



Sunday Sep 22, 2013
Answers To Common Questions (Part 3)
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In June we invited people to send in their questions, with the intent that we will answer them during our Sunday services.

We have broadly categorized the questions we will be covering into five main areas: Christian walk, Marriage, Lifestyle, Theology, Church.

Thus far, we covered

Christian walk, and Marriage (Sun Sep 01)

Lifestyle (Sun Sep 08)

Today we will cover questions on Theology (Sun Sep 22)

There are some questions on "Theology" and "Church" that we do not have time to cover, but hope to address these in a publication, in the near future.

We will attempt to be brief but clear, direct and Scriptural.

On topics where the Scriptures are silent, our approach is to address the matter (A)in the light of what the Scriptures speak on related or similar issues, (B)in the light of the nature of God and (C)with practical wisdom.

In cases where we are sharing our personal opinion, we will indicate that we are doing so, and you are free to hold to your own personal opinion on the matter.

Theology

These questions and answers are not arranged in any particular order.

1, God's Will and His Sovereignty - Can we have some clarification on :

A, How is God sovereign over creation? Especially in the light of Ex 4:11, Ps 139:13-16, Is 45:7 (Do we come into the world exactly the way God intended us to be?)

B, How is God sovereign over situations? (In cases of calamities, accidents, murder, rape, still-born, etc, is it really correct to say 'God permitted/allowed it?')

A good analogy is that of the Owner and Tenant. The Owner own the building (e.g. a home). He rents/leases it out to a Tenant. The terms of the lease Agreement defines what can and cannot happen in the building while the Tenant is there. As long as the



Tenant is in the building, whatever happens in the building is the Tenant's responsibility. The Owner is not held responsible for what happens on a day-to-day basis. If the Tenant leave his door open and thieves come in steal and loot, it is not the Owner's fault. Neither is it the Owner's "will" that such a thing happened. In fact the Owner provided a door and lock to keep the building safe. If the Tenant does not keep the place clean, and the building gets infested with pests, it is neither the Owner's "will" or Owner's "doing".

The Tenant is held responsible. The Tenant can call upon the Owner to intervene in matters as per the Agreement. The "Sovereignty" of the Owner is still in force, in that he still owns the building, and can step in when ever he wishes to, although in the normal course of things, he may do so occasionally or whenever he is invited/requested to do so. Also, his "sovereignty" is still in force so that once the building is handed back to his possession, he will do as he pleases.

This in many ways represents the relationship between God and mankind.

Psa 115:3 But our God is in heaven; He does whatever He pleases.

Psa 115:16 The heaven, even the heavens, are the LORD's; But the earth He has given to the children of men.

God does as He pleases (vs 3) and yet He is pleased to have handed the responsibility of the earth to man (vs 15). Both these statements are true and are the "two sides of the same coin".

We see this clearly depicted in the "Fall of Man":

- 1, It was NOT God's will for man to sin.
- 2, It was NOT God's will for sin, satan and sickness to come into this world.
- 3, God knew all about it and had already prepare both the Lamb of God (Revelation 13:8) and a Kingdom for redeemed people (Matthew 25:34) even before He created man.
- 4, Yet He did not "cause" man to sin neither did He "intervene" to keep man from sinning. He sovereignly stayed out of the picture to let man do as he chose.
- 5, He then stepped in to provide a way out for man from the consequences of man's own decisions. And here again, He sovereignly stays out of the picture to let man make the choice to get receive what has been provided and get saved, healed, delivered, etc.

Here is what we learned in Lesson 01 of FOUNDATIONS:

- As Sovereign – He is absolute Master, Ruler, Lord and everything yields and bows to Him. 1 Timothy 1:17



- In His Sovereignty, He has chosen to entrust man with a free will and He has chosen to respect man's choice.
- God is so secure in His sovereignty that He is not afraid to give up control. As far as a human beings "free will" is concerned, God has given up control.
- Man's freedom to choose and the choices he makes, even if it opposes the purposes of God, in no way, undermines, lessens or weakens God's Sovereignty. God is still in authority.
- However, man's choices also have their consequences.

