

So Many Questions

How to answer
common questions
about Christianity

When was the last time you were asked one of these questions?

1. How do I know God exists in the first place?
2. Did Jesus really come back from the dead?
3. Hasn't science disproved Christianity?
4. You can't trust what the Bible says—it's been changed too much over the years!
5. No-one can claim to have 'the truth'—everyone's opinion is valid.
6. Wasn't Jesus just another great religious teacher?
7. Discussing religion just divides people and causes problems!
8. If the Bible is so clear, why can't Christians agree on what it says?
9. Why is the Bible anti-gay?
10. If God is good, why is there so much suffering in the world?
11. Can't we just be good enough to please God?
12. Christians are just a bunch of hypocrites!
13. Do you have to go to church to be a Christian?

Find out how to answer these common questions by using this workbook and its accompanying video material (available on DVD or online).

In a series of short sessions, *So Many Questions* will take you through each question, helping you to work out what to say, and providing an 'expert' answer from which to learn. You'll also learn the basic principles behind all these answers.

Presented by Tony Payne, Al Stewart, Claire Smith, Paul Grimmond and Chris Braga.



So Many Questions

**How to answer
common questions
about Christianity**

by Simon Roberts



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SYDNEY • YOUNGSTOWN

So Many Questions

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About this course

Welcome to *So Many Questions*, a video-based training course on how to answer common questions about Christianity. By using this workbook and the accompanying video material, you will learn some general principles for answering people's questions, as well as the specifics of how to answer 13 of the most frequently asked questions.

The course is divided into four main sections:

- a. Introduction: This is comprised of four units which cover the general approach to answering people's questions.
- b. Knowing: Some questions presume that the best answer is the one with the best evidence. To answer these types of questions, we need to present the evidence (either historical, scientific or philosophical) that supports our conclusion. This section answers four such questions.
- c. Meaning: Other questions presume that either there is no such thing as 'the truth' or that we cannot know for sure what 'the truth' about God is. This section answers four questions that are based on the assumption that we can't know the truth.
- d. Living: Finally, there are many questions concerned with how we ought to live. These questions seek to either understand or challenge the Bible's teaching on moral issues. The five questions in this section illustrate how these sorts of questions can be answered.

In total, there are 17 units to this course (4 introductory units and 13 answers to questions). The basic format of each unit is simple:

- a. There are some starter questions which help you to start thinking about the main topic the unit will address.
- b. You then watch the relevant segment of the video material, taking notes in the space provided.
- c. There are further questions to help you think about the topic in more depth and summarize the main points you would use in formulating an answer.

For each of the 13 questions, there are summaries along with suggestions for extra reading in Appendix 1. These can also be used as the basis for further discussion if you would like to explore a particular topic in more detail.

Different ways to use the course

As each unit is quite brief, there is considerable flexibility in how the course might be used. Here are some suggestions:

- An individual or couple could work through one unit per week as part of their personal Christian growth (say each Friday night or Sunday afternoon).
- A small Bible study group could do one unit each week during their regular meeting together (taking just 15-20 minutes each week).
- The units could be grouped together to yield more intensive courses of different lengths—for example, a nine-week course (two units per session = 40 minutes) or even a six-week course (three units per session = 60 minutes).
- Group leaders/coordinators could also choose not to cover all the questions. For example, you could choose the eight most common or relevant questions for the members of your group, and put them together in whatever combination you think is best.
- The course could also be run as a series of two or three Saturday morning seminars where six or nine units are completed at a time.

Contributors

We're very grateful to the following people, who gave of their time so generously in the filming of the video:

Chris Braga is the senior minister at Summer Hill Anglican Church.

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In producing this course, our goal has been to equip Christians like you to answer people's questions wisely, graciously and compellingly. Our hope and prayer is that, as you do so, you will give glory to Christ by pointing people to him, and that, in his time and through his grace, many more might come to know him as their Lord.

Simon Roberts

Introduction

Being prepared to give an account

There are two basic reasons why we need to know the answers to the various curly questions that are dealt with in this course.

Firstly, as Christians, these questions can bother us. Is the Bible really a reliable source of information? What about all the advances in science? Don't they somehow render our belief in God old-fashioned? And if God is so loving, why is there so much suffering in the world? At one time or another, these sorts of questions have passed through our minds as Christian believers. It is important that we know the answers to them. God is not afraid of the truth. By asking, researching and answering the questions that arise in our minds, we can only come to grasp his truth more fully.

Secondly, of course, we need to know how to answer people who raise these questions with us. As both Peter and Paul remind us, being able to answer graciously and gently when we are called upon to do so is an important part of every Christian's relationship with 'outsiders' (as Paul calls them in Colossians 4:5-6; see also 1 Peter 3:15-16). In fact, answering questions is often the way we get into conversations with people about Christ and the gospel. As questions are raised (whether privately or around the lunch table at work), the way we react will either adorn the gospel and point the person towards Christ, or discredit Christ and reinforce people's prejudices against Christianity. It is important to be ready to answer well.

In the opening four units of this course, we'll discuss some general principles for answering questions about the Christian faith, before working through 13 very common questions which are asked about God and Christianity.

Think & discuss

Look through the list of common questions and challenges.

- a. Tick the ones that have bothered you at some stage:
- How do I know God exists in the first place?
 - Did Jesus really come back from the dead?
 - Hasn't science disproved Christianity?
 - You can't trust what the Bible says—it's been changed too much over the years!
 - No-one can claim to have 'the truth'—everyone's opinion is valid.
 - Wasn't Jesus just another great religious teacher?
 - Discussing religion just divides people and causes problems!
 - If the Bible is so clear, why can't Christians agree on what it says?
 - Why is the Bible anti-gay?
 - If God is good, why is there so much suffering in the world?
 - Can't we just be good enough to please God?
 - Christians are just a bunch of hypocrites!
 - Do you have to go to church to be a Christian?
- b. Which ones have been you been asked by someone else? How would you rate the answer you gave?
- How do I know God exists in the first place?
 - Did Jesus really come back from the dead?
 - Hasn't science disproved Christianity?
 - You can't trust what the Bible says—it's been changed too much over the years!
 - No-one can claim to have 'the truth'—everyone's opinion is valid.
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 - If the Bible is so clear, why can't Christians agree on what it says?
 - Why is the Bible anti-gay?
 - If God is good, why is there so much suffering in the world?
 - Can't we just be good enough to please God?
 - Christians are just a bunch of hypocrites!
 - Do you have to go to church to be a Christian?

Investigate

What do these passages tell us about why we ought to be ready to answer people when they ask us questions? What do they tell us about how we should answer questions?

Proverbs 15:14

1 Peter 3:14-16

Colossians 4:2-6

2 Timothy 2:22-26



Watch & write: *Being prepared to give an account*

Now play the first introductory segment of the video, and take notes below. (NB. Throughout this course, space has been provided for you to take notes during the video segments. We strongly recommend that you do take notes, not just so that you can refer back to the material easily, but to aid your listening and recall. Taking notes is ‘active listening’; it is harder work than ‘passive listening’, but much more effective.)

Pray

Conclude by praying for:

- a strong desire to be prepared to answer questions well, and the courage and confidence to take hold of opportunities when they arise
- people you know whose questions you may have to answer
- your own growth in knowledge and skills during this course.