



SHOW ME HOW TO
ANSWER TOUGH
QUESTIONS

R. Larry Moyer

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Show Me How to Answer Tough Questions

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What Thirty-Five Years Has Taught Me

When I find something more exciting than what I am now doing, I'm going to go do it! But I don't expect I will. I don't know of anything more exciting than introducing people to Jesus Christ and training other believers to do the same thing. If you introduce others to Jesus Christ, your life takes on eternal significance. You've been used to populate heaven. And because eternal life is as secure as the promises of God, nobody can undo what God has used you to do. When you train other believers to do the same, you'll multiply yourself thousands of times over and will populate heaven many times faster. Thousands of believers will be helping you tell others, people you alone could never have reached. If that's not exciting, please tell me what is!

Having evangelized for longer than thirty-five years now, I'm bothered immensely by something. I can honestly say it has kept me awake at night. Most believers never lead anyone to Christ in their entire lives. Some surveys reveal that as few as 5 percent of believers lead people to Christ. Why don't the other 95 percent? I promise you, it's not because they don't want to. I've had too many people tell me how they have dreamed of leading even one person to Christ in their lifetime. Instead, one of the biggest reasons they give for their inactivity in evangelism is, "I'm afraid I won't be able to answer the questions and objections non-Christians have." They are referring to such questions and objections as "I don't believe

the Bible,” “Christians are hypocrites,” “I don’t believe there is a God,” and so on.

But do you know what bothers me even more? When considering this problem—their inability to answer the questions and objections of non-Christians—believers make so many mistakes and have so many fallacies in their thinking. These mistakes and fallacies allow fear, rather than boldness, to have the upper hand. Let’s talk about a few of them.

One mistake is to think that to reach a non-Christian, you have to be an intellectual giant—a person who can refute any question and respond to any objection. In other words, you have to be the equivalent of a seminary professor or have the mind of a C. S. Lewis.

What’s wrong with that kind of thinking? I’m a graduate of both a college and a seminary. I know how to give all the arguments about the existence of God, explain all the apparent contradictions in the Bible, and analyze all the “theories” behind the empty tomb of Christ. But having interacted with non-Christians for over twenty-five years, I’ve found that often they didn’t need intellectual answers. They needed common-sense answers—the kind that even a new believer in Christ could give. Those common-sense answers have done more to help me lead people to Christ than all the lectures I’ve heard in seminary classrooms, grateful though I am for the benefit of such training.

This willingness to provide common-sense answers is one reason new converts often lead more individuals to Christ than anyone else. It’s not intellectual ability that’s needed most in evangelism, it’s enthusiasm and common sense empowered by the Holy Spirit. Dawson Trotman, founder of the Navigators, was right when he said, “Soul winners are not soul winners because of what they know but because of Who they know and how much they want others to know Him.” Besides, when I do meet non-Christians who need someone with the mind of C. S. Lewis to speak to them, I know which books to loan them.

A second mistake believers make is that they too easily drift

from the central message of Christianity—the substitutionary death of Christ and His resurrection on the third day. What God has done is irrefutable! Even though people are starving in third-world countries, even though children may die at an early age and adults can suffer agonizing deaths, how can I accuse Him of not being a God of love when He died on a cross for me? He did for me what I wouldn't think of doing for others. He has far more cause to question me than I have to question Him. Furthermore, if people don't believe there was a historical Jesus who died for them, they then have to explain away the empty tomb—one of the most attested facts of history! So with non-Christians I must keep going back to the cross and the empty tomb. Those are the issues. If He died for me, what am I going to do with Him? If He didn't arise the third day, disprove the empty tomb. Along with emphasizing the cross and the empty tomb, we must make it clear that we are saved simply by trusting in Jesus Christ as the only way to heaven. We can go through the motions, but if our trust is not in Christ alone to save us, we are lost. Many who sit in church every Sunday have missed that message!

