

Consider the Questions

God Asks

Carl H. Stevens Jr. is pastor of Greater Grace Church located in Baltimore, Maryland. Pastor Stevens is also chancellor of Maryland Bible College & Seminary and host of the international Christian radio program "The Grace Hour." This booklet was created from a message preached by Pastor Stevens.

Pastor Stevens can be seen weekly on cable television stations throughout the United States. Call us for information regarding programming in your area.

All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise noted, are from the King James Version. Italics for emphasis are ours.

GRACE PUBLICATIONS
P.O. BOX 18715
BALTIMORE, MD 21206

Printed in Baltimore, Maryland, U.S.A.

Copyright © 2000

Grace Publications is a ministry of
Greater Grace World Outreach, Inc.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION 5

Chapter 1 7

WHERE IS YOUR PORTION?

Chapter 2 12

WHO DIRECTS YOUR PATH?

Chapter 3 16

*DO YOU HAVE POWER TO FACE
THE STORMS OF LIFE?*

Chapter 4 23

WHAT MORE COULD GOD DO?

CONCLUSION 30

INTRODUCTION

When God Almighty, the One who is omniscient, asks questions, it is extremely important to consider why He asks them.

One of the first questions God asks is in Genesis 4:6, when He asked Cain, “Why art thou wroth? and why is your countenance fallen?”

Abel brought the right offering of a lamb, but Cain brought the fruit of his own labors—the production of his work in the field. God asked those questions because He was more concerned with Cain’s soul than He was with his offering. He wanted to give Cain the opportunity to bring the proper offering that required shedding blood instead of an offering of human merit without blood.

God asks questions so that we will think. Ultimately, He is concerned with the health of our souls. His desire is that we draw nearer to Him and be conformed to the image of Christ. God’s questions cause us to examine our own hearts

and focus our attention on Him.

I pray that this booklet will be a blessing to every reader because of the Word of God. As you receive this message, let it speak to your heart. Rejoice that every question is answered in Christ—and we can think with Him because we have His mind.

Chapter One

WHERE IS YOUR PORTION?

“Behold that which I have seen: it is good and comely for one to eat and to drink, and to enjoy the good of all his labour that he taketh under the sun all the days of his life, which God giveth him, for it is *his portion*” (Ecclesiastes 5:18).

“Arise, O LORD, disappoint him, cast him down: deliver my soul from the wicked, which is thy sword:

“From men which are thy hand, O LORD, from men of the world, which have *their portion* in this life, and whose belly thou fillest with thy hid treasure: they are full of children, and leave the rest of their substance to their babes.

“As for me, I will behold thy face in righteousness: I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with thy likeness” (Psalm 17:13-15).

“Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel, and afterward receive me to glory.

“Whom have I in heaven but thee? And

there is none upon earth that I desire besides thee.

“My flesh and my heart faileth: but God is the strength of my heart, and *my portion* forever” (Psalm 73:24-26).

There are unbelievers and believers whose portion is in this world, who make their decisions according to their desire for worldly gain. This is their portion, God says in Ecclesiastes 5:18. There is nothing else for them.

Before I became saved, I was in a show that played music that did not glorify God. We played to packed houses in Maine. But the moment I was saved, I quit. I didn't go on to try to make it big and try to live the same life I was living before I was saved. A saved man is a transformed man, or he hasn't been renewed by God.

Once I received Jesus as my Savior, I no longer desired my portion to be in this world. God gave me a new heart and a new desire (2 Corinthians 5:17). Don't let your portion be with people whose portion is with the world's system.

Follow the Counsel of the Word

God is there to guide us with His counsel from the Word of God. It is a simple life. Live by

every Word of God, be guided by it with your steps in the Holy Spirit (see Psalm 37:23; Psalm 119:133; and Romans 8:14). Say to yourself, "I am not going to be my own man, I am going to be God's man."

Seriously, who have we in heaven but God? There is none on earth to desire but God. We don't need soul-power relationships with our closest friends. Our hearts should not desire the people or the things of the earth.

Is that how you feel? Or, do you have some things that you still desire on earth?

"My flesh and my heart faileth: but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever.

"For lo, they that are far from thee shall perish: thou hast destroyed all them that go a whoring from thee.

