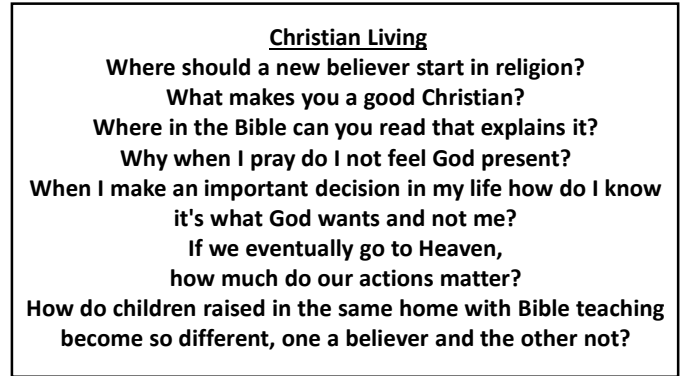
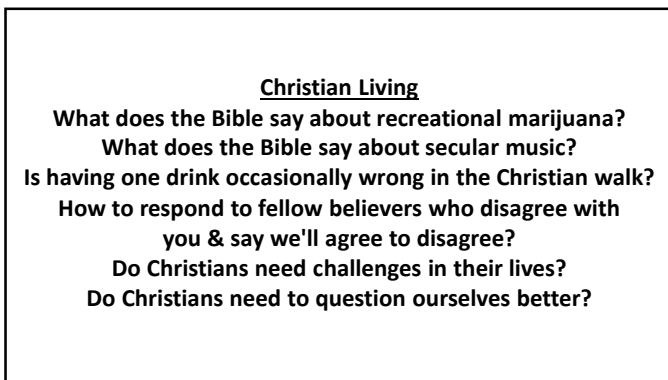




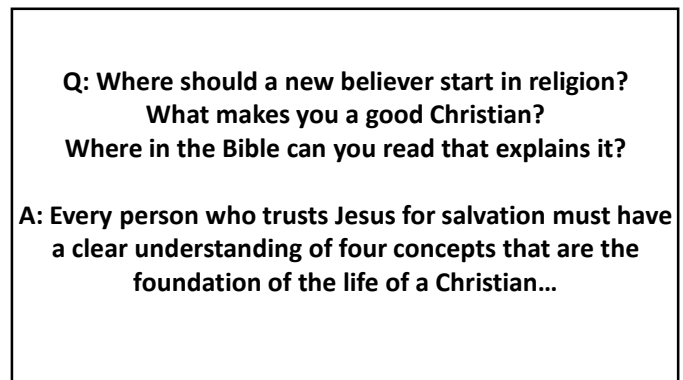
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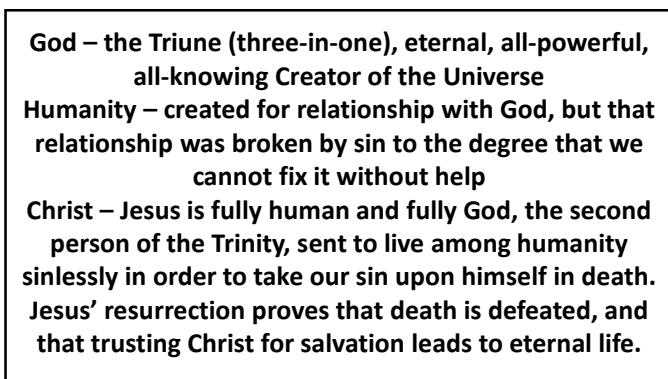
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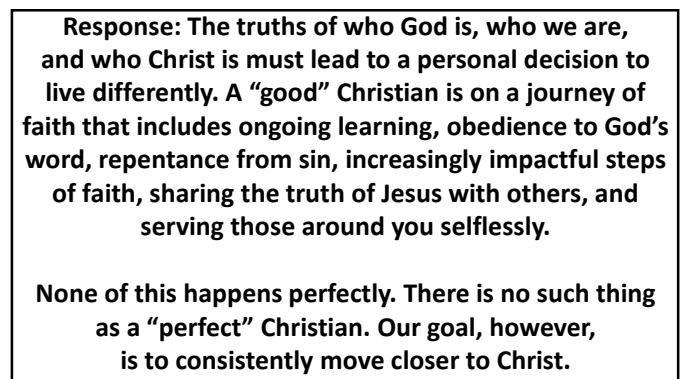
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4



5



6

If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is your life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.