A third mistake is taking the defensive instead of the offensive. It dawned on me after years in evangelism that God's greatest need was not the person who could defend Him but the one who would declare Him. After all, He is big enough to defend Himself! What I needed to do was take the offensive, not the defensive. It was so freeing and so illuminating to discover that truth. I don't have to have all the answers, I just have to be sure I have the correct message: Christ died for you and rose again. In fact, unbelievers have a bigger problem than I do. I have to explain what this God who exists is like. They have to explain what this God, who in their minds does not exist, is like! That's tough to do! Often when they do explain what He's like, I can say, "Okay, I don't think that person exists either." Then I tell them about the One who does exist—and the God of love He is.

Do you know what else astonished me? After years of studying the Scriptures, I was overwhelmed to find that all

the things I was discovering from personal experience were taught in the examples and exhortations of Scripture. For example, when Paul the apostle entered Corinth—a city filled with philosophers and intellectuals dedicated to discussion and debate—he explains what he did. He states, “And I, brethren, when I came to you, did not come with excellence of speech or of wisdom declaring to you the testimony of God. For I determined not to know anything among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified” (1 Cor. 2:1–2). Three verses later, he explains why: “. . . that your faith should not be in the wisdom of men but in the power of God.”

Paul didn’t want anyone leaving his presence saying, “I believe because Paul convinced me.” He wanted everyone leaving to be able to say, “I believe because God convinced me.” He knew that, ultimately, intellectual arguments and spiritual debates do not bring people to Christ. Only the Holy Spirit can do that. And when the Holy Spirit decides to work in a person’s life—watch out! Similarly, when Paul entered Athens, confronted the philosophers, and faced a city “given over to idols” (Acts 17:16), what are we told he did? The text tells us “he preached to them Jesus and the resurrection” (v. 18).

For that reason I’ve had a passion to write a book that illustrates the way we ought to respond to non-Christians, based on how I would see God responding to their questions and struggles. No one, including me, can presume to speak on behalf of God. By writing such a book, I am not pretending to have such knowledge or ability. What is expressed here is based on my experience as an evangelist committed to the expositional handling of Scripture, and on my years of interaction with the struggles of non-Christians. The techniques presented here show how we can respond to non-Christians based on the way I would envision a loving God responding. Evangelism, biblically defined, is not just reaching the lost, but also it is equipping believers to evangelize. I trust that what I have to say will be of some help in equipping you to reach your non-Christian acquaintances.

With each individual presented in this book, I encourage

you to do three things. First, listen to what is being said. Each letter represents a struggle that a non-Christian is expressing to a person who has begun to talk to him or her about spiritual things. Then look carefully at what the non-Christian is expressing; this often reveals some common-sense issues we need to address. Third, respond the way you might envision a loving God responding. In each chapter the responder represents us as believers (whether our name be Kathy, Susan, Chip, or Jack), and the response is the reply we ought to give to non-Christians.

As I write these responses, I demonstrate how we must keep going back to the cross and the resurrection. And by the way, here's where I need your understanding. You may read about four chapters and feel like shouting, "I've got it! Now I see how to keep taking the conversation back to the cross and the resurrection." For you I would not have to be as repetitive in the following chapters. I could simply come to a point and say, "Now do what I've just taught you to do." Others, who feel less confident in evangelism, have said to me, "Please don't assume anything. Keep showing me, conversation after conversation, how to go back to the cross and the empty tomb." For those people, I've done just that in every chapter. As I've done so, I've also tried to help believers understand the value of a compliment. Sincere compliments have a way of helping non-Christians relax and enjoy our conversations with them, making us seem less threatening to them.

I have a simple goal. It's not to give you pat answers to non-Christians' questions. If I attempted to do that, you'd often find yourself frustrated when one non-Christian didn't express his struggle or question the same way as another did, and the answer you had prepared simply didn't fit. Instead, I want to help you learn how to listen and then how to think before responding to non-Christians—how to think in a biblical, common-sense way. If you learn how to listen and how to think, you will be able to answer any non-Christian anywhere, and you will find yourself freed up in evangelism, no longer intimidated by what an unbeliever might ask or say.

