THE THREE MOST IMPORTANT QUESTIONS

Question #1 - Is life real?

Have you ever heard of Solipsism? It is the philosophy that life is not real. We are not actually here. There is no earth, no universe. We’re just an invisible, floating consciousness. Our existence is just an illusion.

Okay, that’s kind of out there. Most of us believe that life is real. We’re here, living on this planet.

**Question #2 – Is death real?**

I think that most of us would agree that death is real. We’ve all known people who were once alive (we saw them, touched them, interacted with them) and then they died and now they are gone. Death is real.

Question #3 – What, if anything, happens after death?

This is where things get much more challenging. That’s because we all have had firsthand experience with life. And while we haven’t personally experienced death, we’re certainly convinced of its reality from the experience of people we were close to who have died.

However, how can we know what, if anything, happens after death? Well, we can’t know with absolute certainty.

As a result, for all of human history people have tried to imagine, to understand, to discover the answer to this third of the three most important questions.

Some religions believe in soul sleep – where the body dies and decomposes, but the soul goes into a kind of eternal rest.

Others teach reincarnation, where the soul is continually recycled from one life form to another.

Then there are those who believe that nothing happens after death. That there is no afterlife. When a person breathes their last breath, their existence is extinguished, like the blowing out of a candle.

There is certainly no shortage of opinions and beliefs out there as to what happens to a person after they die.

But here’s the bottom line – whatever it is the does actually happen after death, that’s what is going to happen to you. No belief in this life, regardless of how strongly held, is capable of altering the reality of what actually happens after death.

If there really is no God, no heaven or hell – then when you die, you’re not going to go to heaven just because in this life you believed you would. There would be no heaven for you to go to. Your faith or belief cannot make it become a reality.

If reincarnation isn’t what happens after death, then no one will be reincarnated. A belief in this life cannot change what happens after death. Wouldn’t you agree with that?

You, no doubt, are familiar with the John Lennon song “Imagine”. He sings, “Imagine there’s no heaven, it’s easy if you try. No hell below us, above us only sky.”

This reflects the philosophy of relativism that permeates our culture these days.

However, no one in their right mind thinks, “because I can wish or imagine that 2 + 2 = 5, then that is true.”

No one in their right mind says, “because I can imagine that I can fly, I will step off the top of the stadium over there and I will fly.”

But every day wonderful and intelligent people say, “well, since I don’t believe there is a God or an afterlife, those things do not exist.”

Whatever is it that does actually happen to people after they die – that’s what happened to John Lennon and it’s what will happen to you and me.

So what we should all seek, is to discover whatever is the actual, objective truth about what, if anything, happens after death.

Eternity is a long time

In the north there is a giant rock mountain – one hundred miles tall and one hundred miles wide. Once every thousand years a small bird comes to sharpen his beak on that rock. When that rock has been completely worn away, that will be like one day in eternity.

The concept of “forever” is virtually impossible for us as humans to comprehend.

I would venture to guess that most people spend more time watching a single three-hour football game, than they spend in their entire lifetimes contemplating and seeking to understand the truth about what happens after they die.

We get busy, distracted. However, a lot is at stake when it comes to question #3 – what, if anything, happens after death?

The biggest spiritual misconception in the world

I’m sure you have been to a funeral. Have you ever noticed in that setting, how everyone joins in the assumption that “well, at least they’re in a better place”, or “everyone goes to heaven when they die”, right?

Well, that is not what the Bible says. That is not what Jesus taught. Now, some choose to believe that the Bible is wrong or that Jesus Christ was mistaken – that’s their prerogative.

Today, if you ask people, “what does a person have to do to get into heaven?” They will say things like…

* “Be a good person”
* “Believe in God”
* “Do more good things that you do bad things”
* “Be honest, care about others, live a good life”

All of which, according to the Bible, are wrong answers.

Religion verses Christianity

Religion could be spelled D-O. It’s all about what you do – observe the rituals, keep the rules, follow the traditions, do good works. It’s all about human effort.

Christianity, on the other hand, could be spelled D-O-N-E. It’s all about what Christ has already done for us on the cross.

How confident are you?

If there was a fourth “most important question” it would be – where do we go for reliable information about what actually happens after death? Because, whatever it is that does happen, is what will happen to you.

Some people turn to horoscopes or psychics. Others listen to Dr. Phil or guests on Oprah, self-help authors or life-coaches.

Then, there is the Bible, and it speaks more clearly and compellingly about death and the afterlife than other source.

Now some will say, “The Bible? Isn’t it filled with myths and mistakes?” I would challenge them to do their due diligence before making such claims. They will discover that the Bible is, without question, the most researched and historically accurate document of ancient literature in the world. It has stood the test of time for a reason. And it contains very clear and specific information on what happens to people after death.

How important is reliable information?

Now with some things in life, it’s not all that critical that you have a clear understanding of what’s true and not true.

If you were told a movie started at 7:30, and when you got there you discovered it had actually started at 7:00 – that’s kind of frustrating.

