

Ask Me Anything - Part 1 Study Guide

[Watch the Sunday Sermon HERE!](#)

This week's question: *How can two equally-committed Christians read the same Bible and reach some very different conclusions on big issues?*

One reason that equally-committed Christians might disagree on what the Bible says is because the Bible can be mysterious sometimes. In fact, God seems to be more comfortable with a little mystery and ambiguity than we are. In this week's message, we explored a few possible sources of "biblical mystery."

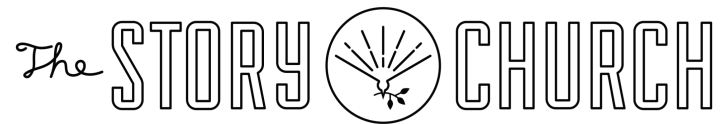
1. Human ignorance can lead to confusion about Scripture. Sometimes, we're just not ready to understand God's Word, but, given some time, we may come to understand it later in life. Have you ever experienced confusion with Scripture that was resolved as you grew older and wiser?

(Supporting Scripture - Luke 18:31-34; 1 Corinthians 14:33)

2. Unresolved sin can also cause the Bible to seem confusing or frustrating. Have you ever seen someone (or maybe it was you) who seemed angry or confused about Scripture because they were more in love with their sin than they were with God?

(Supporting Scripture - Genesis 3:1; James 4:7)

3. Intentional paradox in the Bible can also make it seem ambiguous. Throughout the scriptures, God offers one paradox after another (up is down, slaves are leaders, wealth is poverty, suffering is a blessing, life is death, death is life, etc). What do you make of the paradoxes found in the Bible?



Seemingly Biblical Paradoxes:

- Isaiah 9:6/Matthew 10:34
- Matthew 11:30/Matthew 7:14
- Romans 3:28/James 2:24

The most confounding paradox might be the Bible's insistence that God is both *just* and *merciful*, such as when Jesus said "I came to bring judgment to the world" in John 9:39, and "I did not come to judge the world" in John 12:47. How can both of these statements be true?

Another source of significant disagreement among Christians is our failure to distinguish between the essentials and the non-essentials of our faith. What are the essentials of the Christian faith?

(Supporting Scripture - Romans 10:9; 1 Corinthians 15:3-4)

How does reading the Bible through the lens of Jesus' life, death, and resurrection help us unlock a deeper understanding of Scripture?

(Supporting Scripture - Luke 24:13-35)



Ask Me Anything - Part 2 Study Guide

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This week's question: *How do we know which Biblical laws still apply and which ones we don't have to worry about?*

Why is it important for Christians to humbly listen to this question?

Can you think of a time when you've witnessed Christians (perhaps even yourself) cherry-picking which biblical rules to follow and which ones to ignore based on their (or your) own biases or politics? What's the problem with this approach?

When we talk about the Biblical Law, we're referring to the 613 rules found in the Old Testament. For centuries, the Church has sorted these rules into three categories of Law:

1. _____ Law, which regulated worship and ritual sacrifices in ancient Israel.
2. _____ Law, which regulated daily life in the nation-state called Israel.
3. _____ Law, which distinguishes Good from Evil and Right from Wrong.

What are two or three examples of ceremonial laws in the Old Testament?

Why do Christians no longer follow these rules? (see Hebrews 10:1-18)

Name two or three examples of civil laws in the Old Testament.

Why do Christians no longer follow these rules? (see John 18:36 and Romans 14:17)

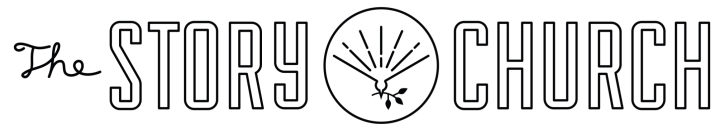


Now, write two or three examples of moral laws in the Old Testament.

Why are Christians still expected to live according to these rules? (see Matthew 22:34-40)

How would you describe the relationship between Law and Love in the Bible? (see 1 John 5:3)

Given everything we've covered here, how would you respond to someone who asked you, "Why do you Christians emphasize certain rules in the Bible while ignoring all the rest of them?"



