



Basic **Q**uestions *for* 21st Century Christians

- ◆ Is there a God?
- ◆ Where is God when people hurt?
- ◆ What is the meaning of life?
- ◆ What does faith mean and how does it work?
- ◆ “Saved from what?” Do we really need a Savior?
- ◆ Have we outgrown sin?
- ◆ Is the Church relevant?
- ◆ Does prayer work?
- ◆ What happens when we die?

Basic **Q**uestions for *21st* Century Christians

“Saved” from what? Do we really need a Savior?



Check all statements you agree with:

- We don't really need to be saved from anything.
- We need to be saved from sin.
- The need for salvation is based on irrational fear.
- We have the power to save ourselves.

- We need to be saved from ourselves.
- There are many ways to attain salvation.
- There is only one way to attain salvation.
- We need to be saved from other people's harmful ways.

- We can be our own salvation if we want to.
- In the end, there is no real difference between the “saved” and unsaved.
- There are two kinds of people in the world: those who are saved and those who are not.
- God has provided a unique and exclusive way to salvation.

- There are some things we cannot save ourselves from.
- No one can save us, not even God.
- Salvation is a relative experience.
- Salvation is an objective reality.

Biblical Models of “Salvation”

The Sacrifice Model

Old Testament sacrificial system

The Substitutional Theory Model

Isaiah 53; 1 Peter 2:24; 2 Cor. 5:21

The Ransom Model

Mark 10:45

The Penal Theory Model

2 Cor. 5:21; 1 Peter 2:24

The Forgiveness Model

1 John 1:9; Col. 2:13; Acts 13:38

The Adoption Model

Romans 8:15, 23; Gal. 4:5

The Self-Giving Love Model

John 3:16; John 15:13

The Victory Model

1 Cor 15:54; 1 John 5:4,5; John 16:33

The Regeneration Model

2 Cor 5:17; John 3:3

The Reconciliation Model

2 Cor. 5:19

The Justification Model

Col. 2:13; Rm. 4:25; Gal. 2:16, 3:24

From *The Baptist Faith and Message (1963)*

SALVATION involves the redemption of the whole person, and is offered freely to all who accept Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, who by His own blood obtained eternal redemption for the believer. In its broadest sense salvation includes regeneration, sanctification, and glorification.

A. Regeneration, of the new birth, is a work of God's grace whereby believers become new creatures in Christ Jesus. It is a change of heart wrought by the Holy Spirit through conviction of sin, to which the sinner responds in repentance toward God and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Repentance and faith are inseparable experiences of grace.

Repentance is a genuine turning from sin toward God. Faith is the acceptance of Jesus Christ and commitment of the entire personality to Him as Lord and Savior. Justification is God's gracious and full acquittal upon principles of His righteousness of all sinners who repent and believe in Christ. Justification brings the believer into a relationship of peace and favor with God.

B. Sanctification is the experience, beginning in regeneration, by which the believer is set apart to God's purposes, and is enabled to progress toward moral and spiritual perfection through the presence and power of the Holy Spirit dwelling in him or her. Growth in grace should continue throughout the regenerate person's life.

C. Glorification is the culmination of salvation and is the final blessed and abiding state of the redeemed.



Critical Questions for a Theological Statement:

Basic Questions for 21st Century Christians

Does Prayer Work?

And I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Son may bring glory to the Father. You may ask me for anything in my name, and I will do it.

John 14:13-14

“Miss Watson, she took me in the closet and prayed, but nothing come of it. She told be to pray every day and whatever I asked for I would get it. But it warn’t so. I tried it. Once I got a fish line, but no hooks. It warn’t any good to me without hooks. I tried for the hooks three or four time times, but somehow I couldn’t make it work. By and by, I asked Miss Watson to try for me, but she said I was a fool. She never told me why, and I couldn’t make it out noway.

I set down one time back in the woods adn had a long think about it. I says to myself if a body can get anything they pray for, why don’t Deacon Wynn get back the money he lost on pork? And why can’t the widow get back her silver snuff box that was stole? Why can’t Miss Watson fat up? No, says I to myself, there ain’t nothin’ in it.”

—Huck, in *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*

“Oh Lord, we are about to join battle with vastly superior numbers of the enemy, and Heavenly Father, we would mighty like for you to be on our side and help us. But if you can’t do it, for Christ’s sake, don’t go over to the Mexicans. Just lie low and keep in the dark and you will see one of the dangdest fights you’ve ever seen.”

—Captain Jack Hayes, Battle of Palo Alto, during the Mexican War

Jesus Teaches About Prayer

Luke 11:5-8 _____

Luke 18:1-8 _____

Matthew 7:9-11 _____

Mark 9:14-29 _____

A Reflection on Prayer

Everybody prays whether he thinks of it as praying or not. The odd silence you fall into when something very beautiful is happening or something very good of very bad. The ah-h-h-h! that sometimes floats up out of you as out of a Fourth of July crowd when the sky-rocket bursts over the water. The stammer of pain at somebody else's pain. The stammer of joy at somebody else's joy. Whatever words of sounds you use for sighing with over you own life. These are all prayers in their way. These are all spoken not just to yourself but to something even more familiar than yourself and even more strange than the world.

According to Jesus, by far the most important thing about praying is to keep at it. The images he uses to explain this are all rather comic, as though he thought it was rather comic to have to explain it at all. He says God is like a friend you go to borrow bread from at midnight. The friend tells you in effect to drop dead, but you go on knocking anyway until finally he gives you what you want so he can go back to bed again. Or God is like a crooked judge who refuses to hear the case of a certain poor widows, presumably because he knows there's nothing much in it for him. But she keeps hounding him until finally he hears her case just to get her out of his hair. Even a stinker, Jesus says, won't give his own child a back eye when he asks for peanut butter and jelly, so how all the more will God when his children—.

Be importunate, Jesus says—not, one assumes, because you have to beat a path to God's door before he'll open it, but because until you beat the path maybe there's no way of getting to *your* door. "Ravish my heart," John Donne wrote. But God will not usually ravish. He will only court.

Whatever else it may or may not be, prayer is at least

talking to yourself, and that's in itself not always a bad idea.

Talk to yourself about your own life, about what you've done and what you've failed to do and about who you are and who you wish you were and who the people you love are and the people you don't love too. Talk to yourself about what matters most to you, because if you don't, you may forget what matters most to you.