In the things that happen in the world around us, there is the interplay of five major factors:

- 1, God's divine purpose for the human race which He unfolds.
- 2, Our co-working (partnership) with God through faith, obedience and His empowerment to see His Kingdom established in our midst.
- 3, The consequence of the Fall, which has led decay prevailing in our world and affecting every sphere of life and activity on earth (Romans 8:19-23)
- 4, The choice of sinful man resulting in terrible consequences and in some cases the judgment of God.
- 5, The direct work of demonic spirits that are active in this present world promoting sin, causing sickness and all forms of wicked works.

God has a plan and purpose for each one. His original intent is for each of use to be fashioned in accordance to His plan, perfect and whole. However, He is not responsible for what man does or demons do that interfere with His perfect plan for each individual. For a child being born - God intends for that child to be perfect. God has a specific purpose for that child. But if in some way the child is born deformed (e.g. due to defect in the genes, due to a direct attack of satan, or due to parental negligence, or due to medical errors, etc.) we cannot attribute this to God's "will" (because His will is clear) neither can we attribute it to God's "doing" (because He make all things perfect). God will work through all of this and "in spite" of all of this, NOT "because of" this - to help any individual who partners with Him in faith, to fulfill His original purpose.

In cases of calamities, accidents, murder, rape, still-born, etc, is it really correct to say 'God permitted/allowed it?' Generally speaking "NO". It is wrong to make this statement. We cannot hold God responsible for such things, any more that the Tenant can hold the Owner responsible for the thieves who break-in or pests that infest the home. There is the inter-play of several factors as we mentioned above. As we see in Scripture, only in judgment for sin/disobedience or in some rare cases, God either (A)withdraws His protection over an individual or a people for a season, or (B)engages the elements of this world e.g. deafness, dumbness, blindness, sickness, death to get



peoples attention. However, repentance brings people out from a place of judgment and into God's mercy. Mercy always triumphs over judgment (James 2:13). We also see that in times/seasons when God's glory being manifested is great, there is lower tolerance for sin (including unbelief). Greater glory, greater grace, but lower tolerance for sin.

Calvinism And Arminianism

In church theology, there are two main theological belief systems: Calvinism is based on the theological beliefs and teaching of John Calvin (1509-1564), a leader in the Reformation, and Arminianism is based on the views of Dutch theologian Jacobus Arminius (1560-1609).

In summary, Calvinism centers on the supreme sovereignty of God, predestination, the total depravity of man, unconditional election, limited atonement, irresistible grace, and the perseverance of the saints.

Arminianism emphasizes conditional election based on God's foreknowledge, man's free will through prevenient grace (i.e. divine grace that precedes human decision) to cooperate with God in salvation, Christ's universal atonement, resistible grace, and salvation that can potentially be lost.

These two theological positions differ on the areas of God's Sovereignty, Man's Depravity, Election, Christ's Atonement, Grace, Man's Will, Perseverance.

Examples:

God's Sovereignty:

Calvinism - God's sovereignty is unconditional, unlimited, and absolute. All things are predetermined by the good pleasure of God's will. God foreknew because of his own planning.

Arminianism - God has limited his control in correspondence with man's freedom and response. God's decrees are associated with his foreknowledge of man's response.

Christ's Atonement:

Calvinism - Jesus Christ died to save only those who were given to him (elected) by the Father in eternity past. Since Christ did not die for everyone, but only for the elect, his atonement is wholly successful.



Arminianism - Christ died for everyone. The Savior's atoning death provided the means of salvation for the entire human race. Christ's atonement, however, is effective only for those who believe.

At APC our theological stance is toward Arminianism and we operate out of that position.

For a concise summary on the differences see:

<http://christianity.about.com/od/denominations/a/calvinarminian.htm>

2, Is it right for women to preach/teach God's Word?

First, we must understand that in Christ there is equality in the grace that is given to both genders.

"There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus." Gal. 3:28.

Second, NT Ministry is not restricted to "males" alone:

The Greek "*anthropos*", Strong's 444 is gender neutral, e.g. "Man (*anthropos*) shall not live by bread alone..." (Matthew 4:4)

2 Timothy 2:2

"And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men (*anthroopois*), who shall be able to teach others also."

anthroopois, plural of the word *anthropos*, Strong's 444 "a human being, whether male or female.

