

THE HARVESTER

"The harvest truly is great, but the laborers are few: pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he would send forth laborers into his harvest" (Luke 10:2)

December 2025

No. 480

GIVE AN ANSWER

Many of the people you meet in the world do not have faith in Jesus or, if they do, they have limited knowledge and understanding. When they see you living a faithful Christian life, they may question you about your faith and hope. Are you prepared to answer them as to why you live as you do? Consider what the Apostle Peter wrote in 1 Peter 3:15,

But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear:

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You should not be ashamed of your belief in Jesus. Some people in the time of Jesus believed in Him, but only in secret.

Nevertheless among the chief rulers also many believed on him; but because of the Pharisees they did not confess him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue: For they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God.
(John 12:42-43)

When it comes to your faith and Christian life, you should be more concerned with what God thinks about you than what people in the world think about you. Jesus said in Matthew 10:32-33,

Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven. But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven.

You certainly don't want Jesus to deny you before the Father. Be willing and eager to share your faith.

Peter said to “*sanctify the Lord God in your hearts*”. You should have the faith that you have and be living your life as you do because you worship the Lord God from your heart. Your life is different from those of the world, not because you are just trying to be different, but because you are seeking to serve your God. Your actions and belief come from your heart. People in the world should see the genuineness of your life which invites them to want to know why you have your faith.

You should dress differently than people of the world (1 Tim. 2:9). You should avoid certain worldly activities (1 Pet. 4:3-4). Your speech should be different from those of the world (Tit. 2:8). You should be going about doing good (2 The. 3:13). You should put assembling with fellow Christians before other activities (Heb. 10:25). Why do you do these things? You should be ready to give others a defense or an an-

swer to their questions about you. Some Christians have grown up in the church so they have “inherited” their way of life; you should know the scriptural basis for your actions so you can tell others. Some Christians are afraid to give an answer about their faith and life because they don’t feel that they know all of the scriptures and the answers to all of the questions. You don’t have to have all of the answers – very few people do. You just need to know why you believe as you do and have the hope that you have. Being prepared to give an answer should strengthen your faith.

Why do you believe in Jesus? Why do you believe in God? I believe in God, first of all, because I see the wonderful design of the creation, and I don’t believe that what we see today is the result of billions of years of evolution.

Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath shewed it unto them. For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse: (Rom. 1:19-20)

What are the reasons that you believe in God? I believe in Jesus because I believe that there is enough evidence that He lived on the earth, He went about performing miracles, He was crucified, and He arose from the grave. I also believe the word of God, the Bible, that tells me about God and about Jesus. What are the reasons that you believe in Jesus? What answer would you give?

What is your hope? I believe that this earthly life is not all that there is. I believe that there is a life after this life. My hope is to receive eternal life with Jesus and God the Father. Why do I have this hope? I have this hope because Jesus arose from the dead.

If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable. But now is Christ risen from the

dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept.
(1 Cor. 15:19-20)

I have this hope because of the promises given in the Bible. God has given me the gift of eternal life (Rom. 6:23). I live my life to please God. If I am faithful until death, I believe I will receive the promises (Rev. 2:10). What is your hope? Why do you have hope? What answer would you give?

When questioned about your faith and hope, you need to answer in “*meekness and fear*”. You answer in meekness in that you are humble and not proud or haughty in the manner that you provide an answer. The ones to whom you give an answer may come back to you in harshness, ridicule, or persecution. It is necessary that you have meekness and accept any unpleasant response without responding to them as they responded to you (1 Pet. 3:9). You answer in fear, not that you are fearful of those who question you, but you are respectful of them even if they have not earned your respect.

My encouragement to you is to be prepared.

But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear:
(1 Pet. 3:15)

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FROM THE SCRIPTURES: A STRONG TOWER

For thou hast been a shelter for me, and a strong tower from the enemy. (Psa. 61:3)

The name of the LORD is a strong tower: the righteous runneth into it, and is safe. (Pro. 18:10)

WHAT HAVE WE LEARNED?

From the day we come out of the womb, we begin a life of learning. We learn how to smile. We also learn how to cry. We learn how to crawl on the floor and later, how to walk and talk. We even learn how to eat by ourselves and how to get dressed.

Then around the age of six we find ourselves in elementary school. Do we finally stop the learning process? Of course not, but rather we further it. We must learn how to read and write. Next we attend high school and acquire the skills necessary for Mathematics, English, History, and Science. Even after four years of “higher education” and a job in the career world, we still find plenty to learn.