"But it is good for me to draw near to God: I have put my trust in the Lord GOD, that I may declare all thy works" (Psalm 73:26-28).

We should demonstrate, manifest, and realize that God is the strength of our hearts and our portion forever. We should not desire anything on earth but God. In heaven, He will be the only One we desire anyway. So let's learn to make Him our portion now.

This doesn't mean that we don't have love

and intimacy while we are here on earth. Of course, we do. Do we enjoy great friendships and love? Of course, we do. But we understand where these friendships are—they are going to end down here.

Settle the Flesh Issue

We can have our portion down here with our careers. We can have our portion here with what we eat and with the people we know. But these things will come to an end. Or, we can have our portion in heaven and live with Jesus Christ as our only desire on earth.

Yes, we have deep love relationships here, but Christ remains our desire. If we come to know Him as many great saints do, every day our desire is ever growing to love Him and to know Him. To know Him is eternal life.

If we really knew Him, we would not have some of the problems that we have with our flesh.

“What do I do with my flesh?” you ask.

Get it crucified. That is the only counsel I can give. Get rid of whatever fleshly thing is plaguing you and stop doing it.

“What do I do with what’s bothering me?”

Get rid of it! That’s what you do with it.

Jesus and the apostle Paul just said, “Stop doing what you are doing and live for God.”

“How do I stop?” is the next question.

Make a decision to stop, and trust God. There is no other answer I can give. Don’t tell me you can’t stop. Many simply will not stop because their portion is with the worldly people who are doing it.

“O Jerusalem, Jerusalem..., how often would I have gathered thy children together, as a hen doth gather her brood under her wings, and ye would not!” (Luke 13:34). God always has a provision for His children, but it is up to us to receive it.

Chapter Two

WHO DIRECTS YOUR PATH?

God's questions have always been so important, but so are the questions that people have asked God.

Susanna Wesley had nineteen children; however, several of them died. A very disciplined Christian, she fasted for a long season, and she must have prayed, "God, I love You with all my heart. Why have You taken my children? They were so young."

God answered her according to Proverbs 3:5-6: "Totally depend on Me, Susanna. Trust in the LORD with all thine heart. Lean not on your own understanding. Acknowledge Me in all your ways, and I will direct your paths."

Susanna got up and said, "I believe You completely; but, Lord, I need more faith."

God said: "Faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the word of God" (Romans 10:17). God told her in His Word that faith was nigh in

her heart, even in her mouth, "So confess it!" (Romans 10:6-9). Then she read a very beautiful passage:

"How shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach, except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!" (Romans 10:14-15).

We can make it through even the most difficult circumstances if we will trust God.

Sent by God

Here is a question from God: Have you been sent?

Many people make decisions to go on the mission field who are never sent. In Acts 13:2, after a time of fasting and prayer, the Holy Spirit said, "Separate unto Me Barnabas and Saul according to My call on their lives." Those two men did not just go independently; they were *sent*.

To be sent means to come under a table of organization. We submit to it by choice and we are sent. This is how it should work: A servant comes to the table of organization and they go

together to God. They pray, knowing that the majority who come in this way are really sent by God. But if someone leaves without being sent, God can still bless him. It is between the individual and God.

Now, when Susanna Wesley read those verses, God was telling her, "If you are not going to learn about hearing from the preacher, you need to have a pastor-teacher."

She got on her knees and said before God, "Guide me to a pastor-teacher who teaches the whole counsel of God (Acts 20:27)."

Then God said, "I want you to train up your little son, John Wesley." He was one who was miraculously saved out of the fire.

Training in Godliness

Susanna trained all of her children to live disciplined lives. They did think she was very strict at times. Some would call it harsh; she called it godly. It is not harsh to train your children to be godly.

This woman had prayed, "God, would you give me one preacher boy who will make an impact on the world?" John was only seven when she prayed that prayer.

God told Susanna Wesley, "If you will go to

a pastor-teacher, be faithful, hear the Word of God, and be consistent, I will give you a special child. Go regularly and hear doctrine more than you have ever heard it before.”

She prayed over that child, loved that child, reared up that child, and many of you know the story. John Wesley became a great preacher who traveled 5,000 miles a year on horseback to deliver four and five sermons a day.

