

Six Complicated Questions

During my years of ministry, I have been asked many questions about heaven and hell—and about who will be going to each place. Some of the questions asked most often relate to people who have died without ever hearing the gospel story about Christ. This section includes six of these questions, each of which is complicated and must be answered from a scriptural point of view.

Question 1

“I lost a child whom I love dearly at an early age. She was like an angel to me. I am hoping that in heaven she will be the same age (age five) that she was on Earth. Is this possible, or will she be a grown woman when I see her? Will she know I was her mother? It greatly burdens me that she will not know who I am!”

Answer: First, consider that we are all a tripartite creation—a body, soul, and spirit. It is the spirit of a person that, if it stepped out of the body where you could see it, you would recognize as that person. This was the case with the rich man who recognized Lazarus (Luke 16:19-31) and with Moses and Elijah, who were recognized by Christ and by Peter at the Mount of Transfiguration (Matt. 17:3-4). Thus, the spirit and soul have

the same appearance as the physical body. This is why we will be known in heaven as we were known on Earth (1 Cor. 13:12).

How to Be a True Worshipper

I have been singing and performing since I was 10 years old, and I can still remember going to my first music practice at my **church**. As a brand-new Christian, I was very excited about meeting **Christian musicians** and playing **Christian music**. I knew it was going to be just like heaven.

When I arrived at the church, I noticed that even though the people were beautiful, when they started to play and sing, everyone became very serious. I tried not to laugh or enjoy myself too much so they wouldn't think I wasn't **spiritual**.

Eventually, I became a "**church singer**." It took years for God to teach me to be myself.

Don't let this be your story. You should never be ashamed of the things that make you unique. Just be available for God to use you.

God created us as individuals—special and unique—to accomplish His purposes. When we worship Him, we can hear the Holy Spirit speaking to us because worship opens our hearts to receive.

Jesus said, "**True worshipers** will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks" (John 4:23, NIV). If you want to be a **true worshipper**, be yourself when you worship God.

Darlene Zschech was the worship pastor of Hillsong Church in Sydney from 1996 to 2007. In addition to "Shout to the Lord," Zschech has written more than 80 songs published by Hillsong

Music Australia, including those on her latest album, Revealing Jesus. She and her husband, Mark, are now senior pastors of Hope Unlimited Church in New South Wales.

Portrait of Heaven: Video

Watch Choo Thomas recall her vision of heaven and hell.

{youtube}llgPeH5kC8o{/youtube}

To Hell and Back Again

Watch Bill Wiese expound on his trip to hell below.

{youtube}87qkY1XZtIs{/youtube}

Study: Most Younger Christians Oppose Abortion

Younger Christians are largely opposed to abortion, a new study reports.

According to a Barna Group survey released Monday, 61 percent

of 18- to 44-year-old born again Christians say abortion should be illegal in all or most cases, compared with 55 percent of Christians older than age 45.

Unlike older believers, younger Christians were more likely to express strong views about abortion and less likely to say they are not sure of their position, the researchers found.

The findings are part of a report that shows most Americans take a moderate view on abortion. The phone survey of 1,001 adults found that 49 percent of Americans believe abortion should remain legal in most cases while 42 percent say it should remain illegal in most cases.

A smaller percentage took a more polarizing view, with 15 percent wanting abortion to be legal in every situation and 19 percent wanting the practice to be banned in all cases. Nine percent of respondents said they weren't sure.

Evangelicals, atheists and agnostics held the strongest views on abortion and were the most inflexible in their opinions. Some 78 percent of Christians said abortion should be illegal in all or most cases, while 72 percent of atheists and agnostics support keeping the practice legal.Â Â

Barna Group President David Kinnaman said the more moderate views on abortion may be due to the fact that other urgent political and social issues are causing cause some Americans to consider abortion less relevant. Joint efforts among pro-life and pro-choice groups to find common ground to reduce abortion and promote adoption reforms also may be contributing to the decreased vitriol, he added, though the effectiveness of those efforts remains in question.

But he said the pro-life views of younger Christians may indicate a need for new ways of addressing issues of abortion, life and choice,Â

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as Americans appear ready to rethink many different issues.

When God Does the Shaking

If God has shaken an area in your life, don't try to rebuild it yourself. Allow Him to restore only those things He wants to establish in your life. Remember, God shakes us so that the things that cannot be shaken will remain.