Even if you don't believe anybody's listening, at least you'll be listening.

Believe Somebody is listening. Believe in miracles. That's what Jesus told the Father who asked him to heal his epileptic son. Jesus said, "All things are possible to him who believes." And the father spoke for all of us when he answered, "Lord, I believe; help my unbelief!" (Mark 9:14-29).

What about when the boy is not healed? When, listened to or not listened to, the prayer goes unanswered? Who knows? Just keep praying, Jesus says. Remember the sleepy friend, the crooked judge. Even if the boy dies, keep on beating a path to God's door, because the one thing you can be sure of is that down the path you beat with even your most half-cocked and halting prayer the God you call upon will finally come, and even if he does not bring you the answer that you want, he will bring you himself. And maybe at the secret heart of all our prayers that is what we are really praying for.

—Frederick Buechner, *Wishful Thinking*

BASIC Questions for 21st Century Christians

Where is God when we hurt?

- God is all-powerful.
- God is all-good.
- Terrible things happen.

You can reconcile any two of these propositions with each other, but you can't reconcile all three. The problem of evil is perhaps the greatest single problem for religious faith.

There have been numerous theological and philosophical attempts to solve it, but when it comes down to the reality of evil itself they are none of them worth much. When a child is raped and murdered, the parents are not apt to take much comfort from the explanation (better than most) that since God wants man to love him, man must first be free to love or not to love and thus free to rape and murder a child if he takes a notion to.

Christian Science solves the problem of evil by saying that it does not exist except as an illusion of mortal mind. Buddhism solves it in terms of reincarnation and an inexorable law of cause and effect whereby the raped child is merely reaping the consequences of evil deeds it committed in another life.

Christianity, on the other hand, ultimately offers no theoretical solution at all. It merely points to the cross and says that, practically speaking, there is no evil so dark and so obscene—not even this—but that God can turn it to good.

Frederick Beuchner, *Wishful Thinking*, p. 24.



The potter does not test cracked vessels, for he need only knock upon them once and they break; but if he test sound vessels, he can knock upon them many times without their breaking.

Similarly the Holy One, blessed be he, does not try the wicked but the righteous; as it is said, "The Lord trieth the righteous," and it is written, "God did test Abraham," Parable of a householder who had two cows, one strong and the other weak. Upon which of them does he place the yoke? Surely upon the strong. In the same manner God tests the righteous.

The Talmud



My face is red with weeping,
deep shadows ring my eyes;
yet my hands have been free
of violence and my prayer is
pure.

"God has made me a byword to everyone, a man in whose face people spit.

My eyes have grown dim with grief; my whole frame is but a shadow.

Upright men are appalled at this; the innocent are aroused against the ungodly.

Nevertheless, the righteous will hold to their ways, and those with clean hands will grow stronger.

"But come on, all of you, try again! I will not find a wise man among you.

My days have passed, my plans are shattered, and so are the desires of my heart.

These men turn night into day; in the face of darkness they say, 'Light is near.'

If the only home I hope for is the grave, if I spread out my bed in darkness,

if I say to corruption, 'You are my father,' and to the worm, 'My mother' or 'My sister,'

where then is my hope? Who can see any hope for me?

Will it go down to the gates of death? Will we descend together into the dust?"

Job 16:16-17; 17:6-16



"Though I cry, 'I've been wronged!'
I get no response; though I call
for help, there is no justice.
He has blocked my way so I
cannot pass; he has shrouded my paths in
darkness.

He has stripped me of my honor and
removed the crown from my head.

He tears me down on every side till I am
gone; he uproots my hope like a tree.

His anger burns against me; he counts me
among his enemies.

Job 19:7-11



My God, my God, why have you
forsaken me? Why are you so far
from saving me, so far from the
words of my groaning?

O my God, I cry out by day, but you do
not answer, by night, and am not silent.

Yet you are enthroned as the Holy One;
you are the praise of Israel.

In you our fathers put their trust; they
trusted and you delivered them.

They cried to you and were saved; in
you they trusted and were not disappointed.

But I am a worm and not a man, scorned
by men and despised by the people.

All who see me mock me; they hurl
insults, shaking their heads:

"He trusts in the LORD; let the LORD
rescue him. Let him deliver him, since he
delights in him."

Yet you brought me out of the womb;
you made me trust in you even at my
mother's breast.

From birth I was cast upon you; from
my mother's womb you have been my God.

Do not be far from me, for trouble is
near and there is no one to help.

Roaring lions tearing their prey open
their mouths wide against me.

I am poured out like water, and all my
bones are out of joint. My heart has turned
to wax; it has melted away within me.

My strength is dried up like a potsherd,
and my tongue sticks to the roof of my
mouth; you lay me in the dust of death.

Dogs have surrounded me; a band of
evil men has encircled me, they have pierced
my hands and my feet.

I can count all my bones; people stare
and gloat over me.

They divide my garments among them
and cast lots for my clothing.

But you, O LORD, be not far off; O my
Strength, come quickly to help me.

Deliver my life from the sword, my
precious life from the power of the dogs.

Rescue me from the mouth of the lions;
save me from the horns of the wild oxen.

I will declare your name to my brothers;
in the congregation I will praise you.

Ps 22:1-22



And a woman spoke, saying, Tell us
of Pain.

And he said:

Your pain is the breaking of the
shell that encloses your understanding.

Even as the stone of the fruit must break,
that its heat may stand in the sun, so must
you know pain.

And could you keep your heart in wonder
at the daily miracles of your life, your pain
would not seem less wondrous than your
joy;

And you would accept the seasons of
your heart even as you have always accepted
the seasons that pass over your fields.

And you would watch with serenity
through the winters of your grief.

Much of your pain is self-chosen.

It is the bitter potion by which the
physician within you heals your sick self.

Therefore trust the physician, and drink
his remedy in silence and tranquility:

For his hand, though heavy and hard, is
guided by the tender hand of the Unseen,

And the cup he brings, though it burn
your lips, has been fashioned of the clay
which the Potter has moistened with His
own sacred tears.

