

No Pat Answers

Col. 4:6

Let your conversation be gracious and effective so that you will have the right answer for everyone.

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Forward

There is no single answer for every problems or situation.

The word of God must be applied to the current situation.

It isn't enough to simply read the Bible; you have to study it. In order to have a biblical worldview, you must learn to see life through the lens of Scripture.

This requires the work of reading, thinking, comparing, and coming to conclusions. Will you understand everything? No. But you will come to understand more than you do now.

"He will call upon me, and I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble; I will rescue him and honor him. Psalm 91:5

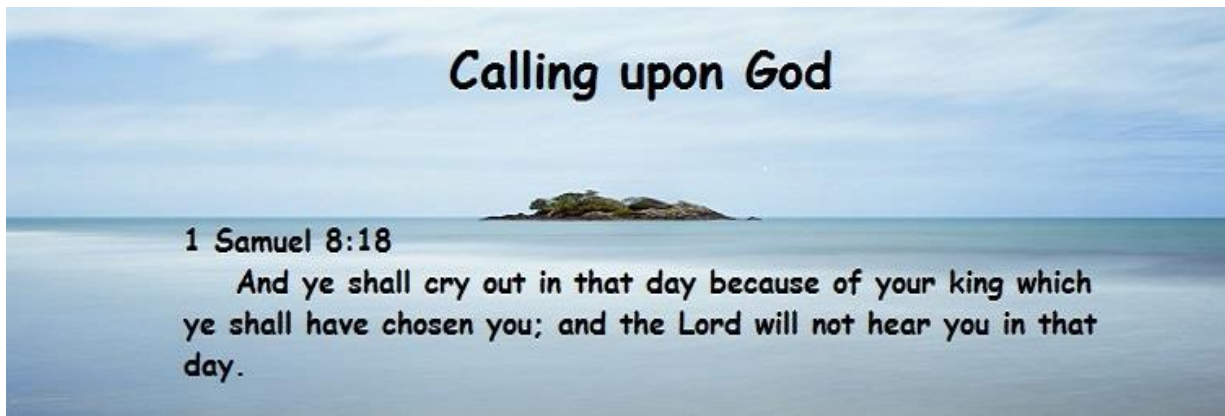
The Holy Spirit will direct us in giving the correct answer when we yield our thoughts and speech to Him.

By sanctifying Christ as Lord in our hearts, we will always be ready to make a defense to everyone who asks us to give an account for the hope that is in us, yet we give that answer with gentleness and reverence

1 Peter 3:15

From universities where I received counseling degrees, I learned in some ways to deal with people, but through the University of the Holy Spirit, I learned that there is no pat answer for every question. Jesus is Lord.

Chapter 1



Calling upon God.

When relying on the king, the Lord will not answer.

1 Samuel 8:18

"Then you will cry out in that day because of your king whom you have chosen for yourselves, but the LORD will not answer you in that day."

Samuel carefully explained all the negative consequences of having a king, but the Israelites refused to listen. When you have an important decision to make, weigh the positives and negatives carefully, considering everyone who might be affected by your choice. When you want something badly enough, it is difficult to see the potential problems. But don't discount the negatives. Unless you have a plan to handle each one, they will cause you great difficulty later.

Israel was called to be a holy nation, separate from and unique among all others (Leviticus 20:26). The Israelites' motive in asking for a king was to be like the nations around them. This was in total opposition to God's original plan. It was not their desire for a king that was wrong, but their reasons for wanting a king.

Often we let others' values and actions dictate our attitudes and behavior. Have you ever made a wrong choice because you wanted to be like everyone else? Be careful that the values of your friends or "heroes" don't pull you away from what God says is right. When God's people want to be like unbelievers, they are heading for spiritual disaster.

The heart of the righteous ponders the answer.

Proverbs 15:28

The heart of the righteous ponders how to answer, but the mouth of the wicked pours out evil things.

The righteous weigh their answers; the wicked don't wait to speak because they don't care about the effects of their words. It is important to have something to say, but it is equally important to weigh it first. Do you carefully plan your words, or do you pour out your thoughts without concern for their impact?

Folly belongs to him who gives an answer before he hears.

Proverbs 18:13

He who gives an answer before he hears, it is folly and shame to him.

In these concise statements, there are three basic principles for making sound decisions:

- (1) Get the facts before answering;
- (2) Be open to new ideas;
- (3) Make sure you hear both sides of the story before judging.

All three principles center on seeking additional information. This is difficult work, but the only alternative is prejudice—judging before getting the facts.

Know for certainty of the words of truth.

Proverbs 22:21-23

To make you know the certainty of the words of truth that you may correctly answer him who sent you?

Do not rob the poor because they are poor or exploit the needy in court. For the Lord is their defender. He will injure anyone who injures them.