John 1:14 tells us that Jesus Christ was “full of grace and truth.” We need that same balance. Some believers have grace but little or no truth in their response to non-Christians. Hence, they never confront the non-Christian with the truth of his sinful condition before God. Others have truth but no grace. Their cold, caustic, callous way of responding to non-Christians often leaves the unbeliever with little interest in Christ or Christianity. We need grace accompanied by truth and truth accompanied by grace. I trust the responses in the following chapters reveal that kind of balance.

One more thing—something I want to say loudly and clearly. Please don’t think for half a second that I believe people are brought to Christ through our well-thought-out answers or responses. Nothing could be further from the truth. One of my favorite verses throughout my ministry has been John 6:44, which says, “No one can come to me unless the Father who sent Me draws him.” I believe God wants us to develop and improve our communication skills, thereby increasing our effectiveness in helping lost people understand the gospel. But never lose sight of the fact that it is God who brings people to Christ. What God is asking you to do is bring Christ to your non-Christian acquaintances.

If in reading this book you find yourself freed up and fired up to talk to non-Christians and aggressively pursue them for Christ, the time spent in writing it was well worth the effort. Again I ask, What on earth could be more exciting than being used by God to populate heaven?

letter one

Matt's Struggle

*God may have created the world,
but circumstantial evidence proves he
doesn't know how to run it.*

Who Is Matt?

Matt is an upper-middle-class insurance company executive who lives in Dallas, Texas. He is in his midforties, happily married, and the father of three children. He has provided well for their needs and prides himself on being a successful businessman with a good reputation in the community. When approached about spiritual things, he admits being annoyed with the “injustices” surrounding life. If he has such a concern for his family, why can God not have that same concern for His world?

Listening to Matt

Dear Mike,

If I were you, I'd be embarrassed. God makes such lofty claims of might and power, but it appears he's lost control. Sometimes it would be easy to convince me he made the world. All the other explanations for how the universe got started don't particularly impress me, even though at times I pretend

they do. But, pardon my bluntness, I often feel that any ten-year-old with brains could run things better than God has.

Take, for example, one of the worst mass murders in U.S. history, the one that occurred in Killeen, Texas. Living here in Dallas, I saw that really shook up a lot of people. Some people have probably forgotten it by now, but I haven't. A guy drove his pickup through the front window of a cafeteria at lunchtime, pulled out a gun, opened fire, then turned the gun on himself. God just stood there with his arms folded. He could have prevented the whole thing—yet he did absolutely nothing. That incident alone did not win him a lot of support.

That tragedy was not nearly as bad as the bombing of the Federal Building in Oklahoma City. There's something nobody will forget. I visited my stepfather, who lives there, two weeks after the bombing. I saw the damage as well as the memorials to all the innocent little children who died along with so many, many adults. As far as I am concerned, the entire scene had evidence of an uncaring God written all over it. The whole time I stood there and looked at the ruins, I kept asking, "Why did this have to happen? Why didn't God prevent it?"

There are times I try to be fair and say what I often hear Christians say: "Don't blame that on God. It just shows you how wicked men are." But how do you account for those things that nobody denies are "acts of God?" For example, what about Hurricane Andrew, which became the costliest natural disaster in U.S. history? Deaths, missing people, destroyed homes, rat infestations—the list goes on and on. One paper reported that two hundred fifty thousand people were left homeless, ten thousand dwellings were destroyed, and another seventy-five thousand houses were damaged. Does God enjoy seeing that kind of devastation? I still remember that one of the people killed in Louisiana was a two-year-old girl. What could she possibly have done for God to punish her in that way? Why didn't he prevent the whole thing?