Kahlil Gibran, *The Prophet*



*Hast thou no scar?
No hidden scar on foot, or side, or hand?
I hear thee sung as mighty in the land,
I hear them hail thy bright ascendant star:
Hast thou no scar?*

*Hast thou no wound?
Yet, I was wounded by archers, spent,
Leaned me against the tree to die, and rent
By ravening beasts that compassed me, I
swooned:*

*Hast thou no wound?
No wound? No scar?
Yes, as the Master shall the servant be.
And pierced are the feet that follow me;
But thine are whole. Can he have followed
far
Who has no wound? No scar?*

Amy Carmichael, 1936



Affliction is a marvel of divine
technique. It is a simple and
ingenious device which introduces
into the soul of a finite creature the
immensity of force, blind, brutal and cold.
The infinite distance which separates God
from the creature is entirely concentrated
into one point to pierce the soul in its centre.

The man to whom such a thing happens
has no part in the operation. He struggles
like a butterfly which is pinned alive into an
album. But through all the horror he can
continue to want to love. There is nothing
impossible in that, no obstacle, one might
almost say no difficulty. For the greatest
suffering, so long as it does not cause
fainting, does not touch the part of the soul
which consents to a right direction.

It is only necessary to know that love is
a direction and not a state of the soul. If one
is unaware of this, one falls into despair at
the first onslaught of affliction.

He whose soul remains ever turned in
the direction of God while the nail pierces it,
finds himself nailed on to the very centre of
the universe. It is the true centre, it is not in
the middle, it is beyond space and time, it is
God. In a dimension which does not belong
to space, which is not time, which is indeed
quite a different dimension, this nail has
pierced a hole through all creation, through
the thickness of the screen which separates
the soul from God.

Simone, Weil, "The Love of God and Affliction," in
Waiting for God, 1942



O Lord,
remember not only the men and women of
goodwill, but also those of ill will.
But do not only remember the suffering they
have inflicted on us,
remember the fruits we bought thanks to this
suffering, our comradeship, our loyalty, our
humility, the courage, the generosity,
the greatness of heart which has grown out
of all this.
And when they come to judgement
let all the fruits that we have borne
be their forgiveness.
Amen. Amen. Amen.

*Written on a piece of wrapping paper near the body of
a dead child in Ravensbruck where 92,000 women and
children died, 1945.*



Jesus did not come to explain suffering
nor to take it away: he came to fill it with his
presence.

Paul Claudel, 1955



I have summarized in my own heart the specific lessons of my months in captivity to help me not to lose anything of their wonder and their worth.

1. *Participation in his suffering is necessary* to each one if we are to fulfil his will in this world;

2. *The pre-eminence of his Son is essential* that we may know in very truth his all-sufficiency at all times;

3. *Praise through his sacrifice is possible* even in the midst of danger and horror, as we rejoice in his working out his purpose.

Above all, I have learned a little of the tremendous privilege of walking with him, of being identified with him. Christ not only bore my sin; he was made sin for me. He identified himself utterly with us sinners that he might redeem us. Now if she should seek a body, a vessel, in whom to live, that he might identify himself with the deepest needs and hungers of Congolese hearts, was I willing to be this vessel? More than willing! I entered into the great privilege of bearing about the One who paid the supreme cost.

Helen Roseveare, *Give Me This Mountain*, 1966.



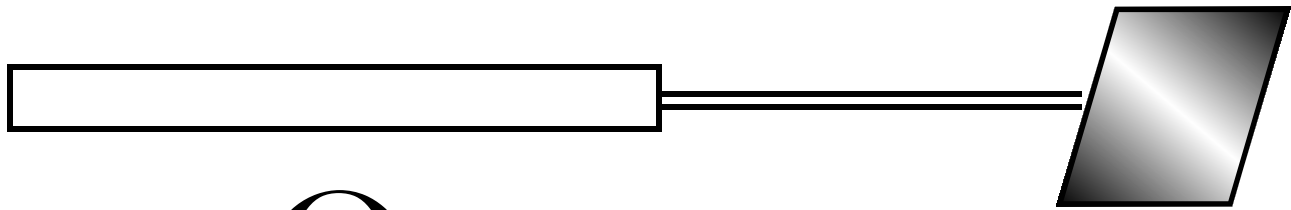
We are to share in Christ's sorrow, and the realm in which we do this is not the realm of a special kind of mystical experience, but in the realm of everyday ministry. It does not mean that we are to be ashamed of our own little griefs or worries. We do not cease to be hurt and sensitive, and Christ understands our

hurts and disappointments. But in and through them we are drawn near to Christ's sorrow. It makes all the difference. The setbacks, the plans that misfire, the unfairness of other people, the sickness, or whatever the trial may be—let these be the door into Christ's sorrow. And as he wept over the city of Jerusalem which did not know the things which belonged to its peace, so may he wish us to weep with him over the cities and villages and populations where his love is rejected or unknown and his people suffer. He draws us to watch with him, and to watch will mean to bear and to grieve.

But the door into his sorrow is also the door into his joy. As the cloud of the presence in the tabernacle was pierced from within by a burning light, so the sorrow of Jesus is the place or reconciling love pouring itself into the world, and his joy there is radiant.

Michael Ramsey, *The Christian Priest Today*, 1972

NEXT WEEK: "What is the meaning of life?"



Basic Questions *for* 21st Century Christians

1. “Is there a God?”

BASIC QUESTIONS

1. Does God exist?
2. If so, what is God like?
3. Can God be known?
4. Does God communicate with us?
5. How does God interact with creation?

Thomas Aquinas’ “Proofs” of the Existence of God

ARGUMENT	OBSERVATION	IMPLICATIONS	CONCLUSION
FROM MOTION	Motion cannot initiate itself but must be motivated by something already in motion	An infinite chain of movers is impossible, for then there would be no first mover and therefore no motion at all.	The unmoved Prime Mover is what we call God
FROM CAUSALITY	Certain events are caused by prior events, which are themselves caused, etc.	As above, the causal chain cannot be infinite	The uncaused First Cause is what we call God
FROM POSSIBILITY	Certain things are transitory, their existence is possible rather than necessary	The chain of derivative existence cannot be infinite but must find its source in a self-existent necessary Being	This self-existent necessary Being is what we call God
FROM IMPERFECTION	We judge certain things to a lesser degree of perfection than others	Relative assessments require absolute standard of perfection. According to Aristotle, that which is greatest in truth is greatest in Being	This absolute standard, God, must exist
FROM DESIGN	Inanimate things function together to accomplish an ordered purpose	This cannot occur by chance but requires an intelligent Designer	This Designer is what we call God

Post-Modern or Post-Secular?

