

Answers to Questions Children Ask

TOP TIP for answering questions

Imagine the child's parents next to them as you answer. This is because they have the biggest influence on their child and we need to respect that, even if they think differently to us. If you are teaching their child in school Scripture you only have them because a parent allows it. You will still give an answer based on what you believe from the Bible, but you'll own it with statements like 'I believe' or ground it with statements like 'The Bible says' or 'Christians believe'.

At school, imagine the school principal next to the child as well. This is because the principal ultimately has the duty of care for the children in his school and any feedback from parents will go to the principal.

Clarify what they mean by the question. Ask 'What do you think?' to help you see where they're coming from.

Give a short answer and wait for them to ask for more.

Is the Easter Bunny true?

The Easter bunny and chocolate eggs is fun, but the deepest meaning of Easter is all about new life and things being fresh and new. Eggs are a reminder of a new life that's about to happen.

What happens when the egg hatches? (*A new life comes out!*)

What's the new life in the Easter story? (*Jesus died, but he came alive again on Easter Sunday*)

So when we think of the Easter Bunny bringing eggs it's a good reminder of the new life that God gives because Jesus died for us and came alive at Easter.

What happens to people who don't believe in God?

The Bible tells us that God planned from the beginning that people would be with him forever. People who want to believe can pray and ask God to show them that he is real and he will, even if it takes a long time. Don't give up. Some people want to believe but they honestly can't. God wants us to be honest and not fake it. Again, ask God to give you faith. In the Bible God promises that people who want to find God will, when they try with all their heart (Jeremiah 29:13).

People who don't want anything to do with God miss out on so much that's good, but God lets them choose, even though it's not good for them. They live without God forever.

NB Avoid discussion of hell. Stick to the positive.

Does God know me?

There's nothing hidden from God. God knows every person, including you. God knows all about you, the good things and the bad things and he still thinks you're great. The Bible says that God loves us with an 'everlasting love'. That means that nothing we can do, or not do will stop God loving us. God also wants you to make the most of your life and will help you if you ask him.

If you've done something really bad, does God still like you?

God knows how hard it is to be good all the time. He knows because he's been a human on earth. At one time Jesus struggled so hard to do what he needed to that he was sweating drops of blood. He likes you no matter what and he's ready to help you do the right thing next time.

Why don't things happen now like in the Bible?

They do. Ask God to show you what he's doing in the world. It's amazing!

Is God true?

God is true even if we don't believe in him. We can research information to tell us about Jesus and that he really lived on earth, in the countries in the Middle East. Archaeologists have made discoveries that confirm a lot of the Bible events. Millions of people alive today believe God's spirit lives in them.

How old is God?

God hasn't got an age. He's what we call *eternal*. That means he's always been here and always will be. The Bible starts with the words 'In the beginning God...' God was here before anyone, or anything.

Where did Jesus get his powers?

Jesus was a real human but he was unlike any human who ever lived. He had God's power in his life because he totally turned against all evil and obeyed God 100% of the time.

Is that picture of God, or Jesus?

God is a spirit and he's invisible. We can't draw God because he doesn't have a body. Jesus was a real human with a body like us.

Is Santa real?

Always the first response to a question like that should be 'what do you think?'

Try a non-committal answer, e.g. 'Lots of people make a big fuss about Santa, but for me Jesus is the important part of Christmas and Jesus is with us all year around' - and move on.

If you find yourself in the middle of a full on discussion you can't avoid, maybe include:

* Different people believe different things about Santa and different families and different countries have different traditions. Suggest they talk with their parents about it.

* Some say that the Santa tradition came from a good man called St Nicholas who lived in Turkey many years ago and secretly gave presents to needy children. St Nicholas was probably a real person and the idea of giving to the needy is good all year round.

*The Christmas story, about the birth of Jesus is recorded in the Bible and has been celebrated as a real event for thousands of years.

* How do we know who is more important, Santa or Jesus? The date, i.e. the calendar that we base daily planning on, is calculated from the time Jesus was born. It's the most important time in the history of the world.

Do NOT be the one to say, 'Santa isn't real!' They'll find out soon enough.

Why doesn't God stop bad things happening?

Things to mention in your discussion

Talking with Kids in the Face of Disasters (written June 2011)

As Christians we want to convey the faith and hope we have that in the end all will be well but kids are only too aware that in the meantime there is a lot of suffering in the world and we don't understand all the reasons.

Here are some points you can use when discussing this with primary aged kids using the everyday language that will help them handle the ideas.

1. There are good and bad forces in the world. The bad forces are not as powerful as God but they are real and cause bad things to happen too. (The book of Job in the Bible is about this, but if you're in school Scripture don't talk about Satan) For now, God doesn't stop everything bad but the Bible says that in the future God will bring an end to all that's bad and then those who want everything to be good will live in a perfect world. In the meantime the world is a mix of good and bad. God doesn't make us be good all the time. God lets us choose, and some of the bad things that happen are the result of people doing wrong things, like car crashes. We can use tragedy to ask ourselves 'Is there anything I should do differently?'

2. The death toll and devastation from Yasi wasn't nearly as bad as expected. Many people prayed and believe their prayers were answered. The Australian 3 Feb 2011 'North-Eastern Australia has a miraculous escape on Thursday when the worst cyclone to hit the state of Queensland in a century missed two major cities, sparing thousands of people from its full force.'

3. Sometimes what starts out looking disastrous turns out to be good in the end. God's word promises that 'All things work together for good to those who love God... (Romans 8:28) Sometimes hard times can actually be good for people and communities. They show kindness and work together in a way they wouldn't otherwise. We need to look for the good as well as the bad in these situations. Sometimes it

takes time. The disciples were still in the terrible storm. It was so bad they thought they were going to die. God doesn't take away bad happenings but he's with us in them. Christians believe that even if we die, that isn't the end, we're with God forever, and that's totally good.

4. There's a place for kids and adults in this. God is finally in control of his world but for the time being God allows people to live as they want and shape the world they live in. God wants us to partner with him in making this world totally good. Jesus did that. When he was on earth he stood against what was bad and brought good out of it. When bad things look like happening we can pray against them. When people have been hurt we can help.

Praying for you as you tackle this with the kids this week, that your hope and trust in God will shine through and give them something to hang on to.