Ask Me Anything - Part 3 Study Guide

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This week's question: *What do you do when, even though you believe in God in your head, you can't feel Him in your heart?*

Can you personally relate to this question? Why or why not?

What are the choices we have when we go through a "dry spell" with God? How have you reacted in the past when the "feeling" of God was gone?

Four Things to Remember When You Can't Feel God in Your Heart:

1. You're in good _____...

What did Eric mean by this? (see Psalm 88, Judges 6:13)

2. ...so be honest with _____...

What would it look/sound like to be honest with God in a dark or dry season?

3. ...but check your _____...

Why is it a bad idea to let your emotions be your guide and to "just follow your heart"? (see Jeremiah 17:9)

4. ...with your _____...

What are essential Christian convictions, and how can we use them to check our emotions? Why is this important?

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The Apostle Paul, who went through several dark, dry seasons that we know of, constantly made it a point to give God thanks and praise, no matter the circumstances (see 2 Corinthians 11:23-28, Romans 11:33-36). Why is it important to thank God for who He is, and not just for what He can give you?

Given this week's message, and upon further reflection here, what would you say to a friend who tells you they can't seem to feel God anymore? Be specific and put it in your own words.



Ask Me Anything - Part 4 Study Guide

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This week's question: *The phrase "premarital sex" never appears in the Bible, so why are Christians so against it?*

How does the Bible describe God's ideal for human sexual expression? (See Genesis 2:24, Exodus 20:14, Hebrews 13:4, 1 Corinthians 6:18, 1 Thessalonians 4:3-5)

Pastor Eric shared some recent *Pew Research* data that revealed the vast divide between the majority opinion of premarital sex and the biblical worldview. According to *Pew Research*, 84% of nonreligious adults (and 50% of Christian adults) in America believe that sex between two consenting adults who are not in a committed relationship is morally acceptable. Why do you think the Bible's teachings on this topic are "losing" in the court of public opinion, and what should Christians do about it?

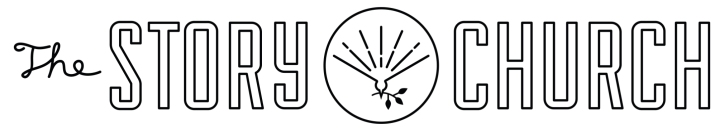
Despite the huge divide between popular opinion and the biblical perspective on sexual morality, Pastor Eric shared three areas of *common ground* where we can all agree:

1. Sex is _____.

In his *Time Magazine* article titled *The Power of Love*, Jeffrey Kluger described the wonder and mystery of sex:

"Of all the splendidly ridiculous, transcendentally fulfilling things humans do, it's sex — with its countless permutations of practices and partners — that most confounds understanding. What in the world are we doing? Why in the world are we so consumed by it? The impulse to procreate may lie at the heart of sex, but like the impulse to nourish ourselves, it is merely the starting point for an "astonishingly varied banquet. Bursting from our sexual center is a whole spangle of other things — art, song, romance, obsession, rapture, sorrow, companionship, love, even violence and criminality — all playing an enormous role in everything from our physical health to our emotional health to our politics, our communities, our very life spans. Why should this be so? Did nature simply overload us in the mating department, hot-wiring us for the sex that is so central to the survival of the species, and never mind the sometimes sloppy consequences? Or is there something smarter and subtler at work, some larger interplay among sexuality, life and what it means to be human?"

(*Time*, January 19, 2004)



What are some of the clues in our society that most everyone - regardless of religious identity - agrees that our sexuality is good and worthy of protecting?

On what grounds should Christians affirm the belief that sex is good? (See Genesis 1:28, Song of Songs 7:6-13, 1 Corinthians 7:3-5)

2. Christians have _____ on sex.

How have many well-intentioned Christians missed the mark when it comes to teaching young people the biblical view of sexual morality?

What do you think it says about God that He invented human sexual intimacy, gifted it to us, and set clear boundaries around it?

3. Sex is either like _____ or it's like _____.

What are the key differences between these two views of sex?

Which view of sex do you espouse, and why?

What would you say to someone who takes the opposite view of sex?

How can Christians - and churches - more effectively communicate the biblical view of sex to you and your peers?

Have you ever felt convicted - by God, the Bible, or something you've learned - to change the way you think about sex and sexual morality?