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Questions & Answers *About Faith*

Twenty-five honest questions people ask about God, Jesus, the Bible and the Christian life, answered in plain words

WESLEY A.M.E. ZION CHURCH
1500 LOMBARD STREET · PHILADELPHIA · SINCE 1820

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

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Questions are not the enemy of faith. The Bible is full of people asking God hard questions: Job, David, Habakkuk, Thomas, Mary. God did not turn them away. Peter tells us to always be ready to give an answer to anyone who asks us about the hope we have, *"with meekness and fear."*

These are the questions people most often ask about the Christian faith, gathered from pastors, church visitors and new believers. The answers are short. Each one could fill a book. If your question isn't here, bring it to Bible study or ask the pastor. There are no foolish questions.

About *God*

Q How can I know God is real?

A Christians point to several witnesses: the world itself, which shows design and beauty (Psalm 19:1); our conscience, which knows right from wrong; the Bible's message and its fulfilled promises; the life, death and resurrection of Jesus, witnessed by hundreds; and the changed lives of believers through history. In the end, faith is trusting God enough to seek Him — and He promises that those who seek Him will find Him (Jeremiah 29:13).

Q What is the Trinity?

A Christians believe in one God who exists eternally as three Persons: the Father, the Son (Jesus) and the Holy Spirit. Not three gods, and not one God wearing three masks. It is a mystery, but every part is in Scripture — at Jesus' baptism, all three are present at once (Matthew 3:16-17).

Q If God is good, why is there suffering?

A This is the hardest question, and the Bible does not hide from it. Suffering entered the world through sin and the brokenness of creation. God does not always explain why, but He has not stayed far away from it: in Jesus, God Himself suffered. He promises to be with us in suffering, to bring good out of it, and one day to end it forever (Romans 8:18, 28; Revelation 21:4).

Q Who is the Holy Spirit?

A The Holy Spirit is God present with us and in us. He comforts, teaches, guides, convicts us of sin, and gives believers power to live for God and gifts to serve others. Jesus called Him *the Comforter* (John 14:26).

ABOUT *Jesus*

Q Was Jesus a real person?

A Yes. Historians, including non-Christian writers of the first and second centuries such as Josephus and Tacitus, mention Jesus and His crucifixion under Pontius Pilate. The question is not whether He lived, but who He was.

Q Why did Jesus have to die?

A Sin separates us from a holy God, and its wages is death (Romans 6:23). Jesus, who had no sin, took our place and paid that debt on the cross. His death shows both how serious sin is and how great God's love is (Romans 5:8).

Q Did Jesus really rise from the dead?

A Christians believe He did, bodily, on the third day. The tomb was empty; He appeared to many people, once to more than five hundred at the same time (1 Corinthians 15:6); and frightened disciples became bold witnesses willing to die for what they had seen. The resurrection is the center of our faith.

Q Is Jesus the only way to God?

A Jesus said, *"I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me"* (John 14:6). Christians believe this. We also believe God's love reaches to every person, and our calling is to share that good news with gentleness and respect.

"He is not here: for he is risen, as he said." Matthew 28:6

ABOUT *salvation*

Q **How is a person saved?**

A By God's grace, through faith in Jesus Christ — not by our own good works (Ephesians 2:8-9). We turn from sin (repent), trust Jesus as Savior and Lord, and receive His forgiveness and new life. Good works follow as the fruit of salvation, not the root.

Q **Am I too far gone?**

A No one is beyond God's reach. The Bible's heroes include a murderer (Moses), an adulterer (David) and a persecutor of Christians (Paul). Jesus forgave the thief on the cross in his final hours (Luke 23:43). If you are still breathing, it is not too late.

Q **What happens when we die?**

A For those who belong to Jesus, *"to be absent from the body"* is *"to be present with the Lord"* (2 Corinthians 5:8). We look forward to the resurrection of the body and eternal life with God in a new heaven and new earth.

ABOUT *the Bible*

Q **Why should I trust the Bible?**

A The Bible is the most carefully preserved book from the ancient world, with thousands of early manuscripts. Its sixty-six books, written over 1,500 years, tell one unified story pointing to Jesus. Christians believe it is inspired by God (2 Timothy 3:16) and has proved itself true in countless lives.

Q Why are there so many translations?

A The Bible was written in Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek, so every English Bible is a translation. Some, like the King James Version (1611), are more word-for-word and traditional; others are in more modern English. Reading more than one can deepen your understanding.

Q Where should I start reading?

A Start with the Gospel of John, then Mark, Acts, Psalms and Proverbs. See *Read the Bible: Three Plans* in this library.

ABOUT *the Christian life*

Q Why do I need to go to church?

A Christianity was never meant to be lived alone. The church is a family where we worship together, learn, receive the sacraments, encourage one another and serve the world (Hebrews 10:24-25). Like a coal that cools when taken out of the fire, faith grows cold in isolation.

Q What is baptism, and do I need it?

A Baptism is an outward sign of God's inward grace, the doorway into the Church. Jesus commanded it (Matthew 28:19). See *The Lord's Supper & Baptism* in this library.

Q How do I know God's will for my life?

A Much of God's will is already clear in the Bible: love God, love your neighbor, be holy, be thankful. For specific decisions, pray, read Scripture, seek wise counsel, watch for open and closed doors, and look for God's peace (Proverbs 3:5-6; James 1:5).

Q **Why do Christians still sin?**

A Becoming a Christian makes us forgiven, not finished. The Methodist tradition emphasizes growing in holiness — John Wesley called it *going on to perfection* in love — but we will struggle until we see Jesus. When we fall, we confess and get up (1 John 1:9).

Q **What about doubt?**

A Doubt is not the opposite of faith; unbelief is. Honest doubt that keeps seeking God can lead to deeper faith. Bring your doubts to God in prayer and to trusted believers. Jesus was gentle with doubting Thomas (John 20:27).

Q **Why are there so many denominations?**

A Christians agree on the central truths — God as Trinity, Jesus as Savior, the Bible, the resurrection — but differ on some practices and church government. Some denominations, like ours, were also born out of history: the A.M.E. Zion Church was formed by Black Methodists who were denied equal treatment. See *The Freedom Church* in this library.

Q **How can I share my faith without pushing people away?**

A Listen more than you talk. Ask questions. Tell your own story of what God has done. Show love in action. Invite people to church. Respect their freedom. *"Let your speech be alway with grace"* (Colossians 4:6).

Q **Does God care about justice?**

A Deeply. The prophets thunder against those who oppress the poor, the widow, the orphan and the stranger (Amos 5:24; Micah 6:8). Jesus announced good news to the poor and liberty to the captive (Luke 4:18). Working for justice has been part of Big Wesley's witness since 1820.

STILL HAVE QUESTIONS?

Bring them to Bible study, or ask the pastor after any service. You can also call the church office at **(215) 735-8961**. God is not afraid of your questions, and neither are we.

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"But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear:"

1 PETER 3:15

Wesley A.M.E. Zion Church

"Big Wesley" · The Freedom Church · Founded June 6, 1820

SUNDAY SCHOOL	9:30 AM
SUNDAY WORSHIP	11:00 AM

1500 Lombard Street, Philadelphia, PA 19146
(215) 735-8961 · wesleyamezion1500@gmail.com

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