

Transcript 108

Shea Houdmann

Welcome to the Got Questions podcast. As you know gotquestions.org is a ministry to answer questions. And today we're going to kind of flip that script a little bit. Our guest today has written two books that I have found very interesting and also very helpful. Joining me today is Israel Wayne. He's the author of Questions God Asks and Questions Jesus Asked. Two books that explore the questions that God and Jesus ask of us. So very closely related to what we do at Got Questions but different at the same time. So Israel and welcome to the show.

Israel Wayne

That's a blessing to be on your podcast. Thank you for inviting me.

Shea Houdmann

And for those who want to get to know Israel little bit more, we'll share more in the show notes, the description on YouTube when the video goes live and also at podcast.gotquestions.org. But also, Israel is the founder of familyrenewal.org and the site editor for christianworldview.net. So Israel maybe tell our guests a little bit about yourself and then what led you to write these two books? Questions God Asked and Questions Jesus Asked.

Israel Wayne

Well, for the last 30 years I've worked in Christian publishing, I have been an author and a Christian conference speaker. I have a Christian apologetics website called christianworldview.net that I manage and travel all over the country speaking at churches and Christian conferences. And I just want to say as far as the gotquestions.org site, I found you guys some years back because I get asked questions from people every day of my life on a variety of topics related to theology, family life, relationships, you know, apologetics, all kinds of different issues, and I always like to be able to refer someone to a good sound article. And I like to save myself time by not having to write it all myself because I don't like to have to reinvent the wheel. And so I found the Got Questions site and over a series of months of reading through the articles I found the consistency that they were thoughtful. They were well researched. They were theologically sound, and so it built up a confidence in me that this is a site that I can send someone to. First of all that I can go to and find an article on that topic, because I've rarely ever searched for a topic that there wasn't already an article written. And then secondly that that it would be biblically sound and helpful for those that I recommend it to. So I've I've been a big fan of the site now for a number of years, and so it's an honor for me to be able to be part of this discussion on the Got Questions podcast.

Shea Houdmann

Well, for sure thank you for that encouragement Israel. It's always always nice to hear. So again, what led you to write these two books?

Speaker 1

Well, the first book. Questions God Asks, came out of my own personal Bible study. I had been reading through the Old Testament. I tried to read through the Bible every year all the way through and I was reading through the Old Testament and I started to notice a trend that surprised me. And it was that God was asking questions of people. And we often hear people say, well, when I get to heaven, I'm going to have all these questions for God, but it surprised me the frequency with which God was asking people questions. And the reason that that surprised me is one of the doctrines that we know to be true of God is that he is omniscient that he knows all things. And so I started to wonder when I saw these questions, why is God asking questions of people?

Israel Wayne

So for example, I saw him ask Balaam who are these men with you and ask Abraham where is your wife Sarah and ask Moses what is that in your hand and he has to Elijah in The Cave what are you doing here?

Israel Wayne

And so I started to think about the fact that God would never ask a question arbitrarily or capriciously. In fact in the New Testament, Jesus tells us that we would give an account on the day of judgment for every idle word that we speak. And so certainly God will play by his own rules, right? He's not just asking idle questions, so I thought, well, if if God already knows the answer to this question, certainly God knew where Abraham's wife was or when he asked Cain whereas your brother, he knew the answer to those questions. But he was wanting the person that he's asking the the question too, to think about something or to consider something. So I started to write down the different topics that were related to each question. And to study the context in depth to really understand what was going on all the way around that question. And I found it to be a fascinating study.

Israel Wayne

And then, of course, because it was recorded in the Holy Scripture, I thought, well, obviously there's application for us in our life today. So the principle that's being taught to these people in the Old Testament has an application for us. So I started writing Questions God Asked, and as I did that, I began to think about the fact that Jesus was really the master of asking questions. And when you think about how many times he was approached by people, especially those who were antagonistic and asked a question frequently rather than just giving it an answer, he would answer the question with a question. A good teacher, what good thing must I do to inherit eternal life? And Jesus would ask something like why do you call me good? And so those questions just tend to cut past the pretense and to really get to the heart of assumptions and biases that people have.

