

Hampton Roads, Virginia - May 22, 2007 9:43 AM

Customer
ServiceSubscribe · Place an
AdJobs · Cars · Real
EstateShopping · Contact
UsAdvertiser
Index

5-Day Forecast
Currently: 66° F
Partly Cloudy
Humidity: 57%
Chance of precip: 9%

Search:

Go

Site / Archives

Web

enhanced by Google™

Email this story

Printer friendly format

Search archives

TOP STORIES

Answering the call-cr

Prepare child for
friend's departureRecycle picnic into
gamesReach out to the
emotionally woundedMost e-mailed
stories

in the past 24 hours:

- 16 local schools among
nation's best
- Man gets 2 years in
soliciting teen for sex
- Unsolved killing is
tragedy without end

More top 20 e-mailed
stories

Home | News | Opinion | Sports | Business | Entertainment | Life | Classifieds | Site Index | Obituaries | Register

Life Today | Columnists | Travel | Gardening | Dating | Health | Special Occasions

Religion News

GUEST COLUMNIST

Don't worry - God can handle a
few difficult questions

TOM GILSON

May 12, 2007

Jamie, a 19-year-old, recently wrote on a Web site: "I was raised [in Christian practices] and for quite some time ... believed all I was told. ... It wasn't until three years ago when I found a loophole that no one would answer, or contradict ... and instead of answers or help, I received condemnation, and the joy of being ignored by EVERYONE in my churchgoing congregation who... heard of my simple [question], that still lies unanswered after so long ..."

This unanswered question, he goes on to say, is why he is now an atheist.

If anyone should be eager to embrace honest questions, it is followers of Jesus Christ. The God we worship is Lord of all creation and source of all truth. In view of that, every answer to every question must surely make sense in light of who God is.

Not every question can be answered, for there are mysteries. I often wonder about what Jesus' home was like when he was a boy. We understand that he was sinless through his entire life. What was it like to live with someone like that? Did other children ever say, "You think you're so perfect!"? If so, how did he answer? What was it like for Mary and Joseph to raise him? We have the barest snippets of information in the Bible; the rest I cannot imagine.

Beliefs do not stand or fall on questions like that. Jamie's question, though, was about where evil comes from, which is indeed a serious question. Why would someone ignore it or condemn him for it?

I suppose some may regard hard questions as a personal challenge, or even a threat to their own knowledge. Jamie's fellow church members may not have known how to answer. That's uncomfortable. If I may suggest this, I think there are two good ways to make it through an awkward moment like that. The first is to respond honestly, "That's a good question, and there's probably a good answer, but I certainly don't know what it is." There's a world of wisdom in "I don't know." People like Jamie can detect faking, yet they respect humility.

Then we need to commit to working it through. That may be uncomfortable in a different way - it takes effort! The Bible calls on us to be diligent in our studies (2 Tim. 2:15). The writer to the Hebrews (5:11-6:3) finds fault with his letter's recipients for getting stuck in "elementary truths" - feeding on "milk, not solid food" - and not having progressed as they should have. Learning is a genuine Christian responsibility. Thankfully, we do not have to go it alone. We're blessed with resources - pastors, books, and Web sites among them - to help us learn.

Others may reject questions for fear that they are impious: "How dare we question God!" It takes just a moment leafing through the Psalms, though, to find questions for God, even hard ones. For example, in Psalm 85:5-6 (NIV): "Will you be angry with us forever? Will you prolong your anger through all generations? Will you not revive us again, that your people may rejoice in you?" If it was OK for the Psalmist to ask questions like that, surely it's OK for us, too.

Others may recoil at the possibility that questions indicate doubt instead of faith. But notice how the Psalmist just quoted was able to join his questions with belief (Psalm 85:8,9): "I will listen to what God the Lord will say; he promises peace to his people, his saints - but let them not return to folly. Surely his salvation is near those who fear him, that his glory may dwell in our land."

This writer, very human yet guided by God's Spirit, was not afraid of his own doubts and disappointments. God wasn't afraid of them either. How better it is to look our difficulties in the eye than to try to bury them!

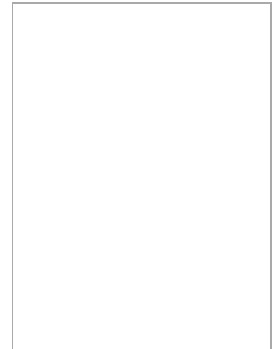
The worst response of all is, in my opinion, is, "Don't ask, just believe!" Belief can't be commanded. Suppose I were to tell you, right now, to believe there's a live penguin waddling through your living room, chasing a floppy fish. You don't have good reasons to believe it (probably!). Can you make yourself think it's true anyway? Of course not. Similarly, if Jamie doesn't know of good reasons to believe in God, or good answers to his questions about God, how could he believe?

