

1. The word “blasphemy” comes from the Greek word blasphemia, which literally means to speak harm. From a religious point of view, it means showing contempt or the utmost disrespect or defiance toward God. A second meaning is claiming the attributes of the Lord (or actually to be God). In Biblical times, what was the punishment for cursing or blaspheming the name of the Lord? (Leviticus 24:15-16, Matthew 26:65-66, John 10:33) Is this penalty still in effect today?

2. 2. How can one blaspheme God? The Bible tells us six ways:

A. Leviticus 24:11_____

B. Acts 6:11_____

C. Ezekiel 20:27-31 (esp vs 27)_____

D. 1 Timothy 1:13 E. James 2:2-7_____

F. Revelation 13:1_____

3. Have you ever blasphemed God? (Most of us have.) Which one(s) of the six ways above have snagged you or continue to be troublesome to you? Why?

4. The Bible differentiates between (A) blasphemy against God and against Jesus, and (B) blasphemy against the Holy Spirit. What’s the difference? (Matthew 12:22-31. Look at the New Living Translation if possible. Also see Mark 3:29-30)

5. Blasphemy against God and Jesus can be forgiven (1 Timothy 1:12-14), but blasphemy against the Holy Spirit is the only unforgivable sin in the Bible. Why is this? (Matthew 12:31-32, Mark 3:28-29, Luke 12:10, Hebrews 6:4-6, 10:26, 29)

6. Have you ever been (or are you now) concerned that you may have blasphemed the Holy Spirit and cannot be forgiven? Put another way, can a Christian believer commit the unforgivable sin? (2 Corinthians 5:17, John 10:27-28, Romans 6:14, 1 John 1:7)

1. The word “discipline” has several different meanings. We will look mainly at it as training that corrects, molds, or perfects one’s mental facilities and moral character. Within this definition, there is discipline from God, discipline from other people, and self-discipline. Which is easiest and which is hardest to accept?
2. For discipline to be effective in correcting or molding character and behavior, what is also necessary:
A) severity, B) judgment, C) fairness, D) suffering, E) love, F) repentance, G) Other
_____. (Judges 8:16, Jeremiah 30:11)
3. Consider God’s approach to training and molding us and getting us to listen to him. What does he use in this process? Where does discipline fit in? (Amos 3:1-2, Jeremiah 31:18-20, Psalm 89:30-33, 1 Corinthians 11:32)
4. How does God want and expect us to react to his discipline? List four or five specific things God wants us to do. (Proverbs 3:11-12, 13:1, 15:5, Job 5:17-18, Hebrews 12:5-11, Revelation 3:19)
5. God expects us to discipline others appropriately, especially parents and their children. (Proverbs 13:24, 19:18, 29:15, Ephesians 6:4)
6. How does God’s recommended discipline for children jibe with the views of the world?
7. Self-discipline is often more difficult than being disciplined by God or others. Can you think of some examples of self-discipline that you practice every day in your daily routine? Are there things that you would like to accomplish that require self-discipline? Can an addiction be brought under control with self-discipline?
8. The Bible has several things to say about self-discipline. First, it says that God wants us to focus on his plans and not on our plans. (1 Timothy 4:7-8)
9. Second, the Bible says we should be receptive to God’s discipline, ways, and commands and do what they say. (Job 36:10, John 15:10-11)
10. 10. Third, we need self-discipline to persevere in the pursuit of our faith. We must keep going, not grow weary, and press on regardless! (Hebrews 12:1-2a)

1. In the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5-7), Jesus opens with nine brief statements in simple words that carry profound meanings. To understand the meanings, we must first understand that the word “blessed” is NOT used in the sense to invoke a blessing but to affirm a quality of spirituality that is already present. We pronounce it bless-ed. It refers to a state that already exists, and it makes a HUGE difference in the way we understand the beatitudes. Given this definition, does a beatitude mean a) Blessed are the people who do X because they will receive Y or does it mean b) Look at the spirituality and joy of people who already have (or will receive) both X and Y.
2. 1st Beatitude. What does Jesus mean by “poor in spirit?” (Matt 5:3, Isaiah 66:2)
3. 2nd Beatitude. If there is mourning, some kind of suffering lies behind it. Does this Beatitude mean that Christians should seek out suffering? Should we rejoice in sickness, disasters, persecution, pain, and death? (Matt 5:4, Ecclesiastes 7:2-4)
4. 3rd Beatitude. Who are the meek? (Matt 5:5, Psalm 37:11, Zephaniah 3:12)
5. 4th Beatitude. Righteousness itself is like a diamond with many facets and we could spend weeks discussing its meaning. But our narrower question today is: why does Jesus focus on those who seek righteousness rather than those who are righteous or who live righteously? (Matt 5:6, Matt 13:44-46)
6. 5th Beatitude. “Showing mercy” has two basic meanings. They are and . (Matt 5:7, 9:36, Luke 11:4)
7. 6th Beatitude. Does “pure in heart” mean having a) one single focus and motive, i.e., no hidden agenda, b) internal purity, i.e., clean thoughts, no hate, no smut, or c) open transparency to God and others, i.e., what you see is what you get?
8. 7th Beatitude. Are the “peacemakers” those who a) are peaceful, b) are pacifists, c) are mediators, d) don’t understand God’s peace. (Philippians 4:7)
9. 8th Beatitude. Does this verse mean (Matt 5:10) being persecuted for: a) doing what is right, b) standing up for justice, c) striving for ethical perfection, d) promoting God’s word, e) something else ?
10. 9th Beatitude. This is the first Beatitude in which Jesus has inserted himself (on my account, because of me) and added some explanation. Why did he do this?