Israel Wayne

And so when I laid out the Old Testament and New Testament questions, I had 19 questions in the Old Testament that I really wanted to address in 20 questions from Jesus and the New Testament. And I notice that none of the topics overlap. There's like 39 completely different topics being addressed in the question. And I had to write it, it just was something that I was compelled to do. And so it was a fabulous study for me as an author, and I think it's a very intriguing approach to a topical Bible study that's fresh and it's just different than how we tended to look at passages and and maybe passages we've read, but we just skipped over and we never really slowed down to think about what was there.

Shea Houdmann

Excellent going through the book I remember just thinking, these are really probing questions. If you try to put yourself in that person's shoes that God is asking that question. That would be quite the on the spot question to be asked, especially when it's God directly asking you. Several years ago I preached the sermon in our church about, well, I think I like the most important questions that God asked us. So very similar. And we picked some of the same topics. But you've been some different directions and like huh I really wish I'd picked that one.

Shea Houdmann

So one of the questions I really like how you addressed was when God asks Job where were you when I laid the foundations? And the whole series, almost a couple chapters of asking Job questions. What were some of the main points that you found in why God is asking Job those particular questions?

Israel Wayne

Job chapter is really, I think, the quintessential chapter for the questioner, right? Because one of the most common questions that gets asked of Christian apologists or of church leaders is if God is good, and he's loving, and all powerful, and omniscient, and then how is it that we have evil and suffering? Or why do bad things happen to good people? And people want an answer to that. And I think that really was Job's question, but it was personal for him. It wasn't simply an abstract philosophical question because you know his life was devastated. And he said, I want to contend with God, you know, I want to talk to God face to face. I want to get an answer to these questions.

Israel Wayne

And then he gets this litany of questions. I mean, he's just barraged with questions. And I think the fascinating thing about that is that he never actually gets the answer to his question. And the response that he has at the end of that is simply to say I had heard of you, but now my eyes have seen you and I repent myself and dust and ashes. I put my hand over my mouth. I won't speak anymore and the conclusion was simply that he had to recognize that there were two people in the room. One of them was God and the other one was him and he was not God. And we just don't always get the why answer. We want it, but we don't always get it. And yet in the New Testament, as believers in Christ, what we get is the promise from the Lord Jesus Christ that I will never leave you and I will never forsake you. I will be with you always, even to the end of the age. So what we get is the promise of the abiding presence of the Lord Jesus Christ himself in the middle of our suffering in the middle of our pain. And I think that's so much more important than the answer to the why. I presume an eternity, we'll get an answer to the why. But for now, we have the promise of the nearness and the closeness of Christ even in the midst of our pain.

Shea Houdmann

Trust me we get questions all the time exactly what you're describing is why? If God is good, why did he allow blank in the blank insert whatever horrible tragedy you just befallen them or something that happened in the world and natural disaster? And those are the questions that people ask that I said I can't tell you why. I can speculate, I can tell you and encourage you to trust that God is good and God is in control and has a purpose in that. But it's not our place to be able to answer those why type of

questions. And obviously God knew why. And you read the first couple chapters of Job, God explains at least some of the why that was happening. But it always fascinated me that God never gave Job the answer, at least not that's recorded for us. Perhaps he did at some other time, but uhm, Job just being reminded of the greatness of God was enough to wash away all of his his doubts, his concerns, and to restore his trust and faith in God, and so seeing how questions can challenge someone to rethink what they're what they're believing. What they're saying. They your chapter on job is probably my favorite and the the questions about Questions God Asked book because it was very, very convicting.

Israel Wayne

It's a blessing that we have those narratives, that we have those stories of real people in the Bible who have the same kinds of struggles that we have and are faced with similar scenarios. Because it reminds us that the same God who was patient with them who was loving with them, who was willing to help them through their difficulties and even their lack of faith, is the same God who is patient with us. And we find strength and comfort from those those narratives and and through these questions that God asks.

