforgiving. People are not lost because of their particular type of sin; they are not saved because they do not know Christ (Isaiah 53:6).

Sinners are saved if they repent from their sin and receive the grace of God. And, all of us have sinned (Romans 3, Romans 6). We’ve either done something we shouldn’t have done, or didn’t do something we should have done, and so we’ve messed things up. We’ve hurt someone, chosen poorly or made a mistake. Jesus never sinned. Scripture says, “*He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world*” (1 John 2:2).

Once we accept Christ’s sacrifice, we become His. We are no longer defined by sin, but by what God declares us to be, Christians. We are redeemed of sin, forgiven, restored, and made righteous. “*God made him who had no sin to be sin for us so that in him we might become the righteousness of God*” (2 Corinthians 5:21).

God proclaims our identity as co-heirs with Christ, ambassadors of God, conquerors, justified by faith, God’s adopted children. Christ died so that we might die to sin and live for righteousness (1 Peter 2:4). He makes all things new, and so we are new creations in Christ. “*God demonstrates His love for us in this, while we were still sinners, Christ died for us*” (Romans 5:8).

What Christ did for us is the be-all and end-all of Christianity. Evangelism is about God, not someone's sexuality. The gospel is all about God and it is clear that God loves us. If we receive Him by faith, His Son lives

in us. Jesus came so all sinners can be forgiven of their sins, to be reconciled to God, and love, serve and glorify Him forever.

We obey by faith, and then He commands us to go and "sin no more" out of a desire to please God. All Christians are now called to pick up their cross and follow Him. We seek His Kingdom and His righteousness and tell others about God's love and love for one another. For some believers to be loving, gentle, compassionate, and kind is their highest struggle. For others, it is a struggle to abstain from sexuality that is not in line with New Testament Scriptures ("For this is the will of God, your sanctification, that you abstain from sexual immorality" 1 Thessalonians 4:3).

God's best is what is best for us, and so Jesus suffered to give God's best for us. He was obedient, even to death on a cross (Philippians 2). Jesus also said, "*If you love me, you will obey my commands*" (John 14:15). Although we are not identified by our past sins, or by our current temptations, there is an expectation that we should love God enough to obey His will.

Friends, love God. Love one another.

10. How do we discern whether the Lord is speaking to us, or if it's just our subconscious, well-intentioned thoughts that we think are His will?

God's Word tells us that He speaks to us. The question of how to discern His voice is an excellent one.

These are some markers that I try to use when discerning God's voice:

1. Is what I'm hearing from God parallel with the Word of God?
2. God would not contradict Himself with His Word.
3. If I question whether or not I think God is speaking to me, I need to have someone in my life who I can ask, "I think God is speaking to me about this. What do you think?" I seek out someone who is more mature in their faith than I am, who can pray for me, and give me wise counsel.

Learning to listen for God's voice takes time and discipline to be quiet in spirit. As we grow through time, we will learn to discern His voice more often.

Romans 10:17, John 10:27