7

Put to death therefore what is earthly in you: sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry. On account of these the wrath of God is coming. In these you too once walked, when you were living in them. But now you must put them all away: anger, wrath, malice, slander, and obscene talk from your mouth.

8

Do not lie to one another, seeing that you have put off the old self with its practices and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator. Here there is not Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave, free; but Christ is all, and in all. Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive.

9

And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body. And be thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God. And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him. (Colossians 3:1-17 ESV)

10

Q: Why when I pray do I not feel God present?
When I make an important decision in my life how do I know it's what God wants and not me?
If we eventually go to Heaven,
how much do our actions matter?
How do children raised in the same home with Bible teaching become so different, one a believer and the other not?

A: Each of these questions have to do with aspects of our response to the Gospel.

11

A: Our experience in prayer is often corrupted by several possible hinderances that we have control over, including:

Timing – what are your best times to pray?

Environment – how can you limit distractions when you pray?

Content – do you pray with substance?

Alignment – are you intending to conform to God's will?

12

A: Jesus made dedicated time to pray by himself (Luke 5:16) and publicly (Luke 3:21-22, John 17:1-26)

Jesus prayed about specific spiritual realities with intention (Luke 6:12, Luke 10:21, John 11:41-42)

Jesus aligned His will with the Father's (Matthew 26:36-46)

When we struggle with prayer, one way to approach it is to model our prayer life after Jesus'. Doing so also helps to ensure that our decisions reflect God's will and not our sinful desires.

13

A: We have at least three ways to determine whether a course of action is what God wants or not:

The Bible: Does what we are seeking to do reflect Biblical truth? (John 17:17, 2 Timothy 3:16-17)

Our mission: Does what we are seeking to do help advance the Kingdom of God? (Matthew 6:33)

The Holy Spirit: Is what we are seeking to do keeping us "in step with the Spirit?" (Galatians 5:16-26)

14

A: Genuine believers who are going to heaven are convinced that their actions matter because Jesus said so repeatedly in the Sermon on the Mount:

"You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven."

(Matthew 5:14-17)

15

A: Throughout the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus emphasizes that our actions are to align with God's definition of righteousness as he addresses:

Humility	Adultery and divorce
Selfishness	Lying
Lust	Vengeance
Anger	Caring for enemies
Covetousness	... and much more.

16

A: Being a genuine disciple of Jesus means following Him, which we must take literally and seriously.

Paul knew this:

What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound? By no means! How can we who died to sin still live in it? Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life. (Romans 6:1-4 ESV)

17

A: Children who are raised in a Christian home have no guarantee of become a genuine follower of Jesus, just as children who are raised in non-Christian homes are not guaranteed to be atheists.

Each human is unique, knit together with intention (Psalm 139:13-16) and so will respond to the Gospel in a unique way known only to God.

There were many who knew Jesus and heard the Gospel repeatedly during His ministry and still rejected Him.

We shouldn't be surprised when the same thing happens today.

18

A: All of this leads back to the question of how we respond to the Gospel message. Each one who hears it has the chance to respond, and the role of the Church is to come alongside people who do respond to help them become fully devoted followers of Jesus, just as the early Church leaders did.

19

**Q: What does the Bible say about recreational marijuana?
What does the Bible say about secular music?
Is having one drink occasionally wrong in the Christian walk?
How to respond to fellow believers who disagree with you & say we'll agree to disagree?**

20

A: Genuine believers have important decisions to make about how they interact with the world and all that it has to offer. These decisions will often put us at odds with the world, and sometimes at odds with each other. Scripture has some strong warnings about how we decide to interact with things of this world:

21

**Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world—the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride of life—is not from the Father but is from the world. And the world is passing away along with its desires, but whoever does the will of God abides forever.
(1 John 2:15-17 ESV)**

22

**Do you not know that you are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in you? If anyone destroys God's temple, God will destroy him. For God's temple is holy, and you are that temple... Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body.
(1 Corinthians 3:16-17, 1 Corinthians 6:19-20 ESV)**

23

**I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.
(Romans 12:1-2 ESV)**

24

A: Genuine believers must examine at least two areas when wrestling with using with worldly things like marijuana, alcohol, or secular media:

Motivation: Why are these things more attractive than Jesus and His word? Am I using this thing to escape what God wants me to confront?

