

But what makes for a good answer? We reckon that a *good answer has four main qualities*, like a trampoline. First, a good answer is *consistent*—it doesn't contradict itself, and the fabric holds tight together. Second, it's *complete*—it explains what we know of the universe, and what we know of ourselves, so it has great coverage. Third, a good answer *corresponds*—that is, it connects to the real world and can be tested, just like the mat is connected to the frame. And fourth, a good answer is *livable*—you can put it into practice and it brings greater clarity and freedom . . . it's sprung right and you find joy in the jumping.

(1) “Why should I consider Christianity when Christians are such hypocrites?”¹

- (a) True. All Christians are prone to hypocrisy, and we've hurt many people. Sorry.
- (b) Jesus condemned hypocrisy too. The beauty of His life and teaching was hypocrisy-free.
- (c) Jesus came to save sinners—the outcasts and untouchables—so failures are welcome.
- (d) Christianity offers forgiveness to failures. And who doesn't fall short and need grace?
- (e) If hypocrisy is reason to disbelieve, then what of lives well lived? For all our failures, Christians have made incomparable contributions to the freedom and good of humankind.

Responses:

- (f) All institutions and all people fall short of their own standards (which is hypocrisy), yet we don't withdraw entirely from the world. Then why the church? Jesus also condemns hypocrisy in religion, and devoted His life to weeding it out, so why not join His mission?
- (g) Hypocrisy is in part a distraction. The real question is whether Christianity is true.

(2) “You cannot prove that God is really there or true, because the only things we can know are material things, the things we can touch or see.”

- (a) The things we value the most are also immaterial—love, justice, purpose.
- (b) We can know God exists through the improbable fine tuning of the universe to support life.
- (c) That the universe exists at all points to an eternal, powerful, and intelligent cause.
- (d) We can know God exists as He has spoken—fulfilled prophecy and medical knowledge contained in the Bible point to an intelligent source outside of time.
- (e) We can know God exists as He has entered our story in Jesus, verified by His life, miracles, teaching, and resurrection.
- (f) We can know God exists by taking up God's challenge to seek Him wholeheartedly.

Responses:

- (g) We live as though objective morals exist, which suggests an objective standard in God.
- (h) We can know God exists wholly apart from argument by immediately experiencing Him.

¹ This troubling issue was perhaps best summarized by the Hindu and Indian revolutionary Mahatma Gandhi who famously said, “I like your Christ, [but] I do not like your Christians. Your Christians are so unlike your Christ.”

(3) “If God is good and powerful, why is the world so bad?”
A God who allows suffering can’t be trusted.”

- (a) We all sense that this is *not* the way the world’s supposed to be. But *why*?
- (b) Suffering poses a problem for everyone—karma and random chemicals give no standard by which to judge good from evil. Suffering may then be evidence *for* God.
- (c) The best of all possible worlds—geared for love and relationship—requires free choice and stable natural laws. This allows for the misuse of God’s good gifts, thus evil and suffering.
- (d) Christianity makes sense of why evil and suffering is *not* the way it’s supposed to be: we’re in a good world gone bad, for which we are all to blame.
- (e) We know God’s response to suffering via Jesus. God has scars. He hurts, and He heals.
- (f) Christ’s resurrection grounds our hope that in a resurrected cosmos, suffering will cease.

Responses:

- (g) Suffering has “redemptive value,” drawing us to God, shaping our character, and uniting us.
- (h) Out of the greatest suffering came the greatest good—Jesus’ death brought all life. So we have reason to trust that apparently “pointless” suffering in God’s hands holds meaning.

(4) “Hasn’t science proved that the Bible is wrong?”

- (a) The “science-faith conflict” is a myth—some of the best scientists believe the Bible.
- (b) Science, as the study of God’s creation, grew out of Christianity.
- (c) Genesis 1 and 2 centres on *who* created, and *why*, whilst science explains how God’s creation works. Knowing the *mechanism* doesn’t dispel the *agency* behind creation.
- (d) “The Heavens declare the glory of the Lord” (Psalm 19). Studying nature leads to worship.

Responses:

- (e) *Scientific* knowing and *religious* knowing are philosophically equivalent—all knowledge is built on trust and assumptions, which affects how we read the evidence.
- (f) Science grew in Christian soil as the Bible grounds natural laws in a lawgiver, and our senses in a God who has geared our minds for communication and stewardship of nature.

(5) “Exclusive religions are dangerous.

Why be intolerant when all paths probably lead to the same God.”

- (a) Christianity has at times thrown fuel on the religious fire. Sorry.
- (b) But how “tolerant” is religious pluralism? Are you the only sighted person to recognize all the blind religious believers grabbing at the *same* elephant? How do you propose to fit together contradictory claims about the nature of God, salvation, and final destiny?
- (c) Who *is* this God toward which all religions head? And what if God speaks?
- (d) Of the major religions, only three—Judaism, Christianity, and Islam—claim God definitively speaks. Only Christianity claims the one true God has incarnated.
- (e) Jesus—seen by all religions as a moral exemplar—made exclusive claims (John 14:12)
- (f) Most religions contain elements that are good, true, and beautiful, but given their essential contradictions, we need to test which (if any) fits with reality. Jesus’ unique life and resurrection suggests to me that Christianity is a good place to start.

Responses:

- (g) What of Hell for those who haven’t heard or chose wrongly? God desires all to be saved, and draws people to Himself through nature, conscience, and supernatural encounters. We have sufficient grace if we choose to respond. God is fair and loving and will do right.

Your Questions and Comments?

Finding the Way to Freedom

Well, we've covered a lot of ground tonight. Again, our hope is that this would be the *start* of many conversations and a genuine search for good answers to life's toughest questions. If you're in a small group at KBC, then check out the Logos web-site where we've posted 3 minute answers to the top *ten* questions on you-tube, and have uploaded a discussion guide so you can continue the dialogue. Whatever you believe, we hope these simple responses support your search for meaning.²

For all the issues we've addressed, though, I suspect there is one more barrier that lies at the heart of it all. *Often we don't want to believe, because it will interfere with our freedom. We don't want the whole God thing to be true, because we don't want any authority telling us what to do.* Following Jesus cramps my style and constrains my sexuality.

But what *is* freedom? Is it merely the absence of constraint?

Are we really "free" if we can't control our own will?

We all need to discipline our desires and find someone who leads us to life.

Freedom always comes with a form. The right form channels our vitality.

For all those who are *slaves to selfish desires*, Jesus offers *true freedom* in *His form*.

This is not a proposition to argue over. It's a challenge to accept or reject. Try it and see.

If you haven't, how can you know Jesus *isn't* trustworthy. Hear the difference He makes.

Jesus captured all commands as "Love God, love others." Love is the *most* liberating form.

If love is commitment, then binding myself to the source of love brings true freedom.

The ultimate answer is not words, but rather *the Word*—the Logos, the way, truth and life.

Jesus can be trusted. Respond to God's advances in love and find freedom and life to the full.

² A complete manuscript and discussion guide for this talk, covering the top ten questions from our surveys is available at <http://logos.kbc.org.au/blog/resources/logos-talks/caught-out/>. Follow the links to the youtube.com clips, and enjoy working through these sessions with your small groups to make sure you're not caught out next time a tough question comes your way.