



Serving the Truth in a Love Sandwich

Illogical Questions

Answering from the heart with love

1st 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."

This course looks at how Jesus Christ responded to difficult illogical questions as an example for us.

Course Text: Gospel of Matthew (Mostly)

Course Contents

- Lesson 1 – Loaded Question* (Matt 22:15-22)
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- Lesson 4 – Disguised Accusation* (Matt 21:23-27)
- Lesson 5 – Pretense of Ignorance* (Matt 11:2-6)



Truthful lips endure forever,
but a lying tongue lasts only a moment.

- PROVERBS 12:19 NIV

Suggested methodology for each lesson:

1. Fellowship (Save most of this for the end of class.)
2. Take prayer requests
(Try to keep it from becoming a competition to see who has the most or the worst.)
3. Pray (The idea is to leave our troubles with God so we can give His word our full attention.)
4. Read the lesson's text aloud from the Bible.
(... or a few verses at a time as you answer the questions.)
5. Answer and *briefly* discuss the "fill in the blank" questions. (Let those who prefer to listen, listen. My answers on the next page are just one opinion; you may have a better answer.)
6. On the final "Think & Pray" question everyone should take a few minutes to pray over it and jot down their own thoughts before the discussion.
This will give the Holy Spirit a time to speak.
7. Discuss your "Think & Pray" answers. (Never force anyone to share theirs. As with the other questions, my answer is just one more opinion; you may have a better answer.)
8. Close in prayer (It is best to call on others to pray, but try to get their permission ahead of time.)
9. Fellowship (Leave this as open ended as possible for the time and place you meet.)

Depending on the number of people, each lesson is expected to take about one hour. Steps 4 thru 7 are about half of that. If you take longer, let each lesson take more than one meeting, or consider breaking into two groups. The final "Think & Pray" question should always be covered, because that is when everyone takes a quiet moment to listen to the Teacher, the Holy Spirit. If you take less time, extra questions are provided for discussion called "For Further Thought"

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Additional Reading

These lessons are designed for small groups or individuals to use without reference to other materials besides the Bible. However, a lot more could be gained if those involved would do some additional reading between class meetings. (See <http://lovebiblestudy.com/CC/Library.htm>)

We plan to provide specific recommendations with each course at <http://lovebiblestudy.com/TLS/Adjunct/>
We also hope to be making specific chapter recommendations from various Christian books that have helped us in our understanding of apologetics, but are not entirely about the topic of the course. Such as these books which would make good companions for this entire series of courses.

Mere Christianity by C. S. Lewis

I Don't Have Enough Faith to Be an Atheist by Norman L. Geisler and Frank Turek

The Case for ... series of books by Lee Strobel

Cold Case Christianity, God's Crime Scene, and Forensic Faith – 3 books by J. Warner Wallace

Also, some books do dovetail nicely with particular courses. Either of these books would work very well with this course, Illogical Questions:

Discerning Truth by Jason Lisle

or if you prefer the abbreviated version:

A Pocket Guide to Logic and Faith: Discerning Truth in Logical Arguments by Jason Lisle

Lesson 1 – Loaded Question - Matthew 22:15-22

Please read Matthew 22:15-22 and answer these questions:

- [1A] Who plotted together to trap Jesus? _____
- [1B] What was their question? _____
- [1C] What was the trap in the question? _____
- [1D] What question did Jesus ask them? _____
- [1E] In Mt 22:16 they flatter Jesus, but in Mt 22:18 He perceives their malice. How?

[1F] What lessons can we draw from the way Jesus answered this question? Without Jesus' divine insight how could we answer such a question?

Think & Pray _____

The Back Pew – Jeff Larson



Give to Caesar what is Caesar's and to God what is God's. **Mt 22:15-22**

For further thought:

- (1g) There is a picture of Washington on the dollar bill. Does that mean we should pay our taxes to the Federal Government in Washington? "Render unto Washington what is Washington's?"
- (1h) An atheist once asked me, "How could Jesus be our model of sinless perfection when he denies he is morally perfect in Matt. 19:17 'And Jesus said unto him, Why callest thou me good, there is none good but one, that is God'?" How could you respond to this atheist's question?
- (1i) Can you think of some more examples of loaded questions?
- (1j) In the context of Matthew 22:15-22, compare Romans 13:1-7 with Acts 5:27-32. When is it OK to not obey the governing authorities?