If you were just sure you had enough gas in your car to run one more errand before stopping to refill, but you were wrong and now you’re stuck on the side of the road – that is a huge pain in the rear.

What if you had someone help you with a plan of savings and investments to ensure that you’d be in great shape financially for retirement. What if over 30 or more years you sacrificed and faithfully followed that plan, only to turn 65 or 70 and discover that you had been misinformed? That you were going to have nowhere near enough money to retire on. Well, that is more than just frustrating, that’s serious! That’s a situation where it’s just critical that you have trustworthy information.

How much more so is that the case when it comes to information about the afterlife? There is just far too much at stake to be fuzzy or misinformed about eternity.

Missing a movie or running out of gas, fall into the “not so important in the big scheme of things” category.

Not having enough money to retire on, that falls into the “much more important” category.

Having trustworthy information about what lies beyond the grave, wouldn’t you agree, that falls into the “supremely important” category?

Certainly, not an issue about which you say, “well, doesn’t the Bible say something like God helps those who help themselves?” Or, “One time I heard somebody say this or that”. Or, “I kind of think maybe it’s this”, and then have no real way to back up or substantiate your beliefs?

If eternity is real, there is way too much at stake for you to base your afterlife on flimsy or unreliable information.

What now?

I have a friend who has two doctorates and was a vice president at OU and then the dean of the graduate colleges. His name is Lee Williams and he showed up at my church about fifteen years ago under duress when his wife drug him along. Lee had gone to church as a child but had abandoned it and had not given it any time or thought for forty some years.

He said he was surprised that he actually enjoyed our services and found the talks to be practical and helpful. He continued attending to placate his wife and family.

One day he said he’d like to talk to me. So, we met and he said that “as a scientist and academic, I just can’t accept the Bible as being completely true.” Also, that “If I can’t believe in something that I can be honest and authentic about it, then I just can’t do it, and so I could never have 100% faith.”

I told him, “well, you don’t have to have 100% faith to go to heaven. I don’t think anyone really has 100% faith and no doubts whatsoever.” I said, “to cross the line of faith, all you have to have is 51%. That puts you on the side of belief. If you can trust that what Jesus did on the cross for you is your only ticket into heaven someday, you’re in!”

Then, I said, “overtime, your faith is going to grow. You’ll discover things in the Bible that you see are real and that work in your life. You’ll get to where you’re 60% belief and 40% doubt. Then, it’ll be more like 75% faith and just 25% doubt.”

It took a while, many months, for Lee to think things through, to do his due diligence. Then, he made the decision to open up his life to God, to receive the free gift of salvation and eternal life through what Christ did for him on the cross.

Now, Lee was a great guy to begin with. Highly intelligent, great people person, capable, gifted, successful – and while he retains all of these qualities, God has worked in his life over the years. Today he is a more caring, humble, selfless and grounded person. He has more inner peace. He wants to make a difference in the lives of other people.

What about you?

It doesn’t matter if you have been far from God for a long time, done a lot of terrible things or a lot of wonderful things. Remember, religion is all about human effort, what you do for God. True Christianity is all about what Christ was already done for you, on the cross.

So, IF there really is an afterlife, what are you putting YOUR hope in to get into heaven? That you tried to live a good life? That you were a better person that most other people? That you believed there is a God? None of those are the authentic ticket in. Only accepting what Jesus did for you on the cross is the answer.

You can do that by simply praying, *“God, I know I’ve screwed up, done things I regret and maybe left you out of my life for a long time. I’m no saint. So, I probably don’t deserve to get into heaven on my own. However, if what Jesus did on the cross is the only ticket in, then I want it. I need it. Please come into my life in a real way and then take me to heaven when I die.”*

If you’ll say that prayer and really mean it, then you can begin to experience an inner peace that God can bring into your life. You won’t have to lay awake at night worrying about what happens after death. It will be a done deal.

Overtime, you will actually start wanting to know what God says and you’ll see how His wisdom works in your life. He will begin to transform you from the kind of person you are into more of the kind of person He wants you to be. Not to become a crazed fanatic, rather the same person that you are, but with God in it.

Now for some, this may seem like jumping into something way too quickly. And if you need time to learn more and think this through, then that’s okay. This is literally the most important decision of your life, the only one that will determine your eternity.

Some people get married just weeks after they meet someone. Most of us want to take a lot more time to make important life decisions. The bigger the decision, the more you need to think it through. Take the time. Do your due diligence. Ask your toughest questions. This is not a decision to take lightly.

Then, even just 51% faith all it takes.

The Three Most Important Questions

Is life real?

Is death real?

What happens after death?

As stated earlier, most people spend more time watching a single football game than they spend during their entire lifetimes contemplating eternity. You have invested some time in reading this. Will you just set this aside and become too busy and distracted again? Of will you commit yourself to doing something about it?

I urge you, if you’re ready, to pray that simple prayer that was mentioned early. If you’re not ready, then I hope you’ll to make time to study, to discover the truth about what happens after death. With your eternity at stake, make a wise decision.

If you would like to talk about this further, and/or if you have other questions about God or the Bible, please contact me. I would be happy to talk on the phone or in person.

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