1. The Bible tells us there are nine things related to salvation (deliverance from sin) of which we can be sure. They are:

- A) _____ (2 Peter 1:10a)
- B) _____ (Romans 8:38-39)
- C) _____ (Romans 8:16)
- D) _____ (Philippians 1:6)
- E) _____ (Hebrews 6:11-12)
- F) _____ (Job 19:25-27a)
- G) _____ (1 John 3:2)
- H) _____ (2 Timothy 4:8)
- I) _____ (1 John 5:13)

2. How do we obtain assurance of our salvation?

- A) _____ (1 John 5:13)
- B) _____ (John 3:16, 3:36, 6:39-40)

3. On what is our assurance of salvation founded?

- A) _____ (Ephesians 1:4-8, 1 Thess 1:4)
- B) _____ (John 6:39, 10:28-30) C) (Romans 8:35-39)

4. What assures us of our salvation?

- A) _____ (Romans 8:14-16, Galatians 4:6)
- B) _____ (Acts 13:48, Romans 3:22a, 30, Ephesians 2:8)
- C) _____ (Hebrews 6:11, 6:18-19a)
- D) _____ (Matthew 7:20, Galatians 5:19-24, 2 Peter 1:5-8, 1 John 3:10-14)

1. The 18 traditional synagogue prayers from early days had openings such as, “God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob,” “holy one,” “builder of Jerusalem,” “mighty one,” and “gracious one.” Why do you think Jesus taught his disciples to pray to “Abba” (our Father)? What kind of relationship does it affirm?

2. “Hallowed” is not a common word today. Just what does it mean? Can we humans make God’s name holy or unholy? (Ezekiel 36:16-23) Who can make God’s name holy? When we say, “hallowed be thy name,” what are we stating or asking for?

3. 3. There are three paradoxes on Jesus’ teachings about the kingdom of God. This is like three railroad trains moving side by side on three separate tracks. If any rail is removed or if the trains move onto one track, there will be a wreck. Each train must move on its own track of two rails. The three paradoxes are:
 - A) The kingdom of God has come in Christ (Luke 11:20) but that same kingdom is still in the future (Matthew 6:10)
 - B) The kingdom of God and the end of all things is near (1 Peter 4:7, 1 Corinthians 7:29, Romans 13:12) but it is still far off (parables in Luke 19:12-27, Matthew 25:14-30)
 - C) Jesus describes many signs of the coming of the kingdom (Luke 21:5-36) but then says only the father knows the time of the end (Matthew 24:36, Mark 13:32)

Given that in this human life we don’t now know and can never truly understand the kingdom of God, what does it mean when we pray, “Your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven?”

4. Using the Greek word, the next petition reads, “give us this day our epiousios bread,” which can be translated as today, tomorrow, or [an] amount. So the phrase can mean, “the bread of today,” “the bread of tomorrow,” or “the bread we need.” Given this broadened definition, what would be a good translation of this petition?

5. Not only are we admonished to forgive others, but in two verses after the prayer, what does Jesus say will happen if we don’t? (Matthew 6:12-15). Different Bible translations ask God to forgive unfulfilled obligations, i.e., debts [KJV, ESV, NASB, NIV], or forgive doing the wrong thing: sins [LB, NLT, NCV], trespasses [Anglican, Episcopal, Roman Catholic, Lutheran], and wrongs [CEV, REB]. Which do you like best? Actually, Jesus said to forgive kihoba, an Aramiac word which means both debts and sins. How do you like that meaning? How can we best express what forgiveness we are asking for from God?

6. We then must forgive others. Does that mean that injustice will be tolerated by Christians? Is anger necessary to fuel the struggle for justice?
7. The phrase, "lead us not into temptation" can also be translated, "do not bring us to the time of trial." [NRSV]. Will God tempt you? (James 1:13) Assuming God will not tempt you, what then does this petition mean?