This proverb is a message of hope to people who must live and work under unjust authoritarian leaders. It is also a warning to those who enjoy ruling with an iron hand. Sometimes God intervenes and directly destroys tyrants. More often, he uses other rulers to overthrow them or their own oppressed people to rebel against them. Leadership through kindness is more effective and longer lasting than leadership by force.

Chapter 2



A glad heart knows how to reply.

Proverbs 27:11

Be wise, my son, and make my heart glad, that I may reply to him who reproaches me.

A friend who has your best interests at heart may have to give you unpleasant advice at times, but you know it is for your own good. An enemy, by contrast, may whisper sweet words and happily send you on your way to ruin. We tend to hear what we want to hear, even if an enemy is the only one who will say it. A friend's advice, no matter how painful, is much better.

Do not answer a fool according to his folly.

Proverbs 26:4

Do not answer a fool according to his folly, or you will also be like him.

Answer a fool, as his folly deserves.

Proverbs 26:5

Answer a fool, as his folly deserves, that he not be wise in his own eyes.

These two verses seem to be in contradiction. But the writer is saying that we shouldn't take a foolish person seriously and try to reason with his or her empty arguments. This will only make him or her proud and determined to win the argument. In some situations, you ought not to even try to answer a fool, for there is no way you can penetrate his or her closed mind. You may, in fact, be stooping to that person's level if you do choose to answer. Such a fool will abuse you and you will be tempted to abuse him or her in return. There are other situations where your common sense tells you to answer in order to expose the fool's pride and folly

The poor utter supplications.

Proverbs 18:23

The poor man utters supplications, but the rich man answers roughly.

This verse does not condone insulting the poor; it is simply recording an unfortunate fact of life. It is wrong for rich people to treat the less fortunate with contempt and arrogance, and God will judge such actions severely (see Proverbs 14:31).

Jesus answered them well.

Mark 12:28

One of the scribes came and heard them arguing, and recognizing that He had answered them well, asked Him, "What commandment is the foremost of all?"

By Jesus' time, the Jews had accumulated hundreds of laws—613 by one historian's count. Some religious leaders tried to distinguish between major and minor laws, and some taught that all laws were equally binding and that it was dangerous to make any distinctions. This teacher's question could have provoked controversy among these groups, but Jesus' answer summarized all of God's laws.

The correct answer brings one near to the kingdom of God.

Mark 12:34

When Jesus saw that he had answered intelligently, He said to him, "You are not far from the kingdom of God." After that, no one would venture to ask Him any more questions.

This man had caught the intent of God's law as it is so often stressed in the Old Testament—that true obedience comes from the heart. Because all the Old Testament commands lead to Christ, his next step was faith in Jesus himself. This, however, was the most difficult step to take.

An answer to identify

John 1:22

Then they said to him, "Who are you, so that we may give an answer to those who sent us? What do you say about yourself?"

In the Pharisees' minds, there were four options regarding John the Baptist's identity: he was

- 1) The prophet foretold by Moses (Deut. 18:15),
- (2) Elijah (Malachi 4:5),
- (4) The Messiah, or
- (5) A false prophet. John denied being the first three personages.

Instead he called himself, in the words of the Old Testament prophet Isaiah, “A voice of one calling: ‘In the desert prepare the way for the LORD’ ” (Isaiah 40:3). The leaders kept pressing John to say who he was because people were expecting the Messiah to come (Luke 3:15). But John emphasized only *why* he had come—to prepare the way for the Messiah. The Pharisees missed the point. They wanted to know who John was, but John wanted them to know who Jesus was.

Be ready to make a defense.

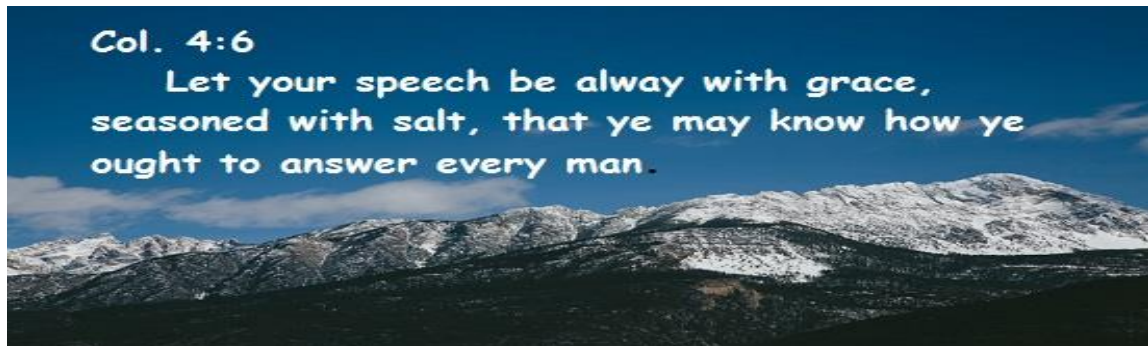
1 Peter 3:15

but sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, always being ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, yet with gentleness and reverence;

Rather than fear our enemies, we are to quietly trust in God as the Lord of all. We must believe that Christ is truly in control of all events. When he rules our thoughts and emotions, we cannot be shaken by anything our enemies may do.