Shea Houdmann

So maybe before we jump into the New Testament, the Questions Jesus Asked, what is one more question that God asks in the Old Testament, that that really, really stands out to you?

Israel Wayne

Yeah, the one that was the most difficult for me to write was when God asked Abraham where is your wife Sarah? So if I remember correctly, I think that's in Genesis 17:18 where God comes and visits Abraham under the trees of Mamre. And Abraham is having a meal prepared. Sarah is in the tent preparing the food and as the Lord is served I'm I mean, I believe that's a a theophany or possibly a christophany not to get too deep into the woods there. But there's these, these three men. There's the the two angels I believe, and and probably the Lord himself, and and so Abraham is watching this. And God asked the question, where is your wife, Sarah? And what I always do is, I think, well, who is the question for? And I assume it's for Abraham. But then he answers the question. He says she's in the tent. And then the the narrative just drops off. I mean it continues, but the question doesn't seem to come back and I'm thinking to myself, well, does certainly God knows where Sarah is?

Israel Wayne

Does Abraham not know where Sarah is? Certainly he does. 'cause he said she's in the tent and I think, well, OK, maybe the question is for Sarah, right? Because she's listening, she's in the tent, does she not know she's in the tent? Will certainly she does. And so anyway, the bottom line with that one, I'll kind of give it a little bit of a spoiler alert is that is not a geographical question. That's a relational question. And the answer I found to that question goes all the way back to Genesis 12, and the promises that God had made and giving a new name to Sarah. And this promise of them having a child, and it was really a question about two things about their relationship about their marriage, about Abraham leadership, but also about his faith.

Israel Wayne

And I, I believe if you read the context of it, it was a bit of a rebuke actually to Abraham. Very complicated and complex question, but that was probably the most difficult to write. The most challenging, but also the most intriguing and enjoyable for me because there was so much richness and depth to it, so there were a lot of those questions there that were like that.

Israel Wayne

And I know you didn't ask this question this way, but I think for me in the New Testament the one where Jesus meets the paralytic who's been lying there for 38 years. You know, unable to walk and he asks him, do you want to get well? I mean that just seems on the face of it, almost insulting. And yet you know it's not because you know the heart of the Lord Jesus. And so some of those questions are just so profound and so deep.

Israel Wayne

And I love that kind of thing as someone who has been a Christian for a long time, read a lot of Christian books, studied theology. I enjoy being challenged. I enjoy thinking about these passages in a new and fresh and deeper way. As opposed to yeah, you know it's the same thing I've read 100 times and no new insights. I'm not adding anything to scripture. I want to be very clear about that. I'm not speculating and adding anything to the scripture at all. I despise books that do that, but just simply looking at what's there in the text of the Scripture itself and drawing out what's what's clearly there.

Shea Houdmann

Good plan and then several other things I would love to talk to you about, but let's jump into the Questions Jesus Asked. To me the one that stood out the most was kind of the two part question of when Jesus asks Peter, it's like who do people say that I am and then after Peter's response responds with well, who do you say that I am? And you really emphasize this one, as well. Why do you think that's such an important question for people to really think through?

Israel Wayne

Well, the first question, who do people say that I am almost sounds like the kind of thing that a Mega church pastor might ask his church staff. You know, as though we need to do a marketing survey, we need to do some sort of demographic study. Find out how we're trending in the community. How do people perceive our ministry, that kind of thing. And you know that's not what Jesus is doing. Again because we know his personhood and his character, but he wants to know do the disciples have their finger on the pulse of what people around them think about Jesus?

Israel Wayne

And I think that's important for us as Christians. What what do people in our society think about Jesus? What are their thought processes? And it is quite different today than it was 50 years ago or 100 years ago. So things have changed from modernism to post modernism. Increasingly, there are more people who don't identify as any type of religion that call themselves nuns. They have no religion and we need to know about those trends.

