

Words of Truth

Are We Supposed To Answer Every Question?

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Some would jump up and be ready to answer the question of this article by citing I Peter 3:15. That Scripture says: *“But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear”* (I Peter 3:15). In addition to that, you could cite these Scriptures: *“I will speak of thy testimonies also before kings, and will not be ashamed... But the other of love, knowing that I am set for the defence of the gospel... Let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man... Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints”* (Psalms 119:46, Philippians 1:17, Colossians 4:6, and Jude 3). In fact, you could use many Scriptures to show that we are to be ready to answer, willing to answer, ready to defend, etc. What you will not find is the Scripture that tells you to absolutely answer every question that is put to you.

Not only will you not find a Scripture that commands you to answer every question that is put to you, you will find Scriptures that say the exact opposite. Notice what the inspired Apostle Paul wrote to Timothy and Titus: *“**But foolish and unlearned questions avoid**, knowing that they do gender strifes... But **avoid foolish questions**, and genealogies, and contentions, and strivings about the law; for they are unprofitable and vain”* (II Timothy 2:23 and Titus 3:9).

What Paul wrote to Timothy and Titus is very much in accordance with what Jesus taught while He was walking on this earth. Notice this command: *“Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn again and rend you”* (Matthew 7:6). Most of us know exactly how it feels to try and teach someone just to have him or her turn and attack us (cf. Galatians 4:16). This is one reason why we are not supposed to answer every question that is put to us. This is one reason why we are not to try and teach everyone we’ve ever met. The fact is, not all questions are honest. Not all seekers are looking for the truth. Sometimes, we have to use righteous judgment (John 7:24) to test whether or not the inquirer is honest (I John 4:1; cf. Matthew 7:20). This is how we’re taught to answer questions. We can see this in the life of our Lord.

The Examples Of Christ Teach Us Not To Answer Every Question

Notice our first example: *“And when he was come into the temple, the chief priests and the elders of the people came unto him as he was teaching, and said, By what authority doest thou these things? and who gave thee this authority? And Jesus answered and said unto them, I also will ask you one thing, which if ye tell me, I in like wise will tell you by what authority I do these things. The baptism of John, whence was it? from heaven, or of men? And they reasoned with themselves, saying, If we shall say, From heaven; he will say unto us, Why*

did ye not then believe him? But if we shall say, Of men; we fear the people; for all hold John as a prophet. And they answered Jesus, and said, We cannot tell. And he said unto them, Neither tell I you by what authority I do these things. But what think ye? A certain man had two sons; and he came to the first, and said, Son, go work to day in my vineyard. He answered and said, I will not: but afterward he repented, and went. And he came to the second, and said likewise. And he answered and said, I go, sir: and went not. Whether of them twain did the will of his father? They say unto him, The first. Jesus saith unto them, Verily I say unto you, That the publicans and the harlots go into the kingdom of God before you. For John came unto you in the way of righteousness, and ye believed him not: but the publicans and the harlots believed him: and ye, when ye had seen it, repented not afterward, that ye might believe him” (Matthew 21:23-32).

In the Scriptures quoted above Jesus did not answer the question that was put to Him. In fact, He asked a question to test the sincerity of the inquirers. When they failed to show honesty, He refused to answer. In addition, the context bears out that these are individuals who had been taught the word of God by John. They had refused to obey the word of God spoken by John. Therefore, we all can know these individuals are not true seekers. In such a case, we are to move on to others who really want the Gospel (Matthew 10:14).

In another example notice what occurs: *“And the Pharisees came forth, and began to question with him, seeking of him a sign from heaven, tempting him. And he sighed deeply in his spirit, and saith, Why doth this generation seek after a sign? verily I say unto you, There shall no sign be given unto this generation. And he left them, and entering into the ship again departed to the other side” (Mark 8:11-13).*

Jesus didn’t answer the request asked in the example we just read. Jesus had already been giving them much to identify who He was (Acts 2:22 and Luke 4:16-32). The signs were already in place (Luke 12:54-57). Signs do not convert someone to the Lord anyway (I Corinthians 1:22-23; cf. Romans 1:16).

In our final example, notice how Jesus ignores a question asked by hypocrites (cf. Matthew 7:1-5 and Titus 1:16): *“Jesus went unto the mount of Olives. And early in the morning he came again into the temple, and all the people came unto him; and he sat down, and taught them. And the scribes and Pharisees brought unto him a woman taken in adultery; and when they had set her in the midst, They say unto him, Master, this woman was taken in adultery, in the very act. Now Moses in the law commanded us, that such should be stoned: but what sayest thou? This they said, tempting him, that they might have to accuse him. But Jesus stooped down, and with his finger wrote on the ground, as though he heard them not. So when they continued asking him, he lifted up himself, and said unto them, He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her. And again he stooped down, and wrote on the ground. And they which heard it, being convicted by their own conscience, went out one by one, beginning at the eldest, even unto the last: and Jesus was left alone, and the woman standing in the midst. When Jesus had lifted up himself, and saw none but the woman, he said unto her, Woman, where are those thine accusers? hath no man condemned thee? She said, No man, Lord. And Jesus said unto her, Neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more” (John 8:1-11).*

Conclusion

Clearly, there are questions we shouldn’t answer. There are people we shouldn’t have discussions with. Pride should never compel us to show someone our knowledge (Proverbs 14:3). We are not supposed to answer every question that is asked of us. Too much talking will get us into trouble anyway (Proverbs 10:19).