On the world scene, things are even worse. The starvation occurring in some countries is mind-boggling. People are

dying by the thousands. In other countries, one tyrant can slaughter hundreds in a day. These countries face violence even more than hunger. There are times I'm not a very caring person, but even I want to reach out and help. God could help, but he doesn't. And then he calls me a sinner?

Mike, face it. God doesn't make sense.

Matt

Looking at Matt

Matt is being totally human. The nature of his letter tells me that Matt sees what is wrong with others a lot more quickly than what is wrong with himself. Even when he admits his own weaknesses and failures, he makes only a passing reference to them, such as when he says, "There are times I'm not a very caring person, but even I want to reach out and help." The "but" in his sentence tells me he is probably an individual who, like most other people, would have difficulty admitting to himself that he is a sinner. That is especially clear when he adds, "And then He calls me a sinner?"

Matt has done what many non-Christians do—they see the side of God they are looking for, even if it is a side that does not exist. Most of us are accusatory by nature. Our depravity finds pointing out what's wrong with people more enjoyable than pointing out what's right. That way of thinking often affects us when it comes to our spiritual perspective.

In pondering who God is and what He is like, Matt needs to start with the cross. Anyone who would give eternal life absolutely free has a lot of kindness about Him. There is no greater way God could have become involved than to allow His perfect Son to die on the cross as our substitute. If a man's character is being questioned, he will often reveal any noble or charitable act he has done. Presidential candidates accused of being cold or uncaring do this. They have family members or close associates speak of their benevolent deeds or kind acts. Similarly, before we become too critical of what we feel God

has done in the present, consistency demands that we look at what He has done in the past. Why not allow God the same privilege we would extend to anybody else?

Matt does what most people do—he takes the short-range view of life. The issue is not “Will hatred and all wrong-doing be punished?” The only question is, “When?” Non-Christians who are not accustomed to thinking with eternity in view often have little or no concept that a future day of judgment is coming. Even if they see themselves having to answer to God for what they’ve done, and many of them do, they think little of how a future day of judgment will affect other people and the world scene.

Responding to Matt

Dear Matt,

You are tempted to think I don’t understand, but I assure you, I do. Please don’t accuse God of not caring. Just because He doesn’t intervene in world events doesn’t mean He doesn’t care. Any injustice or hardship grieves Him more than it does anyone else. He was even grieved the other day, Matt, when you cursed out your neighbor for damaging the electric saw you loaned him. Do you remember telling me how you felt? Yet even you thought it was possible that the saw had been damaged when you gave it to him. And even if he had broken it, did it really call for that kind of reaction? Like the rest of us, you often see how, in your opinion, God has mishandled situations, but see none of your mishandling of your own life. As you know, I’m not a morning person. The first two hours of every day I’m horrible to be around. Whenever I think how irritated God ought to be about the wrongs I see in the world, I’m reminded how He would have every right to be irritated with my 7 to 9 A.M. performances.

Matt, if you saw world events through God’s eyes, your view would be so different. Even if He tried to explain things to you, you wouldn’t understand. His mind is so beyond anything

ours is capable of comprehending. If it weren't, He wouldn't be God. The fact that there are things you don't understand about what He does and allows ought to impress you rather than depress you.

Let me point out something rather simple. You know through your own experience that you always see in a person what you want to see. Even though God's character is beyond reproach, if you want to find a wrong side of Him, one way or another, you'll find it. But why not give Him credit for what He's done right? You have three very intelligent children. Have you ever asked, "Why should I be given these wonderful children when some couples can't have any?" Your wife worships you, and even you would admit you don't always deserve that. I'll bet there are times, when you are alone, that you realize what a selfish person you are. I can tell by some of the comments you've made to me. Have you ever asked yourself, "If there is a God, why would He allow me to have such a loyal wife?"

Even at work you have been fortunate. You find your job satisfying, and you're one of few people who feel secure in your position. Yet you usually see the bad side of everyone. I wish sometimes you'd look for the good side. I challenge you to list everything good in your life and place it alongside everything you feel God's done wrong. Hopefully, you will discover you don't applaud Him where, in fact, He deserves applause.