Lesson 1 – Loaded Question - Matthew 22:15-22

- [1A] Who plotted together to trap Jesus? Pharisees and Herodians Mt 22:15-16 The Pharisees and Herodians hated each other, but apparently they hated Jesus even more.
- [1B] What was their question? Is it lawful to give a poll-tax to Caesar, or not? Mt 22:17
- [1C] What was the trap in the question? If He said, "Yes," He would disappoint the Jews who hated the Roman Caesar and expected Jesus to rescue them from him. If Jesus said, "No," He would be breaking Roman law against sedition and be subject to arrest and prison. Supporting paying taxes is almost always an unpopular position, but even more so in a territory occupied by a foreign power, as Palestine was occupied by the Romans. On the other hand the governing authorities do not take it lightly if people start speaking publically about disobeying the law. It is a crime called sedition, and the Romans would not have been hesitate to prosecute.
- [1D] What question did Jesus ask them? Whose likeness and inscription is this (on the coin)? Mt 22:20
- [1E] In Mt 22:16 they flatter Jesus, but in Mt 22:18 He perceives their malice. How?
The obvious trap could have no other motive. Everyone hates taxes but it is the law of the land.

[1F] The question they asked Him is an example of a "Loaded Question." (The technical name is False Dichotomy) It presents the victim with only two answers, when there are really many answers. For example, "Do you still beat your wife?" It presupposes that you did or do beat your wife. It is in the form of a "Yes or No" question, but the answer is neither. The answer would be "I do not beat and have never beaten my wife." (I hope that is the answer for you as well.) It is easy to feel annoyed when lost people ask these kinds of questions, but we simply need to avoid saying either "Yes" or "No" and give a complete answer. There is nothing wrong with this kind of question if, in fact, there are only two options. Are you here? Is the car engine running? Is it dawn yet?

This particular loaded question also assumed facts not in evidence. There is no law in the Old Testament that precludes the payment of taxes to rightful authority. One of the first things to think about when someone asks a question is whether it has any assumptions in it. Before you answer the question the one asking should be required to show the truth of their question's assumptions. Just ask them questions about their assumptions, nicely. If they are without knowledge or evidence their argument will implode without you ever having to answer their question at all. Jesus could have simply asked them to show Him what law in the Old Testament they were referring to. However, in this case Jesus had a better way and a broader perspective.

My further thoughts:

- (1g) It is a cute play on words, but the picture is of a man, the seat of government just happens to be named for that man. One is not really related to the other. But, yes, I recommend obeying the law.
- (1h) Do you see the false dichotomy? The question implies Jesus is either claiming to not be our model of perfection, or He is telling a lie about not being good. How can we respond? What I said was, "It is not a denial of perfection. It is a claim of divinity." The atheist then just asked another loaded question. I could have ceased the initiative by asking something like, "I don't see Jesus denying He is good! Where did He say that?" Jesus is just asking if the man somehow recognizes that Jesus is Lord, so the atheist would never have been able to answer me logically.
- (1i) They ask a "yes or no" question for which either answer is false to try to trick and trap you into saying something stupid. "Do you still worship that evil god?" for instance. If you answer yes or no, you are saying God is evil. A better answer might be, "The God I worship is good. Which god are you talking about?"
- (1j) When man's laws contradict God's laws, we should not obey man's laws, but you better be sure. Jail is not fun and fines are expensive.

----- ANSWERS -----

Lesson 2 – False Presumption - Matthew 22:23-33

[2A] Who asked the question? Some Sadducees Mt 22:23

[2B] What doctrine did the Sadducees deny? The resurrection of the dead Mt 22:23 They only held the books of Moses as sacred and believed that there was nothing in them about the resurrection. The Pharisees accepted all the books we call the Old Testament and did believe in the resurrection.