His shaking will expose any hidden idols in our lives. An idol is what we give our strength to or draw our strength from.

If you are receiving your affirmation, love, self-worth, joy, strength and acceptance from anywhere or anyone but God, He will shake it. He does this so you will get your life from Him. He knows everything else will eventually disappoint you.

After a shaking, we see our condition in relation to God's truth. However, it is not the truth you know but the truth you live that sets you free. To become responsible, we must be obedient.

We would not grant as much liberty to a disobedient or rebellious child as we would grant to an obedient and responsible child. A disobedient child would use his liberty to rebel. He would confuse rebellion with freedom.

Rebellion will bring bondage. Only through obedience can we find true liberty.

As the Holy Spirit ministers truth to your heart, receive it

and walk in freedom. Let God's truth become alive in you.

Lisa Bevere is a best-selling author of Fight Like a Girl, Kissed the Girls and Made them Cry, Out of Control and Loving It! and Be Angry and Don't Blow It! In addition to speaking at national and international conferences, she is a frequent guest on Christian television and radio shows. She and her husband, best-selling author John Bevere, make their home in Colorado.

Until Death Parts Us

Decide today that you're in your marriage for the long haul

When we see marriage as a covenant, not a contract, it's confirmation that we are meant to stay together until death parts us. In *A Model for Marriage*, Jack and Judy Balswick point out that "the core characteristic of a covenant marriage is commitment, a factor that is profoundly important to marital stability, according to research findings."

The very nature of wedding vows implies a covenant, but for most brides and grooms, the common attitude is to see marriage as a contract that can be broken. Typically, a couple—despite vowing to endure better or worse until death—live by the principle that they'll stay together only as long as their spouse fulfills their end of the bargain. That's an attitude that feeds into the "short haul" approach.

The first 10 years of our marriage were terrible—what we call the "Great Tribulation." Yes, we had some good times; but, overall, we didn't have a good marriage. Yet we never considered divorce as an option. Though we were both young when we married, one thing was clear: We were determined to

make it work. We didn't think of our marriage as a covenant in those days, but we lived as if we had made a covenant. We understood our vows. We were there for the long haul—for better or for worse.

How different our lives would have been if we had given up because we were miserable. Eventually, we grew past our misery and started to build something special together.

A number of marriage studies have been based on interviews with couples on the verge of divorce who, of course, reported that they were miserable. Many of these studies are designed so the researchers can go back and reinterview the same couples years later. Invariably, the couples who divorced report that they still are unhappy; but most of the couples who stayed together report that they are now happy.

I've worked with couples who were miserable but came to counseling because divorce just wasn't an option for them. One of these couples came back recently to deal with some extended-family issues. I hadn't seen them in years. My last memory of them was their telling me they believed they'd turned the corner in their marriage and had the tools to keep their relationship on-track. It turns out they did, and they thanked me for helping them turn things around. What had been misery to them—and the cause of divorce with many other couples—was long past. They were in the process of becoming everything they had hoped to be as a couple.

Marriages go through seasons. When a couple can genuinely make an unconditional commitment to stay the course during the cold, dark season of a marriage, then spring and even summer seasons follow.

There is a saying that goes something like: "Don't doubt in the darkness what you know to be true in the light." You can apply this warning to the seasons of a marriage. When you hit the dark , cold winter season together, don't question the

vows and commitments you made to each other in the light of the summer season. Stay the course. Love unconditionally and know that spring will come.

Click [here](#) to read two other principles to help fix your marriage before it's too late.

David Stoop, Ph.D., and **Jan Stoop, Ph.D.**, lead seminars and marriage retreats nationally and internationally. More tips to keeping the love fires burning in marriage are available in their book *Better Than Ever: Seven Secrets to a Great Marriage*. Or visit them online at [.](#)

How to Pray God's Purposes Over a Person's Life

Problem-based praying identifies problems and forms appropriate requests. However, purpose-based praying forms requests appropriate to God's purposes.

Jesus said, "I tell you the truth, the Son can do nothing by Himself; He can do only what He sees His Father doing, because whatever the Father does the Son also does" (John 5:19, NIV).

We should spend more time identifying and blessing what God is doing. Consider your prayer life. When you pray for someone or something, do you begin with what you see God doing or with what you wish He were doing? We suggest that you:

Identify what God is doing. What evidence, even subtle changes do you see?