Susanna Wesley’s prayer was answered. She joined a local assembly, got a pastor-teacher, drew nigh to doctrine, and God gave her this tremendous son named John. Remember that at first, God’s question to her was, “Will you draw near Me and get yourself some good teaching and preaching?”

She said, “Yes, I will. I will do it.”

Chapter Three

DO YOU HAVE POWER TO FACE THE STORMS OF LIFE?

God's questions are so crucial. In Matthew 8:26, Jesus said to the disciples in the boat in the midst of the storm, "Why are ye fearful, O ye of little faith?"

In other words, God was saying to them, "Don't you realize that I have brought you into this storm, this terrible storm, with water coming into your boat? I have done all of this to teach you some lessons."

God said, "O ye of little faith" for one reason: They were walking by sight and not by faith (2 Corinthians 5:7). They did not realize that the Man sleeping in their boat was omnipotent. He could have told them again and again, "It is the perfect will of the Father for Me to be sleeping (in My humanity) while the storm is raging, O ye of little faith."

Jesus did answer the disciples' fears by say-

ing to the atmosphere: “Demons, be muzzled. The storm ceased and they were at once on the other side” (see Mark 4:39).

Wondering about Signs

God asked another question in Mark 8:12. To the Pharisees, He said, “Why doth this generation seek after a sign? verily I say unto you, There shall no sign be given unto this generation.”

Many people seek signs and wonders today. Really, there is only one sign that the world needs to recognize, and that is the Resurrection.

“An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given to it, but the sign of the prophet [Jonah]:

“For as [Jonah] was three days and three nights in the whale’s belly; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth” (Matthew 12:39-40).

The Resurrection is the sign that God wants us to see. He wants us to see the sign of resurrection power in marriages, in families, in friendships, in pulpits, in pews, in businesses. In every type of motherhood and fatherhood, God wants to see the sign of His resurrection power (Philippians 3:10).

There are so many “sign seekers” today. Will you be one who seeks Him instead?

The Power of the Word

Jesus did not think much of those who sought signs and wonders. But there is one type of believer He considers highly, according to Matthew 8:

“And when Jesus was entered into Capernaum, there came unto him a centurion, beseeching him,

“And saying, Lord, my servant lieth at home sick of the palsy, grievously tormented.

“And Jesus saith unto him, I will come and heal him.

“The centurion answered and said, Lord, I am not worthy that thou shouldest come under my roof: but speak the word only, and my servant shall be healed.

“For I am a man under authority, having soldiers under me: and I say to this man, Go, and he goeth; and to another, Come, and he cometh; and to my servant Do this, and he doeth it” (Matthew 8:5-9).

Jesus marveled at this and said, “I have not found such great faith even in Israel.”

Of course, the centurion’s servant was healed,

because Jesus spoke the Word.

The Word Meets the Need

“Speak the word only....” It is all that needs to be done. Speak the Word through the Holy Spirit and not through academia nor signs and wonders. This is the Word of God for revival.

When you have a need, speak the Word. Speak words of faith, and speak words of love. Speak the words of grace, and build up yourself in the most holy faith. Keep yourself in the love of God and pray in the Holy Spirit (Jude 20-21).

Don't confess what others have done to you. Confess what God has done!

While you think you really have a crisis, often the problem is that it is a crisis of the flesh.

A nobleman came to Jesus and said, “My son is near death. If you would come to my house, my son would live.”

“Then said Jesus unto him, Except ye see signs and wonders, ye will not believe.

“The nobleman saith unto him, Sir, come down ere my child die.

“Jesus saith unto him, Go thy way; thy son liveth. And the man believed the word that Jesus had spoken unto him, and he went his way” (John 4:46-50).

This nobleman's servants came out to tell him that his son was healed the same hour that Jesus spoke the Word.

The 'Good' Thing

God had all kinds of beautiful questions. To the rich young ruler, Jesus asked, "Why do you call me good? there is none good but God" (see Matthew 19:17). The rich young ruler said that he had kept all the commandments and he saw Jesus as a good teacher who could tell him something about the Law that he didn't know.

"If all you think of Me is that I am a teacher, don't call me good. Only God is good," Jesus was saying to him. He was inferring that He was God, of course, and this guy didn't know it. The young ruler was just thinking about the Law.

