

Answering Questions People Ask

Nancy Ross first came to our church because her fiancé was impressed by our church when he attended as a teenager. While he was in the military service, she slipped into the back row of our church during worship. Six weeks later she checked a friendship and worship card indicating her interest in accepting Christ.

I phoned her and made an appointment. She came to my office. “Nancy, what did you have in mind when you indicated your interest in accepting the Lord?”

“Well, my mother told me I should make my own choices about religion. But I really don’t know what choices are available. I don’t even know enough to ask questions. My mother attended church some in her life, but we didn’t go very often.”

“What do you think accepting Christ into your heart means?” I asked. Then she startled me with what I thought were unrelated questions.

“My mother said God doesn’t answer prayer. Is that true? Mom said she prayed for grandfather to live and he didn’t. Does God answer prayer?”

“Another question I have is who wrote the Bible? Did men write it? What’s it about?”

“One more thing, which is true—what the Bible says or evolution?”

Obviously Nancy’s questions and uncertainty needed attention before a Gospel presentation could be seriously offered. “Let’s talk about those areas,” I said. “First, let me ask you a couple of questions: Does your mother love you?”

“Oh, yes,” she said.

“Does she give you everything you ask for?”

“No,” she smiled.

“In the same way God does not give us everything we ask for. Even Jesus preferred not to die on the cross, but God did not withdraw that circumstance from Jesus. Paul, the apostle who healed other people, one time asked for healing for himself and God did not give him good health. Instead God gave him the courage and ability to withstand the pain of his discomfort.

“We can’t conclude simply because God does not answer prayer that He does not exist. Nor can we assume He does not love us. If God did everything we asked, wouldn’t He really become simply a celestial servant?” Her nod signaled her understanding.

Taking the Bible from the end table, I showed her the Old and New Testament table of contents. I explained to her how God spoke through men over centuries. People who read these Spirit-inspired writings saw God’s revelation of Himself and His plan for people. So they had retained these books until our present day. We call them the Bible.

“While these men lived in different periods of time in history, they faithfully revealed to us that we can be right with God,” I noted.

“What about all these Bibles?” she asked.

I informed her of the value and perspective of various translations and affirmed the credibility of the Bible and its place in our lives.

Again she nodded and said, “I see.”

While talking of the Bible, I mentioned in passing that the purpose of

the Bible was not to be a book of science, but to direct us to God. “God explains how we as sinning human beings can find forgiveness.”

When I mentioned the personal love of God and the human need to be forgiven of our sins, Nancy began to ask questions again.

“When I repent of my sins, do I have to name every one to God?” she asked with a grimace.

“No,” I answered, “but you must be willing to turn your back on continued wrongdoing.”

“Oh, yes, I want that,” she said.

I explained how Christ died for our sins. When we place our trust in Him, He forgives us. Her receptive spirit was pronounced through her tear-filled eyes.

This conversation with Nancy illustrates the need Christians have for being able to talk helpfully and intelligently with non-Christians about God. Giving answers to spiritual questions does not convert sinners into believers. More than one Christian, however, has testified to needing some understanding before they could make an informed step of faith. Sometimes people need to know becoming a Christian does not require “checking in their brains at the church foyer.” For others, reason explains and removes doubts so faith can move forward.

--Brint Montgomery and Lyle Pointer