God can, if He desires, give faith as a gift without showing reasons or evidences for it. That undoubtedly happens for many. For those who do have genuine doubts or questions, though, these can't usually be chased away with a rebuke. They require thoughtful, respectful answers.

Jamie provides a tragic example of what can happen when we avoid the hard issues. Good questions that lead to good answers are good things. Good questions that lead us toward God for the answers are even better. God is glorified in

Click the tabs below to view the top videos in our different categories. Click the "More" tab to view our full video selection.

dailypress.com VIDEO



Local News

Sports

Business

Entertainment

Viral Video

Nation/World

More...

LIFE CONTACTS

Features Editor:

Dan Montgomery | 247-4798

Meet Dan (WMV)

Assistant Features Editor / Copy
Desk

Karen Morgan | 247-4757

Meet Karen (WMV)

Assistant Features Editor /
Reporting

Dave Schleck | 247-7430

Meet Dave (WMV)

Copy Editor / Wires Editor:

Marguerite Hargreaves | 247-7439

Meet Marguerite (WMV)

Art Director

Allen Walker | 247-4959

Copy Editor / TV editor

Joe Atkinson | 247-4761

Meet Joe (WMV)

Copy Editor / Designer

Lisa Cherry | 247-4734

Meet Lisa (WMV)

Copy Editor / Designer

Suzanne Fairbank | 247-4773

questions and in answers, and in the process of pursuing them.

(Dedicated to my late mother, who, until she went to be with the Lord last August, always encouraged the good questions.)

Gilson is the director of strategic processes for Campus Crusade for Christ. He can be contacted through his weblog at <http://www.thinkingchristian.net>.

More Local News

[What makes a \\$5.7M rest area?](#)

NEW [More cases of norovirus acknowledged](#)

NEW [Teacher accused of spanking student](#)

[Officials discuss evidence in dog case](#) ► [TRANSCRIPT: Vick interview](#)
► [Redskins star says dogfighting is OK](#)

More Local Sports

[Tough choice](#)

[PD final pairs top seeds](#)

[Shaken Hokie to transfer to Vandy](#)

[Tigers sweep Bay Rivers singles](#)

[Rough day for PD players](#)



[Get home delivery of the Daily Press for less than \\$3.33 a week.](#)

Try our dining, travel, entertainment and gardening newsletters. [Subscribe](#)

Copy Editor / Designer
[Scott Craig](#) | 247-4955

Copy Editor / Designer
[Blaine Price](#) | 247-4631

Copy Editor
[Elizabeth Channon](#) | 247-4788

Copy Editor / Special Occasions
[Lore McDonald](#) | 247-7421

Reporter - Arts / Museum / History
[Mark St. John Erickson](#) | 247-4783
[Meet Mark \(WMV\)](#)

Reporter - Health
[Alison Freehling](#) | 247-4789
[Meet Alison \(WMV\)](#)

Reporter - Pop Culture
[Mike Holtzclaw](#) | 928-6479
[Meet Mike \(WMV\)](#)

Reporter - Pop Music / Entertainment
[Sam McDonald](#) | 247-4732
[Meet Sam \(WMV\)](#)

Reporter - Performing Arts & Media
[Dave Nicholson](#) | 247-4794
[Meet Dave \(WMV\)](#)

Reporter - Food
[Shelley Rauch](#)

Reporter - General Assignment
[Lisa Deaderick](#) | 247-4733
[Meet Lisa \(WMV\)](#)

Columnist - Gardening
[Kathy VanMullekom](#) | 247-4781
[Meet Kathy \(WMV\)](#)

[Newsroom](#) · [Advertising](#) · [Daily Press Jobs](#) · [Internships](#) · [Customer Service](#) · [Subscribe](#) · [Privacy Policy](#)

Partners: [CareerBuilder.com](#) for [Jobs](#) · [Cars.com](#) for [Autos](#) · [Apartments.com](#) for [Apt. Rentals](#) · [Homes Rentals Plus](#) for [House Rentals](#) · [ShopLocal.com](#) for [Shopping](#) · [FSBO](#) and [Open Houses](#) for Real Estate

Copyright ©2007 Daily Press
[Terms of Service](#)