Thank God and praise Him for what He's doing. Thank Him for the circumstances He is arranging, the people and the

influences He is using and the miracles He is performing in this situation.

Proclaim His works. Glorify His name.

Ask Him to enlarge the area of His activity. Ask Him to demonstrate His power and glorify His name as He extends His kingdom in this matter.

Rather than continually asking God to do what He is not doing, bless what He is doing!

Eddie and Alice Smith *are founders of the U.S. Prayer Center in Houston, Texas.*

Website Calls Prodigals Back Home

A Dallas-area pastor is calling prodigals home through a website that has received tens of thousands of hits since it launched last year.

Steve Hill, pastor of Heartland Church in Irving, Texas, said thousands have returned to faith in Christ since he started in April 2009.

“They write us from all over the world,” he said. “Many of them feel like they drifted too far. This website helps them come home.”

A former drug addict turned evangelist, Hill spent five years preaching nightly services during the Brownsville Revival, which drew 4 million visitors from around the world to Brownsville Assembly of God in Pensacola, Fla.

Hill left Brownsville in 2000 and later founded Heartland Church. But since being diagnosed with a "vicious" melanoma in 2001 that has spread into his bloodstream, forming two tumors near his lungs, Hill has increasingly been using the Internet to evangelize. In addition to , he has developed "cybertracts" that he posts on YouTube. (View "Good News, Bad News" and "Hell to Pay" below.)

"I've taken the gospel and I've put it where the world is," Hill said. "The world is right in front of that screen watching."

Hill's ministry, which funds , advertises the site on MySpace and Facebook. Hill said God showed him there were 20 million prodigals in the U.S. alone, but the site has drawn visitors from 130 nations, including China, the United Arab Emirates and Japan.

On the website, Hill shares his testimony of overcoming addiction and the parable of the prodigal son from Luke 15. He then invites visitors to recommit to Christ and share their stories with the ministry, which is working to help direct people to a local church.

Visitors frequently send messages asking for prayer or testifying of salvation. A high school student from Texas wrote that since being raped she had made some of the worst decisions in her life.

"I have always grown up in a Christian home, but after I was raped I went completely opposite of how I was raised," she wrote. "I was so mad at God for letting that happen. ... But today things changed. I was on MySpace, saw a link to this website, went to it, watched the clips and just finally turned my life around."

A 70-year-old man said he made a new start after visiting the website. "I thought it was too late," he wrote. "Now I believe there is much, much more."

A 21-year-old drug-addicted woman sent the site a note that she hated people who believed in God. "But I am scared ... a druggie that is pregnant and I don't know what to do," she wrote.

She planned to get an abortion, but after e-mailing ministry staffer Kathy Duffy for six weeks, the woman accepted Christ, was delivered from drug and alcohol addiction, and decided to keep her baby.

"We flew her out to our church in Dallas to have a baby shower and to get baptized," Duffy said. "She is now enrolled in Correspondence Bible School and loves Jesus with all her heart. There is no greater joy on this earth than helping people find Jesus!"

Next month, former Brownsville Revival leaders including John Kilpatrick and Lindell Cooley will gather at Heartland Church for a special service to honor Hill, who is currently undergoing his third clinic trial at M.D. Anderson Cancer Center in Houston.

Prayer leader Cindy Jacobs, who is convening the July 16 service, hopes the money raised during the benefit will help offset Hill's medical costs and allow him to take a break from preaching to focus on improving his health.

"God burdened me to do this," said Jacobs, co-founder of Generals International. "[Hill has] never asked for anything. He doesn't want to bother anybody. He's so pure-hearted. He's just [focused on] souls and honoring God."

Hill said he's humbled by the generosity of his ministry friends and is thankful that "the troops are rallying" in prayer for him. He said he believes God will heal him, and in the meantime he will continue to win souls, whether in the hospital or on the Internet.

"I don't ask Jesus why," Hill said. "I ask Jesus, 'Use me.'"

The Company You Keep

Friends are like buttons on an elevator—they can take you up or bring you down. Surround yourself with people who are like the person you want to become because you become like those with whom you surround yourself.

After elementary school, we moved to Sacramento, California, where I attended junior high school. Then we moved again while I was in high school. I was desperate for friends. I never gave a thought to who those friends were or what they acted like.