[2C] Compare Matthew 22:24 with Deuteronomy 25:5. Which part did the Sadducees leave out? When brothers live together

[2D] What was their question? In the resurrection, therefore, whose wife of the seven will she be? Mt 22:28

[2E] Two or three husbands would have made their point. Why do you suppose they went to seven? It is a tactic to make their victim feel overwhelmed. People will do it to you. I suggest you ignore it.

[2F] Where does Jesus get his Scriptural based evidence that the resurrection is true? Exodus 3:6 A good cross reference to Mt 22:32 should show you that. It was right out of the books the Sadducees accepted as inspired. There was no way they could respond to Him.

[2G] Sometimes questions carry the seeds of their own destruction. This question assumed facts not in evidence. There is nothing in the Old Testament about marriage in heaven. One of the first things to think about when someone asks a question is whether it has any assumptions in it. Before you answer the question the one asking should be required to show the truth of their question's assumptions. Just ask them questions about their assumptions, nicely. If they are without knowledge or evidence their argument will implode without you ever having to answer their question at all. Jesus could have simply asked, "Where do the Scriptures say there is marriage in heaven?" They would not have been able to answer Him. The Sadducees were basing their question on a false presumption, that marriage would exist as an institution in heaven. Even without Jesus special knowledge their argument was empty, founded on nothingness.

Jesus had a better way. He used it as a "teachable" moment to show them something out of their own sacred writings that actually answered their deeper question. If you have that kind of opportunity, by all means take it, but we are neither as wise as Jesus, nor know as much about people's hearts and thoughts as He did. We probably won't have as many opportunities as He did, but we should always be willing to follow the Holy Spirit's guidance.

My further thoughts:

(2h) How did Jesus know there was no marriage in heaven? It is His home town. Mt 22:29-30.

(2i) Hebrew names for animals are extremely difficult to translate. Probably these are simply translated wrong or refer to species we know nothing about. As far as a bat being a bird it is simply saying that it can fly. The distinction you are talking about has to do with an arbitrary classification system invented by biologists in the last few hundred years. How could the Bible contradict that when it had not even been invented yet?

(2j) How about the unbeliever who asks, "Why do Christians hate homosexuals?" We could deny it, but it might be more effective to ask, "What makes you think Christians hate homosexuals?" and if they give you an example ask, "Do you really think that represents all Christians?" If they quote the Bible ask, "Where does it say anything commanding Christians to hate homosexuals?" Truth in a Love Sandwich Course 18 *Worldviews in Collision*, Lesson 6 explores this issue in more depth. Another example would be, "God is a myth invented by people who are afraid of death. Why do you believe this myth?" The false presumption is that God is an invented myth.

(2k) Heaven will be wonderful and nothing will be awkward. (Revelation 21:4)

Lesson 3 – Pointless Question - Matthew 22:34-40

Please read Matt 22:34-40 and answer these questions:

[3A] Who asked the question? _____

[3B] What was the question? _____

[3C] Why did the answer matter? _____

[3D] Jesus' answers were quotes from the Old Testament. Where? _____

[3E] What depended on the two commandments Jesus quoted? _____

[3F] What can we learn from the way Jesus responded? Without Jesus' divine insight how could we answer such a question?

Think & Pray _____

The Back Pew - Jeff Larson



Serving out of duty rather than love for too long will put you at high risk for a spiritual heart attack.
Mt. 22:37

For further thought:

(3g) In a later course in this series we will look at questions we can ask them. In Mt 22:41-46 we have an example of Jesus doing just that. What does that teach us about asking them questions?

(3h) An atheist once attacked the Bible like this: " John says Nicodemus brought burial spices for Jesus. (Jn 19:38-42) The other Gospels say the women brought spices two days later. (Mt 27:57-61, Mk 15:42-47, & Lk 23:50-56) Since they witnessed the burial, why would they bring burial spices when Nicodemus had already taken care of it?" How could you respond to this?

(3i) Can you think of other examples of pointless questions?

(3j) How do all of the laws in the Old Testament depend on just the two great commandments mentioned by Jesus?

