

God Is the God of the Living

Trick questions—a riddle; sometimes the answers are funny—Like why did the chicken cross the road? Sometimes the answers only raise more questions. If the dead in Christ rise, then why is there a judgment day? The Sadducees were hoping to start an argument with Jesus. But Jesus chose to teach them about the nature of those who are risen. He avoided the trap and went straight to the heart of the matter. Listen again to his answer: **Luke 20:34-38:** ³⁴ Jesus said to them, "Those who belong to this age marry and are given in marriage; ³⁵ but those who are considered worthy of a place in that age and in the resurrection from the dead neither marry nor are given in marriage. ³⁶ Indeed they cannot die anymore, because they are like angels and are children of God, being children of the resurrection. ³⁷ And the fact that the dead are raised Moses himself showed, in the story about the bush, where he speaks of the Lord as the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. ³⁸ Now he is God not of the dead, but of the living; for to him all of them are alive."

God is not the god of the dead, but of the living. Good answer Jesus. The scripture in fact says it was such a good answer that the Sadducees didn't ask him any more questions.

Wouldn't it be great if we could all come up with good answers to questions about our faith? I think that is one of the hardest things about witnessing for Jesus. If we bring up the subject of faith in Jesus Christ, we might be asked a question to which we don't know the answer or at best aren't sure. And if we hesitate, or tap dance, then the person who asked the question might be disillusioned and we will miss an opportunity to bring someone to Christ. How can we be strong

enough in our faith to not fear the questions others may ask? Do we have to memorize large portions of the scriptures? Should we just avoid putting ourselves in situations where questions may be asked of us? The answer to both questions is "no". We don't have to memorize scripture, but we should read it. No, we shouldn't avoid putting ourselves in situations where questions maybe asked of us, because if we are living our lives as Christians, then eventually someone is going to ask us why we do what we do. The answer is, "have faith." God will provide the answer you need at the time you need it. I know that sounds like the answer a preacher is supposed to use, but it's the truth. Jesus promised that after his resurrection, he would send us an advocate, a helper, the Holy Spirit. And that Holy Spirit would lead us and guide us and help give us the right words to say at the right time. But if we haven't read the Bible, then the Holy Spirit can't help us recall what we haven't read. It's like asking a computer to do something we haven't programmed it to do. If you haven't loaded it, the computer won't be able to do anything. In the same way, if you haven't read any of the Psalms, then the Holy Spirit can't help you recall them.

Peter, John, and the other disciples were not authorities on the scriptures, but they were familiar enough with them, that the Holy Spirit could lead them to truth. The Holy Spirit can do that for you too. Then when somebody asks you a question that is intended to start an argument about faith, you too will be able to have a good answer like Jesus did.

Here's one we were given in seminary. If God created everything, and evil exists, then did God create evil? If you answer, "No God did not create evil, but evil exists." Then someone could say well then God did not create everything. I

did not like that question very much. Another question that often comes up in various forms is this: “If God is all powerful, then why does God allow evil to exist? Or why does God let bad things happen to good people? My answer may not satisfy you. But I believe God when God says eventually all things will turn out all right. Evil does exist because in the world that God created, living things have choices—or free will.

Eventually all creation will choose to love God as much as God loves us. When that day comes, and it will come someday, evil will no longer exist. Until that day comes we must put our faith, like Jesus did, in the God of the living.

Let us pray...

God of all creation, who gives hope to the hopeless, life to those who are dead, lead us to the truth about life. Help us to see your hand guiding us in all that we do. Strengthen us where we are weak in the faith, and guide us when we are lost in questions that only you can answer. We want to be your children, but we don't always know how. We want to bring others to you, but we don't know how to find those you are calling. Lead them to us, or guide us to them, as you choose. Just help us to have the right words to say when they ask us about you and our faith in you. We pray in the name of the one you sent to teach us, Jesus Christ. Amen.