When asked about our faith, our life-style, or our Christian perspective. Can others see your hope in Christ? Are you prepared to tell them what Christ has done in your life?

Chapter 3



Let your speech always be with grace.

Colossians 4:6

Let your speech always be with grace, as though seasoned with salt, so that you will know how you should respond to each person.

When we tell others about Christ, it is important always to be gracious in what we say. No matter how much sense the message makes, we lose our effectiveness if we are not courteous. Just as we like to be respected, we must respect others if we want them to listen to what we have to say. "Seasoned with salt" means that what we say should be "tasty" and should encourage further dialogue.

The correct reply

Matthew 21:24

Jesus said to them, "I will also ask you one thing, which if you tell Me, I will also tell you by what authority I do these things.

In Jesus' world, as in ours, people looked for the outward sign of authority—education, title, position, and connections. But Jesus' authority came from who he was, not from any outward and superficial trappings. As followers of Christ, God has given us authority—we can confidently speak and act on his behalf because he has authorized us. Are you exercising your authority?

The Pharisees demanded to know where Jesus got his authority. If Jesus said his authority came from God, they would accuse him of blasphemy. If he said that he was acting on his own authority, the crowds would be convinced that the Pharisees had the greater authority. But Jesus answered them with a seemingly unrelated question that exposed their real motives. They didn't really want an answer to their question; they only wanted to trap him. Jesus showed that the Pharisees wanted the truth only if it supported their own views and causes.

Answer a question with a question

Mark 11:29

And Jesus said to them, "I will ask you one question, and you answer me, and then I will tell you by what authority I do these things.

The religious leaders asked Jesus who gave him the authority to chase away the merchants and moneychangers. Their question was a trap. If Jesus said his authority was from God, they would accuse him of blasphemy; if he said his authority was his own, they would dismiss him as a fanatic. To expose their real motives, Jesus countered their question with a question about John the Baptist. The leaders' silence proved that they were not interested in the truth. They simply wanted to get rid of Jesus because he was undermining their authority.

Do not hide your answer

2 Samuel 14:18

Then the king answered and said to the woman, "Please do not hide anything from me that I am about to ask you." And the woman said, "Let my lord the king please speak."

All the tribes of Israel, recognizing in David the strong leader they needed, pledged their loyalty to him. No doubt the Philistine threat and David's military reputation (1 Samuel 18:7) also helped unify the people.

I will trust in God's word.

Psalm 119:42

So I will have an answer for him who reproaches me, for I trust in Your word.

By seeking God's salvation and forgiveness, we have freedom from sin and the resulting oppressive guilt. By living God's way, we have freedom to fulfill God's plan for our lives.

Know the righteous acts of the Lord

Micah 6:5

"My people remember now What Balak king of Moab counseled and what Balaam son of Beor answered him, and from Shittim to Gilgal, So that you might know the righteous acts of the LORD."

The story of Balak and Balaam is found in Numbers 22-24. Shittim was the Israelites' campsite east of the Jordan River just before they entered the Promised Land (Joshua 2:1). There the people received many of God's instructions about how to live. Gilgal, their first campsite after crossing the Jordan (Joshua 4:19), was where the people renewed their covenant with God (Joshua 5:3-9). These two places represent God's loving care for his people: his willingness both to protect them and to warn them about potential troubles. In Micah's day, the people had forgotten this covenant and its benefits and had turned away from God.

6:5 God continued to be kind to his forgetful people, but their short memory and lack of thankfulness condemned them. When people refuse to see how fortunate they are and begin to take God's gifts for granted, they become self-centered. Regularly remember God's goodness and thank him. Remembering God's past protection will help you see his present provision.

God will answer you.

Job 35:4

"I will answer you, and your friends with you.

His conclusion was that God is still concerned even though he doesn't intervene immediately in every situation. In the broad scope of time God executes justice. We have his promise on that. Don't lose hope. Wait upon God. He notices your right living and your faith.

Chapter 4



Answer according to his word

1 Samuel 17:27

The people answered him in accord with this word....

What a difference perspective can make. Most of the onlookers saw only a giant. David, however, saw a mortal man defying almighty God. He knew he would not be alone when he faced Goliath; God would fight with him. He looked at his situation from God's point of view. Viewing impossible situations from God's point of view helps us put giant problems in perspective. Once we see clearly, we can fight more effectively.