Israel Wayne

But then, of course, the most important question is that engaging personal question, who do you say that I am because that defines everything. And I love of course the classic answer by CS Lewis and Mere Christianity, where he tells us that Jesus hasn't given us a lot of options as far as what classification we put Jesus into. We don't have the luxury of saying, oh, he was just a good moral teacher or he was a good philosopher. Because of what he claimed and who he claimed to be, we have to reject him entirely or we have to accept all of his claims in their totality. With the and Jesus puts us in a position that really, almost no one else in the history of the world does. And I'm constantly amazed by the teachings of Jesus and the claims of Jesus. The longer I read and study His words, the more astounded I am at the uniqueness of his personhood and character. There's been no one like him in all of human history. Not not even close.

Shea Houdmann

I love how you broke down the two questions there and at Got Questions we experiencing very similar. We get people who are asking questions but who Jesus is? Was He just a prophet? Was he was he priest? Was he? Was he the Messiah? And all these questions that are getting to aspects of who he is and then taking that question then transitioning to hey, we can answer these questions, but who is he to you? And kind of turning that around and seeing what that's what Jesus focuses here.

Shea Houdmann

You need to be aware of the different views that are out there about who I am, so you can then better point people to who I actually am, which is of course the most important question in all eternity is who, who is Jesus Christ and what is your relationship to him?

Israel Wayne

Amen. Absolutely yeah. And what an opportunity. What a wonderful opportunity that we have with in this day and age to use technology. To be able to reach millions and millions of people with the gospel.

Israel Wayne

And that's something I want to encourage the listeners of the podcast to think about is that many of us use social media. Many of us have an outreach. Maybe it's the hundreds, maybe it's the thousands, but whatever our outreach, we get to be witnesses for the Lord Jesus Christ, and we have an unparalleled opportunity today because of technology. And you know, yeah, it's great to show pictures of cats on Facebook and Instagram, but we can talk about something far more internal and substantive. That's the Lord Jesus.

Shea Houdmann

Absolutely one other question you highlighted in Questions Jesus Asked, I wanted to point to and every year around Easter. Good Friday. We get a lot of questions about this one. Is like, what did Jesus mean when he asked, my God, my God, why have you forsaken me? This one's interesting, it's not a question he's asking of us or of someone else there. He's actually asking the question of God. So what are some insights that you can give us about the meaning of that question? What what Jesus was getting?

Israel Wayne

Right, well, I think one of the things that we think about is of course just the personal suffering and anguish that Jesus experienced on the cross, and that question certainly brings that out. But at the same time, he's referencing a messianic Psalm and he is declaring himself even in his final moments he's declaring himself to be the Messiah. Jesus said that he didn't do anything on his own. He only did what the father told him to do. He was intentional. He was obedient to the father, and so even on the cross he was quoting from these messianic passages in the Old Testament, letting all of the listeners know who he was. Definitively that he was the son of God, that he was the Messiah, and so it's not merely an emotional guttural cry of anguish. Although I don't want to diminish that because I think there, certainly, you know, was in the humanity of Jesus, the human suffering that we all would anticipate.

Israel Wayne

But there was also a laser like focus on accomplishing the will of the father and declaring himself to be the Son of God, even down to his final seconds. And He was so intentional again, just no one like Jesus in his life, in his teaching, in his words or in his death. And so there's a profound connection to the words that he's speaking there on the cross, and the fulfillment of the Old Testament within his death.

Shea Houdmann

So one of the things that most interests me about this question is that people are always asking, like, what was actually going on and trying to get super theological like what was happening in between God the Son and God the father of this exact moment that's causing Jesus to feel separated. Jesus to feel abandoned again like you said, I don't want to deny the pain that he was going through. And that bearing our sin, the separation he felt from God the Father for the first time and only time in all of eternity. But recognize that he's quoting from Psalm 22, and that many of the people who heard him would have recognized that. If you read the rest of Psalm 22, it's say feeling abandoned but at the same time trusting God and knowing that he's not abandoned you, so it's that juxtaposition of how you feel versus reality. But I think it's really powerful when you actually do a study of Psalm 22, then see both the messianic aspect of it of what Jesus was claiming, but also what he was trying to communicate. And even though it may look like He is being abandoned by God, that is not what is actually happening.