Science

- Copernicus - earth (man) is not the center of the universe (1500)
- Charles Lyell debunks *catastrophism* (1830)
- Darwin, *The Origin of Species* (1859)
- Albert Einstein's theory of relativity (1905)
- Edwin Hubble, George Gamow: Big Bang theory speculated (1927)
- Fred Hoyle & others argue the Steady State theory (1927)
- Penzias & Wilson confirm the "Big Bang" theory (1964)
- The Anthropic Principle, Brandon Carter, physicist (1973)
- Stephen Hawking, "baby universes and black holes" (1989)
- Scientific questions seemingly move from *mechanistic* to *teleological*

Psychology

- Freud, *The Future of an Illusion* (1927)
- Carl G. Jung (1932)
- Philip Rief, "the triumph of the therapeutic" (1966)
- M. Scott Peck, *The Road Less Traveled* (1978)
- Current rediscovery of the "soul" in psychology & counseling

Medicine

- Herbert Benson, study on meditation, Harvard Medical School (1960)
- Elizabeth Kubler-Ross, *On Death and Dying* (1979)
- Randolph Byrd, San Francisco General Hospital, study on prayer (1980)
- M.M Paloma & B. F. Pendleton, study on prayer (1990)
- Conference on spirituality & healing in medicine, Harvard Med School (1995)
- Increased interest, study, and affirmation of spiritual dimensions of persons

Reason

- Augustine, *The City of God* (420)
- Ludwig Feuerbach, atheistic philosophy (1850)
- Friedrich Nietzsche, "God is dead." (1885)
- Martin Heidegger embraces Nazism (1933)
- The Secular City, Harvey Cox (1965)
- Collapse of Communism (the "secular city")
- "Knowledge of the Spirit is prior to the knowledge of reason."

Experience

- Raymond Moody, *Life After Life* (1975)
- Michael Sabon, Emory University School of Medicine (1978)
- Kenneth Ring (1980)
- A third "Great Awakening"?

The Anthropic Principle

"In order for life to appear in the universe billions of years after the universe began, you had to start planning very early—from the first nanosecond of the universe's coming into being. The possibility of producing life depended on everything's being "just right" from the very start—everything from the values of fundamental forces like electromagnetism and gravity, to the relative masses of the various subatomic particles, to things like the number of neutrino types at time 1 second, which the universe has to "know" already at 10^{-43} second. The slightest tinkering with a single one of the scores of basic values and relationships in nature would have resulted in a universe very different from the one we inhabit—say, one with no stars like our sun, or no stars, period. Far from being accidental, life appeared to be the goal toward which the entire universe from the very first moment of its existence had been orchestrated, fine-tuned."

—Patrick Glynn
God: The Evidence (pp. 7-8)

What The Bible Says About God

John 1:18	Malachi 3:6
Hebrews 11:3	James 1:17
Exodus 3:14	Exodus 15:11
1 Thess 1:9	Isaiah 6:1-4
Acts 17:25	Jeremiah 9:24
Psalms 139:7-12	1 Samuel 15:29
Matt 10:29-30	1 Thess. 5:24
Romans 11:33	1 John 4:8
Genesis 17:1	
Psalms 102:26-27	

NEXT WEEK:

"Where is God when people hurt?"

Basic Questions for 21st Century Christians

The Experience of Salvation

Some Thoughts on Salvation

“In the matter of man’s salvation God is first. He comes to us self-invited—he names us by name—he isolates us from the crowd, and sheds upon us the sense of personal recognition—he pronounces the benediction, till we feel that there is a mysterious blessing on our house, and on our meal, and on our heart.”

—Frederick W. Robertson

“Salvation is no bargain-counter product. We have to pay for it in full. Though God pays for the guilt of personal relations and freely offers to us full restoration to fellowship, we still have to pay for the consequences of our deeds in works of faith and love within the grace of God.”

—Nels F. S. Ferre

“There are countless places of refuge; there

is only one place of salvation. But the possibilities of salvation are as numerous as all the places of refuge.”

—Franz Kafka

“God never draws anyone to Himself by force and violence. He wishes all men to be saved, but forces no one.”

—St. John Chrysostom

“The cool, calm vigor of the normal human life; the making of the man to be himself; the calling up out of the depth of his being and the filling with vitality of that self which is truly he—*that* is salvation.”

—Phillips Brooks

1. Did you have a “conversion” experience? Describe it. (Did you have more than one?)
2. How do you understand your salvation in terms of what God has done for you?
3. What, if any, do you understand to be *your* part in the salvation experience?
4. If Jerry Falwell came to your door and asked you, “If you were to die today and God asked you, ‘*Why should I let you into my heaven?*’” What would you say?
5. What movie title best describes your salvation experience right now?

Gone With The Wind
The Maltese Falcon
Indiana Jones and the Search for the Holy Grail
How Green Was My Valley
The Mask
In The Heat of the Night
The Three Muskateers
The Godfather
The Apostle
The Terminator
Remains of the Day
Forever Young
If They Could See Me Now

Casablanca
Star Wars
The Unsinkable Molly Brown
The Rock
In Her Majesty’s Secret Service
Dead Men Tell No Tales
Il Postino
I Remember Mama
Pennies From Heaven
The Neverending Story
The Secret Garden
Other title?

BASIC Questions for 21st Century Christians

“What happens when we die?”

Biblical Understandings of DEATH

Old Testament Thoughts

By the sweat of your brow you will eat your food until you return to the ground, since from it you were taken; for dust you are and to dust you will return." Gen 3:19

"Only a few years will pass before I go on the journey of no return. Job 16:22

It is not the dead who praise the LORD, those who go down to silence; Ps 115:17

Jesus' Thoughts

"I tell you the truth, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned; he has crossed over from death to life.