Paul does not use the Greek word for man "aner" 435, which is totally masculine, but the gender neutral word "*anthroopois*".

Ephesians 4:8,11

8...He gave gifts unto men (*anthropos*).

11 And He gave some ("some" could be he or she)....

1 Timothy 3:1-2

If a man (*ei tis*) desire the office of a bishop, he desireth a goodwork.

ei tis = if any (Strong's Dictionary), whoever (Thayer's Dictionary)

1 Timothy 3:11

"Even so {must their}{not in the original) wives (*gunaikas* 1135 Women) be grave, not slanderers, sober, faithful in all things."



The outpouring of the Spirit is for both men and women (Acts 2:17,18, Philip's daughters who prophesied Acts 21:8,9).

There is no limitation in spiritual gifts of 1 Corinthians 12:1-7 to male alone.

There is no restriction in offices to male alone (1 Corinthians 12:27-28)

Paul had both Aquila and his wife Priscilla as part of his ministry team (Acts 18) and both of them ministered. Paul, called one woman (Phoebe, Romans 16:1) a Minister, and praised another woman (Junia Romans 16:7) as an outstanding Apostle, and lists several women among others as part of those who served.

What about 1 Corinthians 14:34 and 1 Timothy 2:12?

Our interpretation of these two passages must be consistent with the context in which these were written, as well as with the rest of Scripture.

1 Corinthians 14:34

1 Corinthians 14 - the primary objective in 1 Corinthians 14 is to encourage the use of spiritual gifts in a church gathering, but to maintain order and decency.

In this chapter Paul gives the injunction to "keep silent" which applies to 3 situations: speaking in tongues, prophecy and women

- Speak in tongues to the church audience if there is someone who will also flow in interpretation. Else "keep silent" (1 Corinthians 14:27,28).
- Take turns to prophesy, and keep silent when someone else has the inspiration (1 Corinthians 14:29,30)
- Women, if you have questions keep silent in church. Ask your husbands at home later (1 Corinthians 14:34,35)

The objective is order, not the stopping of the exercise of the spiritual gift. We don't use the "keep silent" injunction to prevent speaking in tongues or prophecy. So why should we prevent women from preaching in church?

1 Timothy 2:11-15


We will have to interpret this in the light of Paul's own ministry practices and in the light of the rest of Scripture. The issue here is submission and yielding to men when it comes to leadership, teaching, etc. It was lawful for men in public assemblies to ask questions, or even interrupt the speaker when there was any matter in his speech which they did not understand; but this liberty was not granted to women. This therefore is not a prohibition from women being in ministry to serve God, but rather an active submission to men and a code for proper conduct in local church setting.



3, Can a believer have a demon?

There are different levels of "demonization" - that is influence and working of devils.

INFLUENCE	OPPRESSION	POSSESSION	EMPOWERMENT
Temptation Deception Intimidation Intrusion Opposition	Sickness Depression Bondage Mental/emotional/behavioral Strongholds	Part-time (manifests intermittently) Full-time (totally deranged)	Influence and control people Manifest signs and wonders


 Increasing levels of demonization

A believer will face demonic "influences" and can be under "Oppression" to this extent, 'yes' a believer can have a demon. Many times when a believer is being delivered (set free) from varying degrees of demonic oppression, the "manifestation" can be very similar to that of a person being set free from "possession". However, we do not say that the believer is "possessed" but "oppressed". Regardless of the syntax and forms of demonization - our goal is to cast out devils and set people free.

4, Salvation - What happens to those who do not believe? "It is true that Christ is in heaven interceding for us and has set aside a place for each of us, who believe in Him. What happens to the other half of population (non Christians) that do not believe in Him. What happens to their soul when they pass away from the face of this earth? "

The gift of salvation is through our Lord Jesus Christ and is experienced by those who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ (Romans 6:23, John 3:16, Romans 10:9). The Bible is emphatic that there is salvation in no other (Acts 4:12, John 14:6). Every one will be judged according to the Gospel (Acts 2:16). Other than this we do not know much on how God will justly judge those who have never heard the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

When a believer dies his/her spirit goes to be with the Lord in heaven (2 Corinthians 5:8, 1 Thessalonians 4:14, Philippians 1:21,23). When an unbeliever dies, his/her spirit goes to hell (Gr. *hades*) awaiting the Great White Throne judgment after which they will be cast into the Lake of fire (Revelation 20:10-15).