He started by asking, "What good thing shall I do that I may have eternal life?" (Matthew 19:16).

Jesus said, "You really want to know? Sell all that you have and give to the poor" (see Matthew 19:21). Wait, salvation is by grace through faith, you are saying to yourself. Yes, it is. But this young man had an idol in his life—money and possessions. That is the only reason Jesus related this to this man. He had an idol and could not

believe that Jesus was God. Money was this man's god and he went away sorrowful (Matthew 19:22).

The Sinner's Potential

The Lord asked many questions about Mary Magdalene. She was an amazing, precious woman who was delivered from seven demons (see Luke 8:2). As she poured expensive ointment over Jesus' head, the disciples had a question: "To what purpose is this waste? Why wasn't it sold and the money given to the poor?" (see Matthew 26:8-9).

Jesus had a question for their question: "Why trouble ye the woman? Leave her alone. She has done what she could, and every thing that she has done will stand as a memorial to her forever" (see Matthew 26:10-13).

Mary Magdalene was transformed. Imagine living with all of those demons. Yet, she had potential, and that is what Jesus saw.

Do you know that every person living in sin has great potential? It is not the wicked sin we should see; it is the need for the Savior and the need for the forgiveness, mercy, and love of Calvary.

"Leave her alone," Jesus said to the disci-

ples. Do you know what God wants to say about a lot of people who are criticized and condemned and judged by Christians? "Leave them alone. They are doing what they can."

Chapter Four

WHAT MORE COULD GOD DO?

“Now will I sing to my well-beloved a song of my beloved touching his vineyard. My well-beloved hath a vineyard in a very fruitful hill:

“And he fenced it, and gathered out the stones thereof, and planted it with the choicest wine, and built a tower in the midst of it, and also made a winepress therein: and he looked that it should bring forth grapes, and it brought forth wild grapes.

“And now, O inhabitants of Jerusalem, and men of Judah, judge, I pray you, betwixt me and my vineyard.

“What could have been done more to my vineyard, that I have not done in it? Wherefore, when I looked that it should bring forth grapes, brought it forth wild grapes?” (Isaiah 5:1-4).

“What more can I do unto you than I have already done?” God is asking in this passage. What more could He have done?

Glory to God, He became a Man who suffered—the Just for the unjust—and shed His own precious blood (see 1 Peter 1:18-19). Thank God that this Man came from heaven to show us the nature of God and the Father’s heart (John 14:9). He came to reveal a nature that would do a miracle when He was sleeping, one that would do a miracle even when He was frail and weak.

Thanks be to God that the man Jesus Christ paid for every sin that we would ever commit. There isn’t another thing more that He could do. He came into us to live, and He has given us 3,780 promises.

We don’t need the world, Jesus. We just need You, the desire of our hearts.

He Is with Us in the Valleys

“Why standest thou afar off, O LORD? Why hidest thou thyself in times of troubles?” (Psalm 10:1).

“Wherefore hidest thou thy face, and forgettest our affliction and our oppression? (Psalm 44:24).

Every Christian has had times when it seems as if God is hiding. According to 1 Kings 8:12, God “would dwell in the thick darkness.” In Exodus 14:20, the darkness came over the Egyp-

tians, but that same darkness was as light to the people of Israel.

The things that are dark to the world are light for the child of God who has God's light, life, and love in his heart. The same thing that appears to be darkness to others is light to the Christian who walks in the Spirit of God and by the power of His Word. Trials become light for him because they are opportunities to exercise faith in Jesus Christ through His Word.

Trials, agony, and pain are filled with darkness, but if we make our bed in hell, God is there (Psalm 139:8). I thank God that in times when it seemed as if He were hiding Himself, I found Him in the darkness because He was already dwelling there.

“And I will give thee the treasures of darkness, and hidden riches of secret places, that thou mayest know that I, the LORD, which call thee by name, am the God of Israel” (Isaiah 45:3).

“Who is among you that feareth the LORD, that obeyeth the voice of his servant, that walketh in darkness, and hath no light? let him trust in the name of the LORD, and stay upon his God” (Isaiah 50:10).

To those who are battling deadly and debili-

tating diseases, God is dwelling in your darkness. I guarantee you that God is there with you.

