

St Annes Ryde  
ANGELICAN CHURCH



**CGS 14 Term 3  
2008**

# Myth Busters

**Confronting common myths about  
Jesus and biblical Christianity**



**Bible based Discussion Material**

**prepared by Greg Burke and linked to sermons  
preached at St Anne's Ryde Anglican Church**

**Wednesday 23rd July St Anne's Forum -  
Connect 09 Information and prayer evening  
8pm Ryde Anglican Centre Hall**

**Discussion 1. Myth #1: Spirituality is what really matters  
(Sermon 27th July)**

1. How would you define "spirituality"? What would you say are the characteristics of a genuinely "spiritual" person?
2. What are the differences between a "spiritual" person and a person of genuine Christian faith?
3. How would you reply to someone who says "The Bible is too restrictive - it hinders genuine spiritual experience"?.
4. Your group has decided to set up a stand at the "Mind, Body, Spirit" festival. What material would you give away? How would you design a poster to encourage people to explore Christian faith?
5. What did Jesus mean when he told the Samaritan woman that "God is spirit, and his worshippers must worship in spirit and truth"? John 4:24
6. What Biblical criteria would you use to decide if a certain "spiritual experience" was from God or from Satan? (i.e. true or evil)

**Discussion 2. Myth #2: When you die, that's the end  
(Sermon 3rd August )**

1. How would you respond to a friend who says they are not worried about what comes after death because of their experience of "walking toward the light" during a cardiac operation?
2. Outline the grounds for your confidence in the reality of the resurrection.
3. If Jesus' bones were discovered in a tomb in Jerusalem - what difference would this make to your faith? Then compare your answer to Paul's in 1 Corinthians 14:12-19.
4. Why does Jesus go to the lengths he does in Luke 24:36-39 to show that he has a physical body post resurrection?

5. How would you advise someone writing their will who is trying to decide between specifying burial or cremation? Is this a significant issue?
6. Some people claim that Jesus did not rise (bodily) from the dead - but that his memory is “alive” in the early disciples and in the church. How would you evaluate this argument against the teaching of the New Testament?
7. How helpful or unhelpful do you think statements on headstones such as “Alive forever in our hearts” are?

### **Discussion 3. Myth #3: Science has killed God (Sermon 10th August )**

1. List the “beliefs” you hold that have little or no objective evidence as a basis.
2. Your child or grandchild is studying HSC science at school and comes home saying that evolution shows that the Bible is wrong. How would you answer her?
3. Your child or grandchild studying HSC science at a Christian school comes home confused after being told that the Bible teaches that the earth is 4,500 years old. How would you help him to relate the Bible to his scientific study?
4. Your group is a church committee that has been approached to sponsor and promote a lecture at Ryde Civic Centre called “Creationism - the only godly science”. What factors would you take into account in the process of making your decision?
5. Analyse the following statement by Julian Huxley as religious belief:  
*All reality is evolution ... it is a one way process in time: unitary, continuous; irreversible; self transforming, and generating variety and novelty during its transformations. In the evolutionary pattern of thought there is no longer either need or room for the supernatural. The earth was not created: it evolved. So did all the animals and plants that inhabit it, including our human selves, mind and soul as well as brain and body. So did religion. All aspects of reality are subject to evolution, from atoms and stars to fish and flowers, from fish and flower to human societies and values - indeed ... all reality is a single process of evolution.*
6. Answer the question “Why did God create the universe?” from Genesis 1 & 2, Colossians 1:15-23, Psalm 19, John 1:1-18 and Romans 1:1-18.

### **Discussion 4. Myth #4: God likes religious people best (Sermon 17th August )**

1. Do you consider yourself a “religious” person? Give your reasons.
2. What features do most religions have in common? Does biblical Christianity differ? If so, how?
3. What are the pitfalls and temptations of religion? Illustrate these from Luke 18:9-14, Matthew 6:1-18, Mark 7:1-23 and Colossians 2:16-23
4. How would you respond to the person who says they don't want to read a Gospel or discuss Christianity because they are “not the religious sort”?
5. What is the relationship between religion and tradition? What can be helpful and unhelpful about “traditions”? See Mark 7:5-13
6. What are some of the traditions of our church and our denomination ? What principles/standards should we use to assess these?
7. How would you respond to someone who says that they prefer to attend their “new” church because it is not bound up in tradition like the Anglican Church?

### **Discussion 5. Myth #5: The world is in a mess - God doesn't care (Sermon 24th August )**

1. What evidence of God's care have you experienced today? In what ways have you been unaware of God's care?
2. What are the differences between Christian faith and the common belief in a type of blind fatalism that says ”when my number is up there's nothing I can do about it”?
3. Read the “General Thanksgiving” prayer below. What are the values of general prayers like this? What are the dangers?

*Almighty God, all good things come from you.  
We who do not deserve your mercy humbly thank you  
for your goodness and loving kindness to us and to all people.  
We praise you for creating us and for providing so richly for us day by day.*

*Above all we thank you for your amazing love for the world  
in giving Jesus to die for our sins.  
Thank you for making us your friends,*

*for adopting us as your children,  
for giving us your Holy Spirit,  
and for the confident hope of being raised to life with you forever.  
Help us to more fully understand your love, mercy and kindness,  
so that we may be truly thankful and praise you,  
not only with words, but also in our lives,  
by serving you in love and obedience.  
All honour and glory are yours,  
Father, Son and Holy Spirit, now and forever. Amen.*

4. What does the insurance industry mean by “act of God”? In what ways are we in danger of seeing God's hand in some things and not others?
5. Discuss the statement “you either believe God is sovereign in everything or nothing. There is no middle ground”
6. How would you show your friend who says God doesn't care about the mess the world is in - that He does care? What Bible themes/passages etc would you use?
7. How helpful is the following summary of the Bible's main theme - “The Bible is all about God's mission to rescue his creation” ?  
How do the parallels between Genesis 2 & 3 and Revelation 21:1-5 and 22:1-6 support this view?