Now consider our spiritual life in the same way -- a life of learning. From the moment we are baptized and raised to “*walk in newness of life*” (Rom. 6:4), we are like a new-born babe. We have to learn the “*first principles of the oracles of God*” (Heb. 5:12) and continue from there. Have we begun that process of “spiritual learning”? Have we learned anything since becoming a Christian? Are we still learning or are we at the point that we think we know-it-all already?

Certainly we must learn God’s commandments. But, have we? Some have taken a lot of time to study the Bible and to memorize scriptures. We say we KNOW the truth. Yet, have we really LEARNED God’s law? David was one man who could actually say he learned God’s precepts because he experienced them. The trials and afflictions that David suffered taught him some valuable “lessons in life”. Notice what he had to say in Psalms: “*It is good for me that I have been afflicted; that I might learn thy statutes*” (119:71). What better way to learn the commandments than to obey them! When a teacher wants his students to learn something, he will usually assign homework in that area. The students then gain practice in the skill that will be learned by doing their homework. Although the homework may be hard and despised, the desired effect is accomplished.

Likewise, if we are commanded to “*overcome evil with good*” (Rom. 12:21), will we not learn that lesson when we show kindness to those who persecute us and who hate us? It may mean hardships like David encountered, but the lesson will surely be learned.

A Christian must also learn to do well every day.

Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil; Learn to do well; seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow. (Isa. 1:16-17)

Again, these traits can only be acquired by actually doing them! Just as a child learns his alphabets through continuous practice, a babe in Christ will “*learn to do well*” by helping everyone he meets.

As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith. (Gal. 6:10)

As disciples of Christ, we definitely must learn of Jesus Himself. The Great Teacher instructs us on how this can be done.

Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. (Mat. 11:29)

A simple reading of the Gospel will not make us learn of Jesus. Taking His yoke, forsaking all, denying self, and taking up His cross -- that is the true sign of one who has learned and “knows” Christ. In writing to the Ephesians, Paul could tell by the actions and lives of some that they had not really “*learned Christ*”.

But ye have not so learned Christ; If so be that ye have heard him, and have been taught by him, as the truth is in Jesus: That ye put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful

lusts; And be renewed in the spirit of your mind; And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness. (Eph. 4:20-24)

The proof of one who claims to have “*learned Christ*” is not by his words, but rather by his actions!

But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves. (Jas. 1:22)

Finally, we must learn not to complain about our lives. This may be the hardest lesson of all for most of us to learn.

Not that I speak in respect of want: for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content. (Php. 4:11)

No matter what we think, we have more blessings than we could ever count. We have absolutely no right or reason to complain about anything! If we do, we are guilty of complaining against God.

...For that the LORD heareth your murmurings which ye murmur against him: and what are we? your murmurings are not against us, but against the LORD. (Exo. 16:8b)

It is God, the Almighty Creator who has bestowed on us “*every good gift and every perfect gift*” that we now enjoy (Jas. 1:17). Are we really dissatisfied with what He gave us?

All of us have put a lot of effort into learning those items which have gotten us this far in life. And as for our spiritual life? Are we as far along as we should be? Or can we LEARN a little bit more? If we want to get to heaven, first we have to learn those things that will get us there: learn God’s word, learn to do well, learn of Christ, and learn to be content. It might take a lot of hard work and practice, but the reward will certainly be worth it!

RAY MCMANUS

Reprinted from *The Harvester* April 1988

SEARCH THE SCRIPTURES

1. What did Abram do when he heard that Lot was made a prisoner of war?
2. Whose son did Elijah raise from the dead?
3. What did Jesus and the disciples have for breakfast when Jesus appeared to them after the resurrection by the Sea of Tiberias?
4. Of what did Peter and John heal the man at the temple gate called Beautiful?
5. In Revelation, what is the “number of a man”?

...ANSWERS NEXT MONTH

And remember last month's questions?

1. The name of the Lord is like what place of safety?
A STRONG TOWER (Pro. 18:10)
2. Which city did David pray for the peace of?
JERUSALEM (Psa. 122:6)
3. Who came to see Jesus by night?
NICODEMUS (John 19:39)
4. What did Jesus say when the Pharisees asked why he ate with publicans and sinners?
“THEY THAT BE WHOLE NEED NOT A PHYSICIAN,
BUT THEY THAT ARE SICK.” (Mat. 9:11-12)
5. Which bird does Jesus say we have more value than?
A SPARROW (Mat. 10:31)

THE HARVESTER is a monthly publication intended to encourage all men everywhere to become laborers into God's harvest (Luke 10:2). This paper is mailed free of charge to anyone who wishes to receive it. Please submit name, address, address changes and all correspondence to:

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