Lesson 3 – Pointless Question - Matthew 22:34-40

- [3A] Who asked the question? A lawyer representing the Pharisees. Mt 22:34-35.
 "Lawyer" in this context means an expert on Old Testament law.
- [3B] What was the question? "Teacher, which is the great commandment of the Law?" Mt 22:36
- [3C] Why did the answer matter? It doesn't. In my opinion. All God's commandments are important.
- [3D] Jesus' answers were quotes from the Old Testament. Where?
Deuteronomy 6:5 (Mt 22:37) and Leviticus 19:18 (Mt 22:39).
- [3E] What depended on the two commandments Jesus quoted? The whole Law & the Prophets Mt 22:40
 That was the way they referred to the entire Old Testament.
- [3F] The Scribes believed that they had found over 600 different commandments in the Old Testament. Scribes were more like an informal guild or union of lawyers and accountants than a sect like the Pharisees or Sadducees. In fact there were Scribes who belonged to each of other groups, such as this Pharisee lawyer. They enjoyed arguing and often found this particular question a good way to start a lively debate. The lawyer probably had a whole series of questions he could follow up with depending on getting one of the answers he expected. But he did not get one of the standard answers of the day. Rather than becoming bogged down in complexities, Jesus takes all 600+ commandments and sums them up in two co-equal commandments and ends the argument.

We are not Jesus and these kinds of insights are seldom given to us. Certainly if the Holy Spirit gives you an excellent answer of this kind, do not hesitate to use it. Just make sure you are listening to the Holy Spirit and not leaning on your own cleverness.

If a question does not seem to have a point, try to find out what the questioner really wants to know, before responding. You don't want to be impolite and say something like, "What is your point?" and put them on the defensive. They may have a genuine question on their heart. What you could do is ask something like, "I'm not sure I understand. Why does it matter which commandment is most important? Aren't we supposed to obey them all?"

My further thoughts:

- (3g) There is much to be learned here but for me the main point is unbelievers have no right to be immune from having their point of view scrutinized, especially if they have just questioned ours.
- (3h) You could respond as I did with a long list of possible motivations for what the women did. That leaves the unbeliever in the driver's seat. All he has to do is shake his head and disbelieve the possible motives. It would be better, perhaps, to find out the point of the question. Maybe ask, "What difference does it make what their motives were?" You can not assume someone is lying just because you do not know the motives for the actions they report. The question has no point.
- (3i) "Did Jesus exist?" No reputable historian thinks it is even possible that there was no Jesus. However, "Jesus is a myth" accusations, abound in our culture. We'll deal with it in detail in a later course, but all you really need to do is ask them what makes them think He didn't exist. There simply is no good reason to think Jesus did not exist. Sometimes they know this and are trying to put you on the defensive and confuse you, but usually they are just repeating something they heard. Another one I have heard, albeit rarely, is, "Why make a universe billions of light years across when there was only life on this one dinky little planet? It makes no sense."
- (3j) Just look at the Ten Commandments. The first ones are about loving God and the latter ones are about loving your neighbor, starting with your closest neighbors, your parents. I could not find a single command or rule in the Old Testament that did not fit one of these two categories. Can you?

Lesson 4 – Accusation Disguised as a Question - Matthew 21:23-27

Please read Matthew 21:23-27 and answer these questions:

[4A] Who asked Jesus a question? _____

[4B] What question did they ask Him?

[4C] Did Jesus answer their question? _____

[4D] What did Jesus ask them?

[4E] Why didn't they answer Him?

[4F] What can we learn from the way Jesus responded? Without Jesus' divine insight how could we answer such a question?

Think & Pray _____



For further thought:

- (4g) Jesus had just (probably the day before) run the money changers out of the temple. Isn't it reasonable for the leaders to want to know His authority for what He had done? Why or why not?
- (4h) An atheist once attacked God for wanting people to fear Him, and indirectly me, for worshipping what he called a "god of terrorists. How would you respond to such an attack?
- (4i) Can you think of other examples of questions disguised as accusations?
- (4j) How would you answer Jesus' question about the baptism of John? (Mt 21:25)

Lesson 4 – Accusation Disguised as a Question - Matthew 21:23-27

[4A] Who asked Jesus a question? Chief priests and elders of the people Mt 21:23

[4B] What question did they ask Him?