Israel Wayne

It's also fascinating that in a prophecy David described the crucifixion and the scene at the crucifixion at a time 1000 years before the life of Jesus when crucifixion was not a method of death. And so again, just the way that scripture is validated in so many different ways. It's just powerful. But the Lord was referencing those passages that referred to his death and described the very scene and and what Jesus went through 1000 years before it took place.

Shea Houdmann

Absolutely, it's this is why, in addition to Isaiah 53, Psalm 22 is one of the first places I go to find a very clear reference to Jesus being prophesied about in the Old Testament. So I loved your section on that question. Maybe just do one more. What is another question that Jesus asks in the New Testament that really stands out to you?

Israel Wayne

I think another really important is when he asks why do you call me Lord? And you know there really is a sense in which I think there are people within Christianity today who come to Jesus for a lot of different reasons, particularly the way that the gospel is packaged today, it's like you come to this this self-help therapeutic guru who will help you to become a better version of yourself or you come to God and he will protect you from bad things happening in your life. He'll make you healthy. He'll make you prosperous. He'll make sure that there's this little canopy or bubble over your life that nothing bad ever happens to you, which is not the gospel, it's a false gospel.

Israel Wayne

But recognizing that Jesus is the king of the universe, and that when we come to Jesus, we're not coming to some sort of self help improvement expert. We are coming to the God who spoke everything into existence, and you know, sometimes we don't think about the fact that Jesus, as John one tells us and Colossians one tells us, that Jesus was the one that through through whom God made the world of the visible things in the invisible things, and that nothing was made that wasn't made throughout through the word of the Lord Jesus. And so this powerful creator God, through whom God made all things is is this personal friend, and we're grateful for that. But he's also the rule of the king of all things, and so I think our view of Jesus with an American evangelicalism is is way too small. And and when he says, why do you call me, Lord, do we really understand who he is? We really understand the magnitude of his kingship and what that means for all of our life?

Israel Wayne

And so there's there's a lot that's packed into just that one question. There's so many more. But but there's deep probing questions that Jesus asked his disciples. Sometimes they ask the Pharisees and others, but they're all relevant for us, and I think that we can apply those principles, those general principles to our own life today.

Shea Houdmann

Amen, so Israel we're about out of time but let me just ask you, I know in addition to Questions God Asks and Questions Jesus Asked you written some other books and here's just a brief opportunity. Please tell our audience about some of the other books you've written and describe who who those books are written.

Israel Wayne

Sure, I'll just show these real quick so people have a visual of what they're looking for. If they search for these online, you can get these at our website familyrenewal.org or at my publisher, which is masterbooks.com. I've also written a couple of books on parenting.

Israel Wayne

I have one called Raising Them Up, Parenting for Christians. My wife and I wrote a book together called Pitching a Fit, overcoming angry and stressed out parenting. And then my wife and I actually have eleven children. I I know we just lost most of the listeners, they fell over and had cardiac arrest, but they heard we had eleven children. We have 11 children and we actually homeschooled them, so I've written a couple of books on Christian education and homeschooling ones called Education, Does God have an

Opinion? And another is Answers for Home Schooling, the top 20 questions critics ask, and all of those are available from familyrenewal.org.

Shea Houdmann

Well, that's awesome, no. I mean my brother in law comes from a family of 11, so I'm I'm familiar with how different that dynamic is in comparison to me. I have one older sister, so it's maybe I'll have you back on sometime. We we have a episode on parenting on our to do list as well so that might be an interesting talk for us to have some time.

Israel Wayne

I would love to do that they'll be a blessing.

Shea Houdmann

Alright. Again, this has been the Got Questions podcast with Israel Wayne. We will include links to where you can learn more about him and the ministry God's calling to including the two main books we discussed, Questions God Asked and Questions Jesus Asked so Israel again, thank you for being on the show today.

Israel Wayne

Thank you, brother. God bless you.

Shea Houdmann

This is the Got Questions podcast. Got questions? The Bible has answers. We'll help you find them.