**Content: how do these things impact my mind?
What do I learn by using them?**

25

A: If your convictions as a genuine believer about things like substances, alcohol, and secular culture allow you to partake of them, please consider Scriptures like these:

26

**But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy. Beloved, I urge you as sojourners and exiles to abstain from the passions of the flesh, which wage war against your soul. Keep your conduct among the Gentiles honorable, so that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day of visitation.
(1 Peter 2:9-12 ESV)**

27

A: There are Christians two main areas of disagreement among Christians: theology and practice.

In case of a theological disagreement, consider which aspects of theology you are willing to die for and which ones are better left to be judged by God.

In case of a disagreement about practices, consider which aspects of practical living you are willing to sacrifice relationships over and which ones are better left to be judged by God.

Your choices in these areas will produce tension.

28

A: Paul lived in this tension and encouraged the churches to do the same. For example:

We who are strong have an obligation to bear with the failings of the weak, and not to please ourselves. Let each of us please his neighbor for his good, to build him up. For Christ did not please himself, but as it is written, "The reproaches of those who reproached you fell on me." For whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, that through endurance and through the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope.

29

May the God of endurance and encouragement grant you to live in such harmony with one another, in accord with Christ Jesus, that together you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Therefore welcome one another as Christ has welcomed you, for the glory of God.

(Romans 15:1-7 ESV)

30

I myself am satisfied about you, my brothers, that you yourselves are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge and able to instruct one another. But on some points I have written to you very boldly by way of reminder, because of the grace given me by God to be a minister of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles in the priestly service of the gospel of God, so that the offering of the Gentiles may be acceptable, sanctified by the Holy Spirit. In Christ Jesus, then, I have reason to be proud of my work for God. For I will not venture to speak of anything except what Christ has accomplished through me to bring the Gentiles to obedience—by word and deed... (Romans 15:14-18 ESV)

31

**Q: Do Christians need challenges in their lives?
Do Christians need to question ourselves better?**

A: Yes.

Jesus describes the life of a genuine believer like this:

32

As they were going along the road, someone said to him, "I will follow you wherever you go." And Jesus said to him, "Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head." To another he said, "Follow me." But he said, "Lord, let me first go and bury my father." And Jesus said to him, "Leave the dead to bury their own dead. But as for you, go and proclaim the kingdom of God." Yet another said, "I will follow you, Lord, but let me first say farewell to those at my home." Jesus said to him, "No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for the kingdom of God." (Luke 9:57-62)

33

And calling the crowd to him with his disciples, he said to them, "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake and the gospel's will save it. For what does it profit a man to gain the whole world and forfeit his soul?

For what can a man give in return for his soul? For whoever is ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him will the Son of Man also be ashamed when he comes in the glory of his Father with the holy angels." (Mark 8:34-38 ESV)

34

"Everyone then who hears these words of mine and does them will be like a wise man who built his house on the rock. And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house, but it did not fall, because it had been founded on the rock. And everyone who hears these words of mine and does not do them will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand. And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell, and great was the fall of it." (Matthew 7:24-27 ESV)

35

Behold, the hour is coming, indeed it has come, when you will be scattered, each to his own home, and will leave me alone. Yet I am not alone, for the Father is with me. I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world."
(John 16:32-33 ESV)

36

A: Much later, Peter tells the persecuted, exiled Church:

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, who by God's power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.

37

In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials, so that the tested genuineness of your faith—more precious than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire—may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ. Though you have not seen him, you love him. Though you do not now see him, you believe in him and rejoice with joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory, obtaining the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls.

(1 Peter 1:3-9 ESV)

38

A: The challenges we face as believers are part of the development of our faith, and we find great value in examining ourselves and our responses to the circumstances we face each day:

**Examine yourselves, to see whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves. Or do you not realize this about yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you?—unless indeed you fail to meet the test!
(2 Corinthians 13:5 ESV)**

39