"By what authority are You doing these things, and who gave You this authority?" Mt 21:24

[4C] Did Jesus answer their question? No Mt 21:27

[4D] What did Jesus ask them?

"The baptism of John was from what source, from heaven or from men?" Mt 21:25

[4E] Why didn't they answer Him? They were afraid of the consequences of any answer they could imagine. Mt 21:25-26 Notice that they neither knew nor cared where John's authority came from. They were not interested in the truth, only in accusing Jesus of having no authority to teach.

[4F] The chief priests and the elders wanted to know who Jesus thought He was. Jesus sidestepped their question. Instead He asked them a question He knew they were too cowardly to answer. Although the Bible does not tell us, I believe His motive was to expose their sinfulness to them in order to bring them to a place of repentance. He knew their hatred of Him would lead to His crucifixion but His love for them made Him extend to them every possible chance. Either way, the point is that we do not have to answer all questions that come to us.

1 Peter 3:15 only obligates us to answer those questions whose answer is the "reason of the hope that is in" us. In other words, if the answer is the Gospel message then we must answer the question, otherwise we must use our God given wisdom and the guidance of the Holy Spirit not only in the answer but also in the decision whether to answer or not. Accusations do not have to be answered when they come from people to whom we are not accountable.

My further thoughts:

(4g) If you read the context, Jesus had already given the Scriptural authority for His actions in Matthew 21:13.

They had no answer for His evidence so they attacked His person instead. You can expect people to do the same to you when they feel like they are losing an argument or don't have answers for your questions. We don't want people to feel cornered by us; we want the Holy Spirit to convict them. When they start acting like they feel attacked, you might want to back off and let them save face. However, make sure you are prayerfully following the leading of the Spirit when making these decisions.

(4h) This is part of my answer to him: "I don't think you really understand the word 'terrorist.' If I warn you not to step in front of a speeding car, would you call that terrorism? Of course not. God loves you and wants you to not go to hell. But if you continue to run from Him and disobey Him, the consequences are hell. That is an uncomfortable truth, but it is factual. You have been warned.

The word "fear" in the Bible has a relatively wide range of sense. It is used in three main ways. You might encounter all three of these "fears" in a courtroom. The first, dread, might come when the accused is waiting for the jury to come back in with the verdict. The second, of being afraid, might come when you are standing before a judge for sentencing when you have been found guilty of a crime. The third, awe and respect, might come if you are not on trial but perhaps testifying as a witness or serving on the jury. You are not accused of anything but if you misbehave yourself the judge may site you for contempt or if you misspeak you might be accused of perjury. Lost people in danger of hell should be afraid of God and dread going to hell. Saved people should give God all the respect and reverence they are capable of giving.

Our God is not some tame pet idol you can hang on your living room wall to listen to your wish list. Our God is a dangerous God.

(4i) One of the things some lost people like to do is try to manipulate us by saying things like, "Would a 'real' Christian " (whatever they don't like)? This accusation disguised as a question is designed to put us on the defensive and make us explain ourselves. We don't owe them an explanation. Simply ask them in reply, "What makes you think a 'real' Christian (whatever it is about)?" It might turn into a chance to explain to them our liberty in Christ. (See 1 Cor 6:12 & 1 Cor 10:23)

(4j) Jesus answered His Own question earlier when John asked Him about it. (See Mt 3:13-17)

Lesson 5 – Pretense of Ignorance – Matthew 11:2-6

Please read Matthew 11:2-6 and answer these questions:

[5A] Who asked Jesus a question? _____

[5B] What was the question? _____

[5C] What kind of question was it? _____

[5D] Did Jesus answer the question? _____

[5E] In Mark 1:9-11 what did John the Baptist hear a voice from heaven say to Jesus?

[5F] In Matthew 3:13—17 what did John the Baptist see fly down and land on Jesus?

[5G] In John 1:30-36 what did John the Baptist call Jesus?

[5H] Did the baptism of Jesus happen before or after John sent his disciples to ask Jesus a question in Matthew 11?

[5I] What can we learn from the way Jesus responded? Without Jesus' divine insight how could we answer such a question?