The people answered the same things.

1 Samuel 17:30

Then he turned away from him to another and said the same thing; and the people answered the same thing as before.

Criticism couldn't stop David. While the rest of the army stood around, he knew the importance of taking action. With God to fight for him, there was no reason to wait. People may try to discourage you with

negative comments or mockery, but continue to do what you know is right. By doing what is right, you will be pleasing God, whose opinion matters most.

They were amazed at his understanding.

Luke 2:47

And all who heard Him were amazed at His understanding and His answers.

The temple courts were famous throughout Judea as a place of learning. The apostle Paul studied in Jerusalem, perhaps in the temple courts, under Gamaliel, one of its foremost teachers (Acts 22:3). At the time of the Passover, the greatest rabbis of the land would assemble to teach and to discuss great truths among themselves. The coming Messiah would no doubt have been a popular discussion topic, for everyone was expecting him soon. Jesus would have been eager to listen and to ask probing questions. It was not his youth, but the depth of his wisdom, that astounded these teachers.

The answer from the messengers of the nation

Isaiah 14:32

"How then will one answer the messengers of the nation? That the LORD has founded Zion, and the afflicted of His people will seek refuge in it."

Chapter 5



Abraham receives an answer

Genesis 23:14

Then Ephron answered Abraham, saying to him

The polite interchange between Abraham and Ephron was typical of bargaining at that time. Ephron graciously offered to give his land to Abraham at no charge; Abraham insisted on paying for it; Ephron politely mentioned the price but said, in effect, that it wasn't important; Abraham paid the 400 shekels of silver. Both men knew what was going on as they went through the bargaining process. If Abraham had accepted the land as a gift when it was offered, he would have insulted Ephron, who then would have rescinded his offer. Many Middle Eastern shopkeepers still follow this ritual with their customers.

The wise princess repeats her words to herself.

Judges 5:29

"Her wise princesses would answer her, indeed she repeats her words to herself.

The king gave all the answers.

1 Kings 10:3

Solomon answered all her questions; nothing was hidden from the king that he did not explain to her.

The queen of Sheba came to see for herself if everything she had heard about Solomon was true. Contests using riddles or proverbs were often used to test wisdom. The queen may have used some of these as she questioned Solomon (1 Kings 10:1, 3). When she realized the extent of his riches and wisdom, “she was overwhelmed” and no longer questioned his power or wisdom. No longer a competitor, she became an admirer. Her experience was repeated by many kings and foreign dignitaries who paid honor to Solomon (1 Kings 4:34).

The king sent an answer.

Ezra 4:17

Then the king sent an answer to Rehum the commander, to Shimshai the scribe, and to the rest of their colleagues who live in Samaria and in the rest of the provinces beyond the River: "Peace. And now

Artaxerxes said that Jerusalem “has a long history of revolt against kings and has been a place of rebellion and sedition.” By reading the historical records, he learned that mighty kings had come from Jerusalem, and he

may have feared that another would arise if the city were rebuilt. Solomon had ruled a huge empire (1 Kings 4:21), and Jerusalem's kings had rebelled against mighty powers—for example, Zedekiah rebelled against Nebuchadnezzar despite his oath of loyalty (2 Chron. 36:13). Artaxerxes did not want to aid the rebuilding of a rebellious city and nation.

Jesus was struck for his answer.

John 18:22

When He had said this, one of the officers standing nearby struck Jesus, saying, "Is that the way you answer the high priest?"

We can easily get angry at the Sanhedrin for their injustice in condemning Jesus, but we must remember that Peter and the rest of the disciples also contributed to Jesus' pain by deserting and disowning him (Matthew 26:56, 75). While most of us are not like the religious leaders, we are all like the disciples, for all of us have been guilty of denying that Christ is Lord in vital areas of our lives or of keeping secret our identity as believers in times of pressure. Don't excuse yourself by pointing at others whose sins seem worse than yours. Instead, come to Jesus for forgiveness and healing.

The earth will respond.

Hosea 2:22

And the earth will respond to the grain, to the new wine and to the oil, and they will respond to Jezreel.

God's wedding gift to his people, both in Hosea's day and in our own, is his compassion. Through no merit of our own, God forgives us and makes us right with him. There is no way for us by our own efforts to reach God's high standard for moral and spiritual life, but he graciously accepts us, forgives us, and draws us into a relationship with himself. In that relationship we have personal and intimate communion with him.

To ask Jesus to come into your heart please pray this Prayer:

Dear Lord Jesus, I believe you are the Christ, the Son of the Living God. I ask you to forgive me of my sins and coming into my heart. I accept you as savior and will follow you as Lord. Amen.

References:

Holy Bible: King James Translation

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Additional comments and charts are taken from: *Life Application Study Bible*. Illinois: Tyndale House 2007. Print