Are you walking in darkness and you have no light? Trust in the name of the Lord, and stay upon your God.

Draw Near to Him

Sometimes God hides Himself so that we will draw near to Him and to His people with true faith and assurance (Hebrews 10:22).

Another reason God hides Himself is because He wants His people to hunger and thirst after His righteousness so that they can be filled (Matthew 5:6). God hides Himself because people live in self-centered sin. They live there, and for some reason, they won't repent, get right, and stay right with God. They need to humble themselves before God and confess their sins. Until they do, God will hide from them.

God also hides in the midst of the angelic contest so that we, as Job did, will glorify the Lord before Satan and the demons. God hid Himself from Job, and through it all, Job discovered deep things about the character of God (Job 12:22). Ultimately he confessed, "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him" (Job 13:15).

What If This Is All There Is?

Why do the wicked prosper? That is a question asked of God in Jeremiah 12:1. The answer, as we related at the beginning from Ecclesiastes 5:18, is because all that they will ever have is a portion in this life.

A couple in my church tell this story: The wife treated her husband so beautifully. She was precious and sweet; he was stubborn, and he just refused to get saved.

One year, on his wife's birthday, he asked her, "Why are you so kind to me? I can't understand it."

She said to him: "Because you are never going to get any kindness except what you get in this lifetime. You are not saved; that's why I am kind. I am sure you will never see this in eternity. You are not going to get it unless you get saved."

That man became saved and was baptized not long after that.

The wicked prosper because what they have on earth is the only portion they will ever have.

What Do You Have against Him?

"Thus saith the LORD, What iniquity have your fathers found in me, that they are gone far

from me, and have walked after vanity, and are become vain?" (Jeremiah 2:5).

"What do your fathers have against Me?" God asked Israel. "They never honor me. They have constantly disobeyed Me." Today, God would ask why so many are involved with lust and pornography, or are so self-centered in their schedules and what they do in life that they refuse the holy and heavenly call that He has for them.

Can't you see the pleading heart of God saying to His people, "What do your fathers have against Me? What more could I do unto you than I have done?"

God spoke to Solomon and said that one day Israel would be ruined and the question would be asked, "Why hath the LORD done thus unto this land, and to this house?" (1 Kings 9:8).

"And they shall answer, Because they forsook the LORD their God, who brought forth their fathers out of the land of Egypt, and have taken hold upon other gods, and have worshipped them, and served them: therefore hath the LORD brought upon them all this evil" (1 Kings 9:9).

Iniquity, which is emotional rebellion against God, is what brought down Israel, and it is what

brings down God's people today. The question is this: What more could God have done for us?

"My God and my Lord, why hast Thou forsaken me?" Jesus asked on the Cross. The answer to that question is this: Every sin and every iniquity was placed upon His precious body and was pressing on His soul. God forsook Him because our sins were upon Him, and in Habakkuk 1:13, God cannot look upon iniquity. To defeat death and give His people the victory over sin, God the Father placed every sin of the entire history of the human race upon His perfect Son, Jesus Christ, so that now we can be cleansed and free from sin forever through faith in Jesus Christ.

CONCLUSION

Jesus came from heaven and asked Paul a question: "Why are you persecuting Me?" (See Acts 9:4.)

"Who are you?" Paul said. In other words, "I am not persecuting You. I am persecuting the Church."

"No, you are persecuting Me. Why persecutest thou Me?"

In 1 Timothy 1:13-15, Paul said that he was a blasphemer, a persecutor, an injurious person, but that he obtained mercy because he did those things in unbelief. He went on to say that God gave him grace, faith, and love through faith in Jesus Christ, who "came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief."

Jesus prayed on the Cross for people like Paul: "Forgive them; for they know not what they do" (Luke 23:34). They do so much in zeal as religious people. But like Paul, they can receive mercy, grace, faith, and the love of Jesus

Christ, even if they consider themselves to be the chief of sinners.

God's questions are so crucial, and His answer for every seeking heart is that He loves us forever. He draws us to Himself with everlasting love and with lovingkindness.

"Listen," God is saying, "I paid for every sin. Believe Me. Come unto Me and receive life."

To those who are lost, God has one more question: "What are you waiting for? Now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation" (see 2 Corinthians 6:2).