Think & Pray _____

The Back Pew – Jeff Larson



Vinny the Vulture watched on with envy as Jesus is baptized and the spirit descends upon him like a dove... and he could not help but dream.. WHAT IF? Mt. 3:16

For further thought:

- (5j) Besides arranging for Jesus to be able to give John's disciples evidence that He was the Messiah, can you think of other possible motives John might have had for asking a question when he already knew the answer?
- (5k) What do you think is the best way to respond when someone asks you a question when it seems likely they already know what your answer will be, but you suspect getting to the truth is not part of their agenda?
- (5l) Can you think of other examples of questions where ignorance is feigned?
- (5m) What did you learn in this course that you most want to remember?

Lesson 5 – Pretense of Ignorance – Matthew 11:2-6

- [5A] Who asked Jesus a question? John the Baptist through his disciples. Mt 11:2-3
- [5B] What was the question? "Are You the Expected One, or shall we look for someone else?" Mt 11:2-3
- [5C] What kind of question was it? It was a closed question– an either/or question.
- [5D] Did Jesus answer the question? Yes and No He did not use one of the optional answers He was offered, but He did give evidence that He was the Expected One. Jesus alludes to prophecy He is fulfilling about the Messiah (See Isaiah 35:5-10 and Isaiah 61:1)
- [5E] In Mark 1:9-11 what did John the Baptist hear a voice from heaven say to Jesus?
"You are My beloved Son, in You I am well pleased." Mk 1:11
- [5F] In Matthew 3:13—17 what did John the Baptist see fly down and land on Jesus? "The Spirit of God descending as a dove." Mt 3:16
- [5G] In John 1:30-36 what did John the Baptist call Jesus? The Lamb of God Jn 1:36
- [5H] Did the baptism of Jesus happen before or after John sent his disciples to ask Jesus a question in Matthew 11? John asked this question after Jesus' baptism. John asked the question from prison where he died. He would have no opportunity to baptize Jesus after he was in prison.
- [5I] John the Baptist asks if Jesus is the Messiah. Jesus alludes to an Old Testament prophesy of the coming Messiah and compares it to what He is actually doing. In other words He points to the evidence. Since John already knew who Jesus was (See John 3:26-36) it seems likely that he was just wanting his disciples to be convinced. Jesus answers by pointing to the evidence. The point here is that to those we believe are honestly seeking the truth we should give them every bit of evidence at our disposal.

My further thoughts:

- (5j) The Bible does not explain John's motives. It is also possible that John was indirectly appealing to Jesus to hurry up and get His kingdom up and running so He could rescue John from prison.
- (5k) If you get this kind of question from a non-believer, (a question you are pretty sure they already know what you are going to say), be cautious. The most likely reason they would do this is to set you up for a response they have planned. Notice in particular if they have arranged for an audience. That is a sure sign they have a scheme of some kind. Choose your words wisely and prayerfully.
- (5l) An atheist once asked me, "Do you believe Zeus existed?" Zeus was the head god of the Greek pantheon the same way Jupiter was for the Romans and Woden was for the Norse. He expected me to say, "No, Zeus is just a myth," after which he could say something like, "Yes, a myth just like Jesus," or similar nonsense and put me on the defensive. However, myths usually have a cause, so I answered like this, "Zeus may have been some ancient political or religious leader. Or he could have been a demonic apparition. The similarity between many of the various ancient pantheons is striking. I think it possible that there is some historical basis for them. The days of the week, almost always seven days, are usually associated with the same god or goddess, which in turn is associated with same planet or star, and a corresponding idol, god or spirit. For instance Mars is the Roman god of war and is associated with what we call Thursday. Thor is the Norse God of war and is associated with the planet we call Mars and Thursday, etc. Because almost every culture has a similar arrangement it points to a common beginning." He had no reply.
- (5m) For me the most important thing to remember from this course is that convincing people is the Holy Spirit's function, not mine. I am only responsible for saying why I'm convinced. If that does not convince anyone else, there is nothing I need to do about it. If I can get them to begin to doubt just one of the lies they believe, it is enough. Their worldview is a house of cards.