Nothing I've said concerns me more than what I am about to ask you to consider. When pondering how good God is, please start with the cross. He's written three verses in the Bible that have helped a lot of people in this area. They are found in a book called Romans in the New Testament portion of the Bible. In the fifth chapter of Romans and beginning in the sixth verse you will read, "For when we were still without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die; yet perhaps for a good man someone would even dare to die. But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us." Would you allow me to ask

you a question? You referred to the massacre in Texas, where a man gunned down a lunchtime crowd of innocent people. Suppose that man had not killed himself but, instead, had fled the crime scene, was later captured, tried for his crime, and sentenced to die for it. If it were possible, would you die as his substitute? I'm sure you would say, "No way." I can't say I would either.

Yet that is exactly what God's Son Jesus Christ did. He died for sinners—people who were completely undeserving, like you and me. Why? So that when He had paid for your sin, and risen the third day, He could forgive you for all of the wrongs you've done and give you, completely free, His gift of eternal life. All people need to do is come to Him as a sinner, recognize that His Son was their substitute on the cross, and trust in Christ alone to save them. From that point on, they are forever His. Since God allowed His Son to take the place of all sinners on a cross so they could live with Him forever, doesn't that remove all doubt about His character? Who else would die for you except someone who loves you that much? When His Son stretched out His arms and died for us, that removed all questions about His concern. Since you and I know that we would not do the same thing, He has every right to question our character. We have no reason to question His. Anyone who would let His Son die for you does not mean you any harm. Now you know why a person once expressed it by saying, "He's too loving to do you wrong; He's too wise to make a mistake."

You mentioned the tyrant who slaughters hundreds of people. Don't think God is standing by unaware. If that tyrant does not come to Christ, his punishment awaits him. The Bible clearly declares in the twentieth chapter of Revelation, "Anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire." In an eternal hell, he will wish to die but won't be able to. Just look at the world around you. Every day people rebel and get further away from God. Until Christ

returns to earth, the situation will get worse, not better. My wife and I were talking the other night about the increase in violence in the last twenty years. Left to itself, humanity will do wrong, not right. God could step in and stop it, and one day He is going to do just that. But keep in mind, He's a Savior, not a dictator. He's given everyone a choice. They can come to Him, receive forgiveness for all their sins, and live in eternity with Him. Or they can choose to reject Him and live a life independent of Him, a life that becomes more miserable with each step. And the most miserable thing of all will be to be separated from Him forever. The choice is theirs to make.

You are probably saying, "But you still have not addressed the issue. What about the victims of those disasters and violence?" That is why God pleads with people to come to Christ now. Until He establishes a new world, there will always be violence. Please remember that He has not rebelled against men; men have rebelled against Him. In their rebellion, they do things that are wicked, and innocent people become victims. Don't forget, my own brother was killed in a car accident when he was hit head-on by a drunk driver. God has proven His love for those victims the same way He proved His love for those who committed the violence. Christ died for their sins, too. What greater way is there to "get involved?" Quite frankly, Matt, that's why I try to talk to as many people as I can about spiritual things. Unfortunately, not all of them are as willing to ask questions as you are. When people come to Christ, even if they are the victims of the worst violence, they will live with Him forever. That is the ultimate joy. Several of the people who died in Killeen were undoubtedly His people. If only they all had been.

I assure you, Matt, according to the Bible a day is coming when the earth will know no violence. There will be no suffering, shootings, hijackings, famine, catastrophes, pain, or hardship of any kind. All those who know Him will be together with Him in eternal bliss. When they see things from

His perspective, they will realize how just and righteous He's been and is. God really wants you in His family.

Thanks for listening, Matt. I do appreciate you. Let's keep the lines of communication open, okay? Tell Jennifer and the kids I said hello.

Mike