I tell you the truth, a time is coming and has now come when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God and those who hear will live. John 5:24-25

But here is the bread that comes down from heaven, which a man may eat and not die. I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever. This bread is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world." John 6:50-51

Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies; and whoever lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?" John 11:25-26

But those who are considered worthy of taking part in that age and in the resurrection from the dead will neither marry nor be given in marriage, and they can no longer die; for they are like the angels. They are God's children, since they are children of the resurrection. Luke 20:35-36

"Then he will say to those on his left, 'Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. Then they will go

away to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life." Matt 25:41, 46

Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather, be afraid of the One who can destroy both soul and body in hell. Matt 10:28

John's Thoughts

He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away." Rev 21:4

Peter's Thoughts

I think it is right to refresh your memory as long as I live in the tent of this body, because I know that I will soon put it aside, as our Lord Jesus Christ has made clear to me. 2 Pet 1:13-14

Paul's Thoughts

Listen, I tell you a mystery: We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed--in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed.

For the perishable must clothe itself with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality. When the perishable has been clothed with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality, then the saying that is written will come true:

"Death has been swallowed up in victory."

"Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?"

The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. 1 Cor 15:51-57

According to the Lord's own word, we tell you that we who are still alive, who are left till the coming of the Lord, will certainly not precede those who have fallen asleep. For the Lord himself will come down from heaven,

with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first.

After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever. Therefore encourage each other with these words. 1Thes 4:15-18

Now we know that if the earthly tent we live in is destroyed, we have a building from God, an eternal house in heaven, not built by human hands. Meanwhile we groan, longing to be clothed with our heavenly dwelling, because when we are clothed, we will not be found naked.

For while we are in this tent, we groan and are burdened, because we do not wish to be unclothed but to be clothed with our heavenly dwelling, so that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life. Now it is God who has made us for this very purpose and has given us the Spirit as a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come.

Therefore we are always confident and know that as long as we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord. We live by faith, not by sight. We are confident, I say, and would prefer to be away from the body and at home with the Lord.

So we make it our goal to please him, whether we are at home in the body or away from it. For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive what is due him for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad. 2 Cor 5:1-10

For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain. If I am to go on living in the body, this will mean fruitful labor for me. Yet what shall I choose? I do not know! I am torn between the two: I desire to depart and be with Christ, which is better by far; Phil 1:21-23

He will punish those who do not know God and do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. They will be punished with everlasting destruction and shut out from the presence of the Lord and from the majesty of his power II Th 1:8-9

Reading questions:

- What does the verse say?
- What doesn't it say?
- What do you think it teaches about death?
- What does it mean?

NOTES:

Basic Questions for 21st Century Christians

What happens when we die?

“Yet a little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep.”
(Proverb 7:10)

The foolish fear death as the greatest of evils, the wise desire it as a rest after labours and the end of ills. — St. Ambrose

For man is by nature afraid of death and of the dissolution of the body; but there is this most startling fact, that he who has put on the faith of the cross despises even what is naturally fearful, and for Christ’s sake is not afraid of death. —St. Athanasius

Death is but a sharp corner near the beginning of life’s procession down eternity. —John Ayscough

Death is the great adventure, beside which moon landings and space trips pale into insignificance. —Joseph Bayly

The final heartbeat for the

Christian is not the mysterious conclusion to a meaningless existence. It is, rather, the grand beginning to a life that will never end. —James Dobson

Death has nothing terrible which life has not made so. A faithful Christian life in this world is the best preparation for the next. —Tyron Edwards

We are not entirely present to ourselves until the day of our death. — Louis Lavelle

Why is it that we rejoice at a birth and grieve at a funeral? It is because we are not the person involved. —Mark Twain

If after I depart this vale, you ever remember me and have thought to

please my ghost, forgive some sinner and wink your eye at some homely girl. —H.L. Menken

In the midst of life we are in death. —Book of Common Prayer

Every moment of life is a step towards death. —Corneille

I have a rendezvous with Death at some disputed barricade. —A. Seeger

I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live. And whoever lives and believes in me shall never die. —Jesus of Nazareth

Groupwork:

Each member of your group is to choose *one* question to answer for themselves. When time is called, discuss one question at a time. Begin by listening to the person who answered the question for themselves, then the rest of the group can respond and discuss their own thoughts or ask questions.

1. If this were your last day on earth, how would you want to spend your time?
2. What do you think happens the moment you die?
3. Do you believe in the concept of heaven? If so, what will heaven be like for you?
4. Do you believe in the concept of hell? If so, what do you believe hell is like and why will some people experience it?

Discussion:

5. How do your beliefs about the afterlife influence you today? Share an example.

Counterpoint

Stinger,

*you can jab,
and point,
and thrust,
your sword at me,
(you do it so expertly!)
but I do not fear.*

Stinger,

*you can prick
and pierce
and lunge
your sword through me,
(you know you can make me bleed)
but I do not fear.*

And then, Stinger,

*you can dance
and gloat
and lift
your sword in glee
when I succumb to your weaponry
but I do not fear.*

Because, Stinger,

*I am the living
and the living don't feel
the sting of your sword,
the living go free.
Only the dead
know your devilry.*

Stinger, you are stung by our victory.

—Leslie Fields

Noel Coward recalled that he and Cole Porter “had a long cozy chat about death.”

“We discussed what would happen if I died and what would happen if he died, and we came to the sensible conclusion that there was nothing to be done. We should have to go on with life until our time came.