5, Sabbath - Why do we not observe the seventh day (Saturday) as the Sabbath?

The Old Covenant clearly stated the observance of the seventh day (our Saturday) as the Sabbath, the day of rest.



In the New Covenant, through His death the Lord Jesus removed the requirements that was against us (Colossians 2:14). Hence, we are no longer under the laws and requirements of the Old Covenant, including the keeping of the Sabbath (Colossians 2:16-23). Instead, each individual is free to observe a particular day or all days as days unto the Lord (Romans 14:4-8). The believers began gathering on the first day of the week, being the resurrection day, and called this as the "Lord's day" (Luke 24:1, John 20:1,19 Acts 20:7, 1 Corinthians 16:2, Revelation 1:10). So we continue doing this - although there is nothing restricting us from gathering and worshipping together on any other convenient day (as in some parts of the world, the believers gather together on a Friday, etc.).

6, Dreams - When we get dreams how can we tell which of them is from God and which are not.

7, Dreams - What is your opinion on people having sexual dreams?

We will answer both of these questions together.

Dreams can happen because of one of three reasons:

- 1, the natural working of our brain where our own activities, fears, anxieties are expressed (Ecclesiasts 5:3)
- 2, God speaking to us at night through the dream (Job 33:14-17)
- 3, could be demonic, with the enemy injecting our mind with fears, etc. - while there are no Scriptures on this, this seems very possible.

Here are some checks we can do to determine if a dream is from God:

- 1, Is there an overwhelming sense that God has spoken, a sense of God's presence, a sense of peace.
- 2, Even in dreams that warn us, or alert us of danger - there is a sense that God is still on our side and we can overcome - rather than a morbid fear or sense of hopelessness or despair
- 3, The meaning become apparent to us directly or with the help of another believer who can help us interpret and the course of action or response is clear
- 4, There is no obvious activity that I was directly involved in that would have caused this dream (normally), so that I eliminate the possibility that it is my own mind at work.

If there is doubt about the source of the dream - it is best to lay it aside and not be bothered by it.



About sexual dreams - while we are not psychologists and hence cannot comment on this from a "technical/scientific" perspective. Here are some things we would encourage you to do when sexual dreams happen (A)Cleanse yourself from the effect of such dreams in the name of Jesus. Refuse to let such things influence you. Renounce the effect of such things (B)Fill your mind during the day with God's Word, worship music, set your affections on spiritual things (C)Cover yourself when going to sleep and consecrate your mind and dreams unto God. Doing these things will considerably if not completely stop sexual dreams.

8, Speaking in tongues - When we speak in tongues. How do we know whether what we are saying is right and that we are not making things up. Is there a way we can increase in this language through practice or does the Holy Spirit increase these utterances. Sometimes i get worried whether i am making things up and whether God will be angry because of this.

We refer you to our publication "The Wonderful Benefits of Speaking in Tongues" for a thorough treatment of this subject.

<http://apcwo.org/newsite/resources/publications/english/TheWonderfulBenefitOfPrayingInTongues.pdf>

9, Spiritual Authority - In the Bible there is a story where a few men went out casting demons in Jesus name but the evil spirit questioned these men saying paul i know Jesus i know but who are you. These men were not given authority similarly is everyone who can speak in tongues allowed to pray over people who don't have the gift of tongues.

The seven sons of Sceva were unsaved people who did not believe in Jesus and did not have their position in Christ (Acts 19:13-17). Hence they were unable to exercise the authority in Jesus name. However this example does NOT hold true for believers. All believers in Jesus Christ have been authorized to use the name of Jesus and minister in His name (Mark 16:17,18 Luke 10:19). Hence, YES all believers who themselves have experience the work of the Spirit and speak in tongues can pray for others to do so. Ananias who was a believer was sent to pray for Saul to received sight and be filled with the Spirit (Acts 9:17).

