

- Did you know that there are at least two different endings for the book of Mark?
- Why did Jesus curse a tree? (Mark 11)
- Doesn't Jesus' rampage in the temple (John 2, for example) contradict turning the other cheek?
- Doesn't Jesus want you to give away all your possessions? (Luke 14:33)
- What do you think happened to all the people who rose from the dead when Jesus died? (Matthew 27)
- Didn't Jesus' followers think that the second coming was going to happen soon? (Matthew 16)
- Why does Jesus think God has forsaken him if he *is* God? (Mark 15, for example)
- The Gospels don't agree on a number of things, such as Jesus' last words or the number of people who found the empty tomb. Can you explain how these are not contradictions, using reasoning that you would allow in the discussion of other topics?

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## TOUGH QUESTIONS ABOUT THE BIBLE

A Question of Moral Atheism

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- Is it moral to punish children for things their parents did? (Genesis 9, for example)
- Why did God "harden Pharaoh's heart" when Pharaoh wanted to let the Israelites go? (Exodus 4-9)
- Does God still like how animal sacrifices smell? (Genesis 8, for example)
- Why doesn't the Bible condemn slavery? (Exodus 21)
- Why did God order Moses to kill children?
- (Deuteronomy 3, for example)
- What precisely does "Thou shalt not kill" mean? When is it okay to kill a person?
- How can you tell which of the Jewish laws (such as the Ten Commandments, or eating lobster and being homosexual being abominations) should be obeyed by Christians?
- Are the Jews still God's chosen people?
- How can you tell which Old Testament passages are the ones that have a "hidden" second meaning as a prophecy about Jesus?

IT'S POSSIBLE TO be both philosophically rigorous and believe that the Bible is God's word, but far too many Christians have not asked themselves enough tough questions about the Bible to make sure that they are indeed rigorous. Here are a few they might consider:

- Which parts of the Bible are literally true and which are stories that have been simplified so they could be understood by the book's original audience?
- What parts of the Bible do you think are okay for children? Do you think the "adult" parts of some Bible stories should be edited for children, or should children not learn those stories until they are older?
- If the Bible appears to contradict science (as it does in Genesis, for example), should you doubt scripture, doubt science, or doubt both?
- If the Bible was written under God's direction, why doesn't everyone agree what it means? Shouldn't it be perfectly clear?
- There are scriptures that did not make it into the Bible. How can you tell true and false scripture apart?

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# QUESTIONS OF MORAL ATHEISM: INSTRUCTIONS

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1. Print pages one and two of this document, one on each side of the same piece of paper (if you don't have access to a duplex printer, print page one, put the page back in the paper tray upside down, and print page two — depending on the type of printer, you may have to experiment a bit).
2. Cut the printout in two, using the thin rules across the middle of the page as a guide.
3. Fold the two pieces of paper in half, making a pair of small pamphlets.
4. Keep one of the pamphlets to read, and give the other away to an interested friend or stranger.

That's it! If you have any questions, suggestions, or comments, we invite you to share them by leaving a comment on [blog.iamanatheist.org](http://blog.iamanatheist.org). Thanks!

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