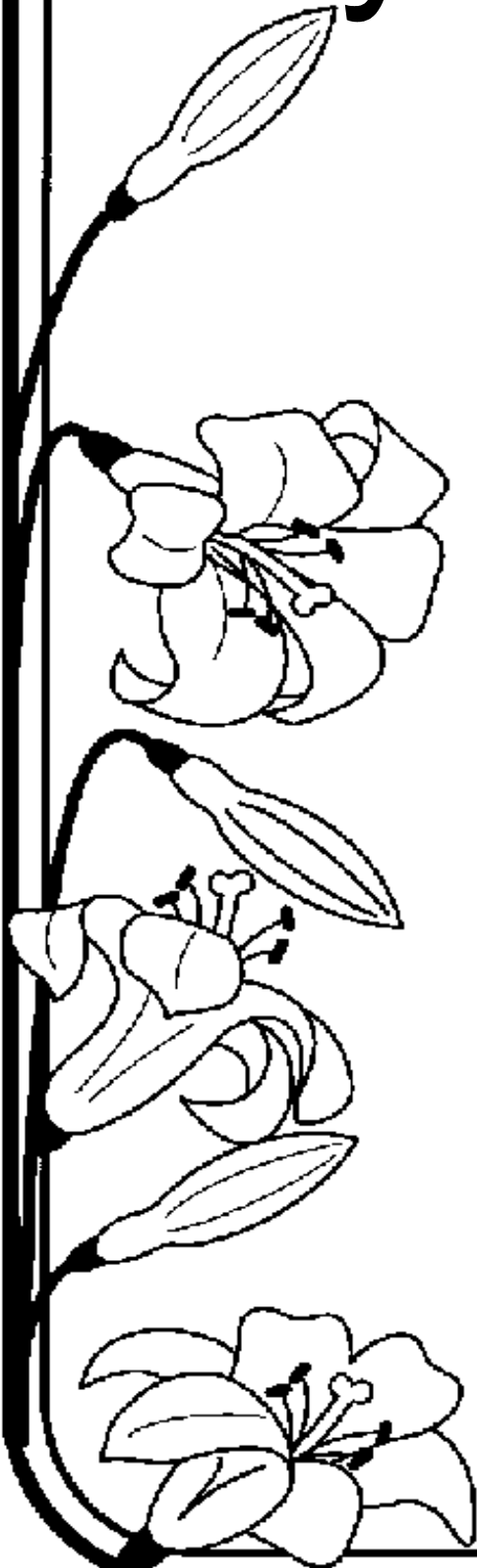
“I said, ‘After all, the day had to get on and breakfast had to be eaten,’ and he replied that if I died he might find it a little difficult to eat breakfast but would probably be hungry by lunchtime.”

DEATH AWARENESS SURVEY

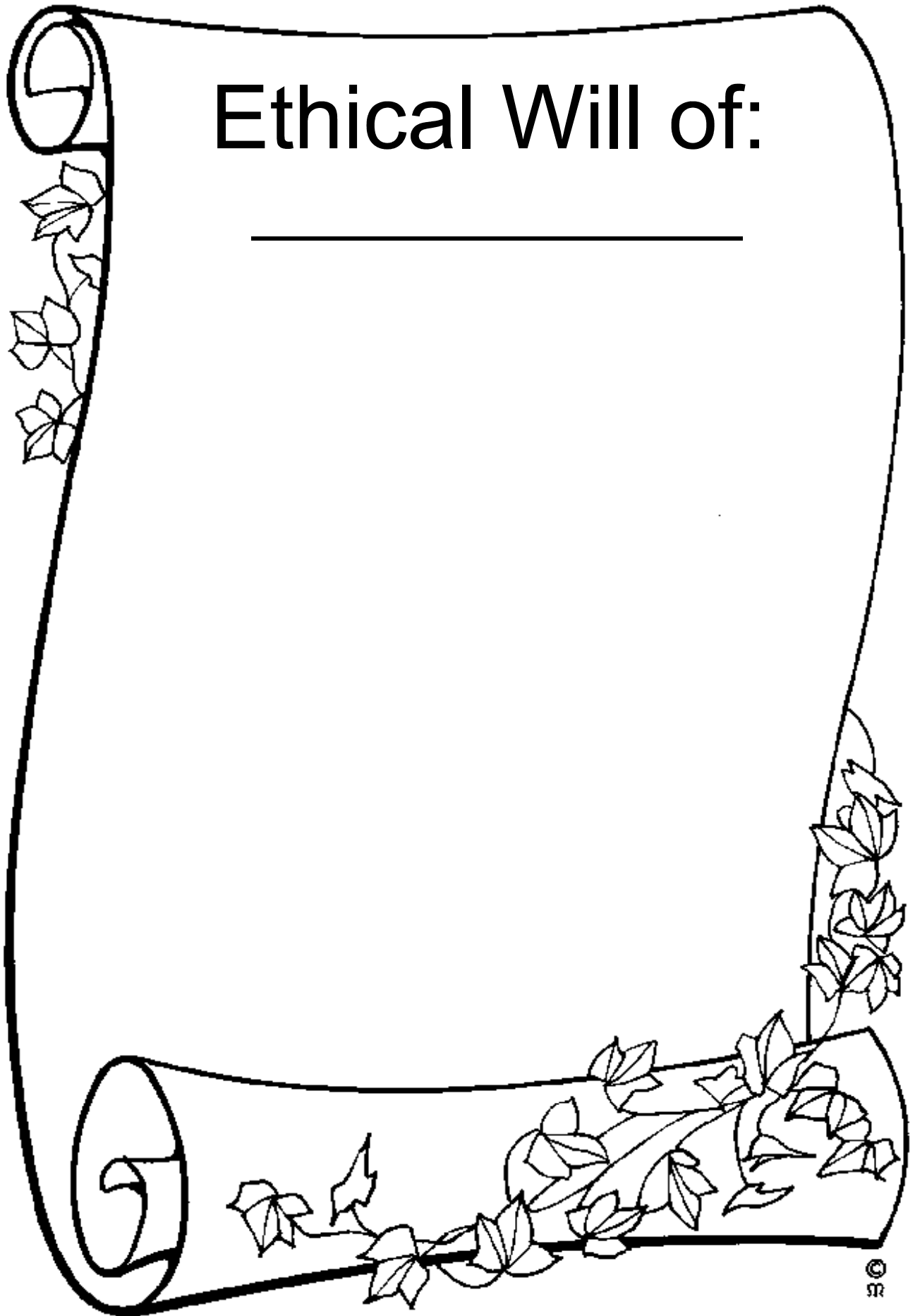
This is a death awareness survey. Please answer the following brief statements YES if they are true for you or if you agree, or NO if they are untrue or if you disagree.

