
Session 3 | Show Notes

Your own Journey

So, let's face it. You may be finding yourself asking some questions you never expected to ask. Questions that you thought you had figured out at one point. This is a sign of growth and intellect, both good things. Being able to re-evaluate where you are in life and what you believe in is key. Whether you consider yourself old or young it's never too late nor too early to explore your faith.

Like I mentioned in the podcast there is no way I can tackle all the questions that could come up. But I do want to take some time and approach a couple. Keeping in mind these answers are an understanding of the Bible and its context I have gathered over the years through many conversations, debates and readings. I always try to refer to scripture when trying to understand life's questions.

Let's jump right in.

What Christianity is not.

We often view Christianity by what it is, and we may or may not have a misconception on that. So here are some of the important things I want to point out in regards to what Christianity is not.

Firstly, it is not solely a set of rules about what not to do. Sure, the Bible guides you and protects you by making you think through your actions. However, I believe we do a disservice to the bible when we talk about it simply as a set of rules.

Secondly, often times we judge Christianity on what we see in popular media, which paints a picture that in my opinion is less than flattering. I believe that extremism is dangerous whether that be within Christianity or other belief systems.

How do I know the Bible is real?

Textual Criticism is the way in which books are tested for validity. This means that a book and its manuscripts are measured by the number of textual variants. In other words, the books themselves are tested by the number of changes that are made over time and whether or not those stand true to the original text of the book or manuscript. It also measures the number of copies made over a period of time and to what degree changes have been made. All this to say, textual criticism looks at the trueness and consistency of a book. Using this method of measurement, the Bible stands out as being one of the most accurate and well-preserved texts of it's time, which establishes the accuracy of the text today.

Why do bad things happen to good people?

Understandably this is a common question. Unfortunately, that does not mean it is easy to answer. I can no longer count the number of times I have been asked this question, either from adults or children. Each presenting their own difficulties in answering in an age-appropriate way. For this post, let's focus on the adults. Everyone is living in a broken and sinful world. Our world and human beings no longer live as originally intended by God. We all have the capacity to do bad things which impacts the people around us. The world is a place where bad things happen, for example, disease, famine and natural disasters many of these things are out of our human control.

We often find ourselves fixated on the question of "Why?" when bad or unpleasant things are happening in our lives or others. This question in and of itself can be maddening. The why question will often lead us to a point where we are

trying to understand some pretty big questions, often times the answer to these questions are outside of our grasp and understanding. The question we can be asking rather than "Why?" could be "Where?". Where does good come from? where, do we as individuals, find our hope and comfort in the midst of the hard and frustrating times that we face.

Within Christianity, we look to God for comfort and hope.

How do we know Heaven and Hell are real?

I believe that this is a question that we, as a global culture, deal with on a regular basis. The question really is "What's next?" or "What happens when I die?" These are obviously not easy questions to answer. However, if we believe in the bible, and that all scripture is inspired by God then we can begin to shape our understanding of Heaven and Hell.

I have never been to Heaven or Hell, so I can only go off of what the Bible tells me about them. Heaven is described as a place for those who have accepted God's free gift of grace (Romans 6:23). In John 14:1-4 Jesus is speaking to his disciples and says about heaven.

"Don't let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God, and trust also in me. There is more than enough room in my Father's home. If this were not so, would I have told you that I am going to prepare a place for you? When everything is ready, I will come and get you, so that you will always be with me where I am. And you know the way to where I am going."

Hell is described as a place for all who sin but do not accept God's free gift of grace. Jesus says this in Matthew 7:13-14.

"You can enter God's Kingdom only through the narrow gate. The highway to hell is broad, and its gate is wide for the many who choose that way. But the gateway to life is very narrow and the road is difficult, and only a few ever find it.

Scripture says a great deal about heaven and hell and metaphors are often used to help us understand. Scripture describes hell as a fire, furnace, or lake of fire. Heaven is described like this, the "main street was pure gold, as clear as glass." Rev 21:21. My point is this regardless of how literal your interpretation of the descriptions we know that heaven will be a glorious place with God and hell a torturous place without God.

What is free will in the context of Christianity?

The concept of choice is one we face every day, we choose the clothes we wear, the food we eat and the relationships we seek out. God gave us free will to have just that, the choice. Simply put if we were forced to love God or something, would that still be love? God does not want us to follow him because we are forced to, he wants us to choose a relationship with him. This leads to a genuine relationship. This is often the choice we speak of as Christians, a very important choice, one that you choose every day, not just to be a Christian but to live life out in a way that honours God and the relationship you have with him.

Free will is the freedom to choose. God gives us that freedom in our relationship with him.

Although this is not a comprehensive list of questions, I hope it helps either answer some of your own questions or answer the questions that may come up from your child. Christianity is a journey with its own set of learning curves, don't let that keep you from exploring. You aren't meant to be perfect right away, or ever for that matter. Taking any step in faith is a huge achievement and will teach you more about yourself and God than expected.

Remember asking questions is key to growth. Having your own questions and exploring them is a great way to be able to support your child in their faith. Through your own exploration and curiosity can come some discussions that will

shape the way in which both you and your child relate to God and can prompt a healthier understanding of what faith can be.

Embark is here to support you! Please do not hesitate to send in more questions in the comments section at <http://covenantbay.ca/embark/session-3> or to the contacts provided below.

Thank you for being on this journey with me. Let's continue to Embark together.

embark@covenantbay.ca

(780) 586-2828