

“Why the endless quibbling over teachings?” (Matthew 11:25-30)

- 1) How does Jesus offer rest to our souls in a way that no other religion or philosophy can?
He tells us that he has lifted our burden for us. He lived and died to open heaven for us. He came down from heaven to rescue us for eternal glory. We don't have to do anything to help.
- 2) G.K. Chesterton observed that in a delicate balancing act, an inch is everything. What does that mean when it comes to church teachings?
He tells us that he has lifted our burden for us. He lived and died to open heaven for us. He came down from heaven to rescue us for eternal glory. We don't have to do anything to help.
- 3) Why is it so essential that we pour over the Scriptures, mine their depths, and make sure to be precise?
Because human beings don't have anything good to add to the perfection of God's word.
- 4) How important is it that the Bible be kept in all of its truth and purity?
Extremely important. When it comes to the gospel, we must not add a drop of law. We either have full and free salvation in Christ alone, or we don't. This we must not touch, or it is destroyed.

“Why is there so much pain in the world?” (Mark 1:40-45)

- 5) Describe the life of a leper.
They were social outcasts. They had to stay at a distance from people. They lived in colonies outside the cities and villages with other lepers. People didn't touch them ever. There were no more hugs, kisses, or physical intimacy of any kind. As someone approached them, they would call out “unclean” as a warning. On top of all of this, people also saw leprosy as evidence of sin. It seemed reasonable that, if they were so severely afflicted, God must have something against them.
- 6) Why do you suppose Jesus touched this man?
Jesus was showing love, compassion, acceptance, and welcome to this man. He wasn't on the outs with God. He wasn't even a second-rate believer.
- 7) Does leprosy make people's skin die off and decay?
No, leprosy makes people lose the feeling of pain. The damage is done by the person themselves, as they unknowingly hurt and harm themselves. They don't have any signals of pain to stop themselves.
- 8) Does this description make you thankful for pain?
In a way, yes. Pain is helping us from harming ourselves even more seriously.
- 9) When someone is hurting, how is atheism even worse than Christianity?
A Christian has to deal with pain. An atheist has to deal with meaningless pain.
- 10) Where is Jesus among all our pain?

First, he's there at the cross being insulted, tortured, and abandoned in ways that we can't even imagine. Secondly, he's also at our side with his heart breaking at the pain that we're going through.

11) How does the Bible answer the world's pain?

It says our pain ends as we are welcomed into glory. It also says that our future glory will be to such a degree that it will make even our worst pain and suffering seem like nothing. It will be completely irrelevant. Nobody in heaven will be asking, "Why did I have to go through so much?" We'll just be overwhelmed with considering, "How could God give all this to me?"

12) What can you say to the family whose child is suffering and/or has died at an early age?

You might say, "God is always good." Or, "Better to have a child in heaven than to lose them forever." Or, "May God give you the strength to bear these burdens." Or perhaps, you just cry along with them.

13) What answer can you give to the person suffering with chronic pain or illness?

Remind them that God is with them. And even if nobody else understands their pain, he still does. Remind them of how Christ suffered beyond measure so that we wouldn't have to. Remind them that their troubles aren't a sign that God has left them or holds something against them. They're a sign of a broken world, and make us yearn for heaven.

"Who can *really* say what death *means*?" (Luke 7:11-16)

14) What surprises you about the way that Jesus reacts during the funeral procession?

Jesus touched the coffin. And he spoke to the dead boy.

15) Does it really make much difference? After all, the boy died again sometime later...

Yes, it makes a great deal of difference. The boy provided for his mother, and as far as we know, got to live a full earthly life. This event also pointed many people to Jesus as the Savior. Finally, this proves that Christ can help us when death draws near. In fact, he's the only one who can.

16) C.S. Lewis said that for hunger we have food, for thirst there is water, for sexual desire there is physical intimacy, and when we long for something that nothing in this world satisfies, it's a sign that there is more than what we now see. What do you think of that?

I find that a profound logical truth.

17) Is it better to have loved and lost than never to have loved at all?

Most would probably say so. Far better to enjoy the relationships we have while we can and see them as gifts from God, rather than to have never experienced them in the first place. More than that, I'd rather have a dead child or a dead wife who has made it to heaven forever than to have an unbelieving relative who won't ever arrive.

18) How do you respond to someone who says, "Death is natural."

If it were so natural and not a big deal, then it shouldn't hurt so much when they die. Even the atheist senses the horror, pain, and brokenness that death brings.

- 19) Have you ever seen a mummy in real life? I have. And it was truly the most disgusting and awful things I've seen. These particular mummies weren't hiding silently inside a sarcophagus, wrapped in linen strips, or even properly clothed. It was a clear display of what our sin deserves. Do you see more beauty or ugliness lying in the coffin? The Day of the Dead may use vibrant colors, our own morticians may do their best work, but death is ugly, and it's a result of sin. If you want to see someone at their best, encourage them with Jesus on earth, and find them in heaven.
- 20) A man sent out a Christmas card to me, and as I understand it, many other friends and family. But it was one that I don't forget. It pointed to the manger, the beauty of a small child born, and the peace and life we have in him. But the card also took a sharp turn, when Gerry said that this would be the last Christmas he would be able to share with us on earth, and that he wasn't even sure he'd make it that long. (In the end, it was New Years Eve, at around 6:45 pm that he went to heaven, about the time we said the "amen" in a prayer that asked God to take him home.) Few times have I seen such speed with a prayer's answer. I'll not forget the closing of that Christmas card. He's still celebrating with Jesus, and waiting for me to come to the party, too. Does such a sentimental card really mean anything? I believe that Gerry lives on, not only in my memory and longing. I trust in Christ and in his empty tomb where he ripped out the teeth and claws from death itself.
- 21) What powerful words are you waiting for Jesus to say to you? Perhaps, "I say to you, get up." Perhaps, "Come here. I'll dry every tear from your eyes." Or perhaps, "Enter now into your master's happiness."