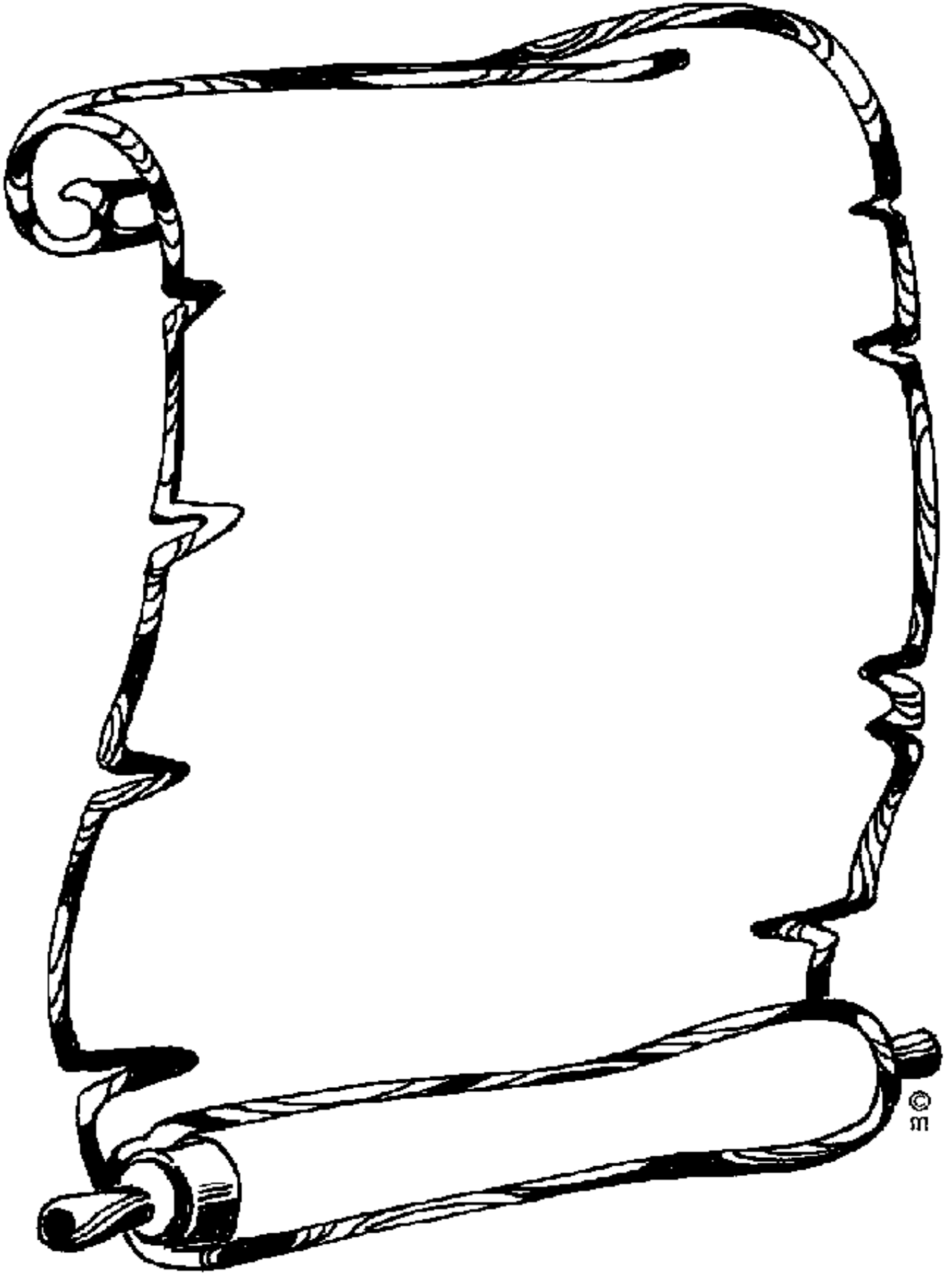
- | | YES | NO |
|--|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| 1. I have a positive attitude toward death. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 2. I have discussed my death with my spouse/mate. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 3. I have made funeral arrangements for myself. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 4. I am prepared to deal with the legal details at the death of a relative. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 5. I have discussed death with my children. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 6. There has been a death in my family within the last year. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 7. I am emotionally prepared to deal with the death of a loved one. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 8. I have discussed death with my close friends. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 9. I can identify the reasons for my fear of death. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 10. I think of death often. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 11. I feel that euthanasia is acceptable in some cases. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 12. I know the average cost of a funeral. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 13. I know what is involved in the process of embalming. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 14. I can recall the subject of death being death with in my church/synagogue. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 15. I believe there is an afterlife. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 16. I have prepared a will. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 17. Children should be made aware of the reality of death. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 18. I have made funeral arrangements for a family member. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 19. I would be willing to spend some time with a terminally ill person if asked. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 20. My faith gives me hope in the face of death. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

My Epitaph



Ethical Will of:





BASIC Questions for 21st Century Christians

“What does faith mean and how does it work?”

Related Questions:

- Is faith a verb or a noun?
- Is faith a universal, an inherent trait in all persons?
- Is faith utilitarian?

Biblical Understandings

Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see. Heb 11:1

Jesus turned and saw her. "Take heart, daughter," he said, "your faith has healed you." Matt 9:22

Then he touched their eyes and said, "According to your faith will it be done to you"; Matt 9:29

He replied, "Because you have so little faith. I tell you the truth, if you have faith as small as a mustard seed, you can say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there' and it will move. Nothing will be impossible for you." Matt 17:20

When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, "Son, your sins are forgiven." Mark 2:5

This, the first of his miraculous signs, Jesus performed at Cana in Galilee. He thus revealed his glory, and his disciples put their faith in him. John 2:11

By faith in the name of Jesus, this man whom you see and know was made strong. It is Jesus' name and the faith that comes through him that has given this complete healing to him, as you can all see. Acts 3:16

By faith in the name of Jesus, this man whom you see and know was made strong. It is Jesus' name and the faith that comes through him that has given this complete healing to him, as you can all see. Acts 3:16

He listened to Paul as he was speaking. Paul looked directly at him, saw that he had faith to be healed. Acts 14:9

to open their eyes and turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, so that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me.' Acts 26:18

Through him and for his name's sake, we received grace and apostleship to call people from among all the Gentiles to the obedience that comes from faith. Rom 1:5

For in the gospel a righteousness from God is revealed, a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written: "The righteous will live by faith." Rom 1:17

This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference, Rom 3:22

We have been saying that Abraham's faith was credited to him as righteousness. Rom 4:9

Consequently, faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word of Christ. Rom 10:17

One person's faith allows him to eat everything, but another person, whose faith is weak, eats only vegetables. Rom 14:2

know that a man is not justified by observing the law, but by faith in Jesus Christ. So we, too, have put our faith in Christ Jesus that we may be justified by faith in Christ and not by observing the law, because by observing the law no one will be justified. Gal 2:16

He redeemed us in order that the blessing given to Abraham might come to the Gentiles through Christ Jesus, so that by faith we might receive the promise of the Spirit. Gal 3:14

Now that faith has come, we are no longer under the supervision of the law. Gal 3:25

You are all children of God through faith in Christ Jesus, Gal 3:26

Some “Givens” Concerning Faith:

- Faith in God involves right belief about God.
 - Faith rests on divine activity.
 - Faith is a human universal.
 - Faith is dynamic and effectual.
-

In Your Experience . . .