### **Discussion 6. Myth #6: Gentle Jesus, meek and mild (Sermon 31st August )**

1. You have a friend who says “I'm not interested in Christianity - I learnt all that stuff at Sunday School”. What do you think they might know about Jesus with this background?
2. List some of the characteristics of Jesus as the Gospels portray him that you think would surprise most people.
3. Rank from 1 (doesn't apply) to 5 (definitely applies) each of the qualities below as they are true of Jesus:

\_\_\_ loving    \_\_\_ tolerant    \_\_\_ gentle    \_\_\_ easy going    \_\_\_ serving  
\_\_\_ understanding    \_\_\_ confused    \_\_\_ definite    \_\_\_ demanding

4. What is the difference between “tolerant” and “understanding”?  
Would you prefer God to be tolerant OR understanding? Why?

5. How would Jesus respond to the modern claim “all religions are basically the same - they all get you to God in their own way”?

6. Choose one or more of these incidents from the Gospels and identify the characteristics of Jesus revealed in each:

John 8:1-11, Mark 3:1-6, Mark 7: 1-13, Mark 9:42-50,  
Mark 11:12-19, Mark 8:31-37, Mark 7:24-30

### **Discussion 7. Myth #7: Money will make me happy (Sermon 7th September )**

1. Bill Gates has a personal fortune of \$58 billion (approx.). He has decided to give most of it away. List all the possible motives for his decision. How many of these are self centred and how many focussed on others?

2. If you inherited \$10 million from a “long lost auntie” what do you think God would want you to do with it? What other options would you have? What principles would you use to work this out?

3. People often misquote Paul as saying “**money** is the root of all evil” they claim that Christianity is anti-money. How would you respond? What is the difference between this misquote and what Paul actually says in 1Timothy 6:10 ?

4. What could be the steps involved in the journey described in 1Timothy 6:10b “*some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs*” ? What could these “griefs” be?

5. How do Paul's instructions to Timothy (1 Timothy 6:11-16) and to rich people like us (1 Timothy 6:17-19) provide practical antidotes to the temptation of love of money ?

6. What do you think of John Wesley's use of money in this account:

*John Wesley was a great evangelist of the 18th Century. Born in 1703, in 1731 he began to limit his expenses so that he would have more money to give to the poor.*

*In the first year his income was 30 pounds and he found he could live on 28 and so gave away two. In the second year his income doubled but he held his expenses steady, so he had 32 pounds to give away (a comfortable year's income). In the third year his income jumped to 90 pounds and he gave away 62 pounds.*

*In his long life, Wesley's income advanced to as high as 1,400 pounds in a year. But he rarely let his expenses rise above 30 pounds. He said that he seldom had more than 100 pounds in his possession at a time.*

*This so baffled the English Tax Commissioners that they investigated him in 1776, insisting that for a man of his income he must have silver dishes that he was not paying excise tax on. He wrote them, "I have two silver spoons at London and two at Bristol. This is all the plate I have at present, and I shall not buy any more while so many round me want bread."*

*When he died in 1791 at the age of 87 the only money mentioned in his will was the coins to be found in his pockets and dresser. Most of the 30,000 pounds he had earned in his life had already been given away. He wrote, I cannot help leaving my books behind me whenever God calls me hence; but in every other respect, my own hands will be my executors. In other words, I control my spending myself and I will go beyond the tithe for the sake of Christ and his kingdom.*

Would this be practical today? Why?/why not?

7. Discuss the value of Wesley's principle: *"When I have money, I get rid of it quickly, lest it find a way into my heart"*.

What danger is he guarding against?

### **Discussion 8. Myth #8: Life is hard, God is punishing me (Sermon 14th September )**

1. Can you think of a difficult experience you have had which didn't make sense at the time but in hindsight you can see that God brought some good out of it?

2. What is the difference between punishment and discipline?

3. What lesson does Jesus say can be drawn from the disasters of his day in Luke 13:1-9?

4. How would you support someone who thinks that their difficulties in life are God's punishment for their sin? How would your response be different if the person had a genuine Christian faith?

5. In what practical ways can we express God's comfort to others? How does our own experience of suffering help? (see 2 Corinthians 1:3-7)

6. What light does the description of Jesus as a "man of sorrows" in Isaiah 53:3 add to Paul's teaching in Romans 8:28-30 that God is conforming us to the likeness of Jesus?

List the "sorrows" and suffering of Jesus you can think of from the Gospels (go beyond physical suffering).

**Discussion 9. Myth #9: Good people go to heaven  
(Sermon 21st September )**

1. What pictures do most people have of heaven?
2. How would you answer someone who says “I would rather go to hell - all my mates will be there” ?
3. What is the difference between having a reputation as someone who “does good” and a “do gooder”?  
What motives are there for doing good in Romans 2:7, Galatians 6:9 and 1 Peter 2:15?  
How can we avoid the temptation to pride as we “do good”?  
What practical steps could you take to obey Jesus’ command in Matthew 5:16 ?
4. What are the different criteria of judgement in the following passages Matthew 25:31-46 and Matthew 7:15-23 ?
5. Your group is taking part in a debate. The topic is “An eternal hell is unworthy of a God of love”. You have to prepare both sides of the debate because you will only be given 15 minutes notice of which side you have to take. Outline the points you would make for each side of the argument.