10, Depression - I am a born again Christian who on antidepressants , for long years. Right now, even if I'm under medication, I'm leading quite a normal life. But I want to consult a Christian Psychiatrist, so that I can decide on a new treatment course , so as not to depend on antidepressants throughout out my life. What can you suggest for me as a pastor, to overcome depression in my life?. Do I have to depend on medicines



throughout my life? I am a person who desires to live in the fullness that God has designed for me. Can you suggest a lifestyle for me to win over this deadly stuff ?

First of all, there is nothing wrong in taking medications, as directed by the Physician/Clinical Psychiatrist. Please follow their recommended treatment plan.

Secondly, we know that our God is our Healer. He restores our soul - mind, will, emotions. There is a pathway that we can take to receive healing and wholeness even for emotional/mental health problems.

- You can make use of good Christian teaching on this. APC has a free publication called "The Conquest of the Mind". Joyce Meyer also has a book "The Battlefield of the Mind" that you can use. There are other Christian authors whose resources can be used.
- Meet regularly with a pastor/Christian counselor who can walk with you through this journey to wholeness.
- Spend time in God's presence, privately and corporately - because healing and wholeness comes in His Presence.

Do this while continuing on the treatment plan prescribed by your Physician/Clinical Psychiatrist. Only at the "right time" with approval from your Physician and along with support from your pastor/Christian Counselor transition completely off medication, etc.

11, Committing Suicide -

A. What if we are undergoing depression and commit suicide, does God accept it ?

B. Will the soul go to heaven or hell if the soul knew Jesus as a personal saviour?

C. Wouldn't it be cowardice to say Jesus is my personal saviour and yet I want to end my life?

D. Sometimes the Devil torments us when we stand up for something and these thoughts inflict conflict of interest in us, in that moment of weakness if life comes to an end will we be forgiven?

Regardless of our situations, suicide is not the right thing to do. It is a cowardly thing to do, especially for us believers who have God on our side. But it is possible that some believers may end up taking this step and we are addressing "What if" a believer commits this.

The New Testament makes it clear that only one sin that sends a person to hell, which is not having a personal faith in and a personal relationship with Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour (John 3:36, 1 John 5:11,12).

Lets consider another scenario:



What if a believer tells lies and the rapture happens at that moment (liars will not be in the Kingdom Revelation 21:8)?

What if a believer momentarily has fear/becomes cowardly and the rapture happens at that instant (those who are cowardly will not enter heaven Revelation 21:8).

What if a believer looks lustfully at a woman for a moment and the rapture happens at that instant?

Would a believer lose his/her eternal salvation at that moment just because of that sin? The answer is 'No'. The work of redemption that Jesus has provided us is eternal (Hebrews 9:12), He has perfected us forever (Hebrews 10:14), and He saves us to the uttermost (Hebrews 7:25). It is only when a believer willfully disregards Christ's work and renounces the faith does the completed work, cease to be effective in his/her case (Hebrews 6:4-6 , Hebrews 10:26,27,38,39)

Based on this understanding, if a believer commits suicide, although this is a cowardly thing to do, we believe he/she will still go to heaven (our answer to A-D).

12, Creation - Going by Biblical records, creation of Adam and Eve dates to approx. 5000 BC. However, fossiled evidence shows that man has been around for a few million years. As a christian, I am troubled to see such a big difference.

Our response to this may be simplistic, not scientific - but something that satisfies us very well.

Imagine we were in the Garden of Eden sometime as Genesis Chapter 2 unfolded, and God showed us around.

Imagine if God showed the man and women He created and then asked us to estimate how old we thought they were.

We'd probably guess Adam's age to be 40 years and according to our evolution theory he must have come about as a result of over millions of years of evolutionary process. God would have smiled and said, I just created him a few days back.

Similarly, if God asked us to estimate the age of the trees, animals, etc..we through our current process of dating would have arrived about several thousands or millions of years. God would have smiled and said I just made all these things a few days back.

So, essentially, God made everything in a "mature" state, which throws off all our scientific approach to estimation. While there is nothing wrong with our scientific tools themselves, the fact that God made everything in a "mature" state cannot be calibrated.