1. What are the qualities of faith?

Have you had a role model for your faith? Who?

What are or were the qualities of this person’s faith?

2. How can we develop our faith?

What persons or events in your life have had the most impact in the development and strengthening of your faith?

In what ways, if any, has your faith ever been shaken or tested?

Has that experience made your faith stronger or weaker?

What do you do now to build your faith?

3. What are the benefits of faith?

What has your faith done for you?

4. How does faith become evident in life?

How have you demonstrated faith in your life?

What role will faith play in your future?

What would be missing in your life if you did not have your faith?

5. How does faith work?

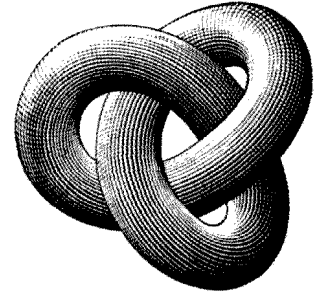
How do you use faith in your life?

BASIC Questions for 21st Century Christians

What is the meaning of life?

First, some questions

1. Is there a purpose to life?
2. How would you describe or define a "good life"?
3. If life is a game, how do you win in the end?
4. If life is a game, what is the most important rule to follow?
5. Why did God create persons, and what did God create them for?
6. How do people discover meaning in their lives?
7. Is the answer to the meaning of life the same for everyone?
8. If people can choose their own meaning to life, how do they determine that it's the right one?



Some Bible References Which May Help (or Not)

Keep his decrees and commands, which I am giving you today, so that it may go well with you and your children after you and that you may live long in the land the LORD your God gives you for all time. Deut 4:39-40

What good will it be for a man if he gains the whole world, yet forfeits his soul? Or what can a man give in exchange for his soul? Matt 16:26

Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it. Matt 10:39

The man who loves his life will lose it, while the man who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life. John 12:25

"I tell you the truth, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned; he has crossed over from death to life. John 5:24

Do not work for food that spoils, but for food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you. On him God the Father has placed his seal of approval." John 6:27

"Meaningless! Meaningless!" says the Teacher.
"Utterly meaningless! Everything is meaningless."

What does man gain from all his labor at which he toils under the sun?

Generations come and generations go, but the earth remains forever. Eccl 1:2-4

So I hated life, because the work that is done under the sun was grievous to me. All of it is meaningless, a chasing after the wind. Eccl 2:17

Enjoy life with your wife, whom you love, all the days of this meaningless life that God has given you under the sun--all your meaningless days. For this is your lot in life and in your toilsome labor under the sun.

Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with all your might, for in the grave, where you are going, there is neither working nor planning nor knowledge nor wisdom.

I have seen something else under the sun: The race is not to the swift or the battle to the strong, nor does food come to the wise or wealth to the brilliant or favor to the learned; but time and chance happen to them all.

Moreover, no man knows when his hour will come: As fish are caught in a cruel net, or birds are taken in a snare, so men are trapped by evil times that fall unexpectedly upon them. Eccl 9:9-12

Some Thoughts Which May Help (or not).....

“We don’t receive wisdom; we must discover it for ourselves after a journey that no one can take for us or spare us.” —Marcel Proust

“*Life is far too important a thing ever to talk about.*” —Oscar Wilde

“If a man would live well, let him fetch his last day to him, and make it always his company-keeper.” —John Bunyan

“*Life is real! Life is earnest! And the grave is not its goal.*” —H. W. Longfellow

“If one way of life is no better than another, then no way of life is valuable at all.” —Michael Roberts

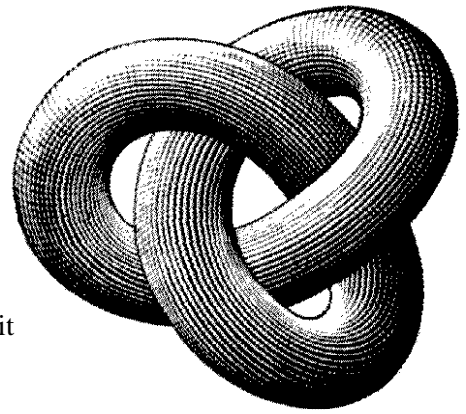
“Life is a tale, told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, signifying *nothing.*” —W. Shakespeare

“*Life is a watch or a vision; Between a sleep and a sleep.*” —A. C. Swinburne

“A man’s life of any worth is a continual allegory.” —John Keats

“The very purpose of existence is to reconcile the glowing opinion we hold of ourselves with the appalling things that other people think about us.” —Q. Crisp

“*It’s an unanswered question, but let us still believe in the dignity and importance of the question.*” —T. Williams



Life is

...a bowl of cherries.
...to be experienced.
...short.
...a mystery.
...a gift.
...a partnership.
...a struggle.
...finding your one true love.
...a school.
...a journey.
...a circus.
...a metaphor.
...is a @\$%! and then you die.

Life is

Basic **Q**uestions for 21st Century Christians

2. Where is God when people hurt?

or,
Where does evil come from?
Why does God allow the innocent to suffer?
Why do bad things happen to good people?
Why doesn't God act in the face of evil?
Why does God seem absent when we most need him?

A Theological Spectrum

- | | | |
|--|----|---|
| 1. God is control of every aspect of life. | ←→ | God created the world but has left it to run its own course. |
| 2. God, as Creator, is the source of everything: life and death; light and darkness; good and evil | ←→ | God, as Creator, is the source of all that is good. Evil exists only as a by-product and consequence of God's creative act. |
| 3. We suffer because God punishes us. | ←→ | We suffer because of the consequences of our own (or others') actions and intents. |
| 4. God loves and cares for us, and feels with us in our pain and suffering. | ←→ | God is aware of our suffering, but is aloof to mundane, temporal human suffering. |
| 5. God answers the prayers of individuals. | ←→ | God does not answer the prayers of individuals—either because he cannot or because he wills not to. |

“My definitive answer to this issue:”