

Episode-208

Shea Houdmann

Welcome to the Got Questions Podcast. Joining me today is Jeff, the Managing Editor of BibleRef.com, and Kevin, the Managing Editor of GotQuestions.org. So, today we are actually going to begin a new series, I guess we're calling it Difficult Passages in the Bible. We'll all be solely focused on passages, some of the difficult topics, difficult things in the Bible. But Difficult Passages in the Bible is the title we're going with.

Shea Houdmann

So today, we're actually going to be covering a very common question we get at Got Questions, and that is, why did God order the genocide of the Canaanites? So, as the Israelites come out of Egypt, they're going to enter the Promised Land, obviously, after the 40 years of wandering, and God orders the Israelites to completely wipe out any Canaanites who oppose them. And let me actually read the passage.

Shea Houdmann

So first, there's Deuteronomy 20, verses 16 to 17, where God says, Deuteronomy 20, verses 16 to 17, where God says, In the cities of the nations, the Lord your God is giving you as an inheritance. Do not leave alive anything that breathes. Completely destroy them, the Hittites, Amorites, Canaanites, Perizzites, Hivites, and Jebusites, as the Lord your God commanded you. And also, similarly, on the way to the Promised Land, in the battle with the Amalekites, attacked Israel, did some despicable things to them. And later, in the days of Saul, God orders the Israelites, Now go and strike Amalek and devote to destruction all that they have. Do not spare them, but kill both man and woman, child and infant, ox and sheep, camel and donkey. So God here is commanding the Israelites to completely eradicate a people group.

Shea Houdmann

Obviously, this is a difficult thing to hear. In the conversation that Jeff, Kevin, and I have, we're going to give you some explanations why we think it was done this way, why it was necessary, and so forth. But we're not going to be able to tell you why this should be easy to accept, because it's harsh. This is an extremely painful thing to hear to realize that it had to happen. So in our

conversation, they don't hear us thinking, Oh yeah, we're totally great with that. But no, ultimately, we trust God. We know that He is just and His ways are right. And so we know He had a purpose, even in what seems to us to be a brutal command. So Jeff, why don't you start us off? When you hear this issue, read these passages, or we get questions about it, what are some of the key points that you do when you're answering this question?

Jeff Laird

It's very difficult. And we could spend hours and hours. I've taught groups where we've literally spent hours just talking about this issue. And one of the things that we find out is that most of the passages in the Bible that we find are difficult. It's usually because of some sort of misinformation, something we don't understand, something we don't see. Other times, the passages are difficult just because the subject matter is hard. And this one is both. The subject matter is really tough. And there's some things about it that we don't get.

Jeff Laird

Now, we introduced this topic by referring to it as a genocide, which is the way everybody phrases it. That's something people will sometimes notice. Our articles, we typically phrase them the way people ask. It doesn't mean that we're necessarily accepting everything about that. So in this case, that's one of the things to remember is when God gave these commands, he had a specific reason for it. So in Deuteronomy, we read 16 and 17 verse 18 says that they may not teach you to do according to all their abominable practices that they have done for their gods.

Jeff Laird

So as we look at this, we start to see that there's a purpose behind why God does this. There is some context between the two cultures. And I think part of the thing I'd want to focus on, first of all, just to get in the right sort of mindset is what we call the narrative concept. And this is coming at the Bible from a completely rational or logical perspective and saying, if you're going to watch a movie, read a book, listen to a story, something like that, you cannot take ideas that are contrary to the narrative and use them to criticize the narrative. So some examples from movies in the James Bond movies, sometimes you will see James Bond with no trial, with no anything. He will dispose of a bad guy. And if I were to look at that and say, well, why don't

they arrest him? Because there's no such thing as a license to kill. Why doesn't he get arrested? Well, in the world of the movie, the movie that you're watching is presenting you with a world where there is such a thing.

Jeff Laird

There's the back to the future movies from the eighties. If somebody was to say, it's really wrong to tell Marty to drive at 88 miles an hour, because that's not safe and it's not safe because time travels, not real. Well, in the narrative of the movie, it is real. So you are free to say that didn't happen. I don't think that that stuff exists. That's fine. What you can't do is you can't make a criticism that completely ignores the narrative of the movie.

Jeff Laird

How that applies to this issue is the narrative from which the Bible is coming. According to the narrative of the Bible, you have a all powerful, all knowing, all good, perfect creator. Who's not just another person, not just an advanced superhero. He's a completely different level of being an entity who is creating the earth and the world and who has absolute sovereignty to do what he chooses with it. He is using Israel for a specific purpose. He is punishing certain things in evil. And all of this also happens in the context that the lives we live here on earth are not meant to be the only thing that we experienced. There's an entire eternity where everything we experience is meant to be resolved and justified.

Jeff Laird

So there's never going to be a time when we'll look at what's going on in these passages and say, I like this. I'm okay with this.

I think if people are honest, we all have times we look at things in scripture and say, I don't like it. Doesn't matter how long I've studied it. Doesn't matter how long I've seen it. I don't like it. If I was God, I wouldn't do it that way. Probably a good thing that I'm not.

Jeff Laird

So in the narrative idea, we just have to remember that it's okay for us to say, I don't like this. It's okay to say, I don't understand this. But as we critique it, as we criticize it, as we understand it, we can't divorce it from all of those things that come along with the story, including exactly how these people are there, who God is and what that means.

Kevin Stone

Right. And I mean, it is a tough passage, these passages that we're talking about today. But there is a foundational narrative that we've got to keep in mind. There is a bedrock truth, a couple of them that are very clear in scripture that will help to inform our opinion on all that happened there in the conquest of Canaan.

Kevin Stone

One is that God is sovereign over all of life. He is the creator of life.

He is the giver of life. He's the sustainer of life. The earth is the Lord's, Psalm 24 says. The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof, the world and all who dwell therein. All people belong to him. All the earth is mine, God says in Exodus 19, verse 15. So God is the author of life. He's the one who decides when people live, when people die. And He alone has that right. But it is a true right. It is truly His prerogative to make these types of decisions.

Kevin Stone

And when we take a look at the conquest of Canaan, we see that it was judgment day for Canaan that God, the judge of all the earth, the author of all of life, said, this is the time that I will execute justice on the Canaanites. And God gives reasons for it, very specific reasons in the book of Leviticus. It even goes so far as to say that the land was vomiting out the inhabitants. He pictures it as the land itself, the earth itself had just had enough of the Canaanites and their detestable practices. And so it was judgment day, and God alone is the one who has the right to judge in this way.

Kevin Stone

Also, foundational to our understanding of all of this is that God is perfectly just and righteous in all that He does. Deuteronomy 32 and verse 4, His work is perfect, for all His ways are justice. A God of faithfulness and without iniquity, just and upright is He. And in the New Testament, Paul asks the rhetorical question, is there injustice on God's part? And answers it right away in the same verse, by no means. God is perfectly just. There is absolutely no injustice with Him. And the moment we say that what God did was not just, that was not fair, we have set ourselves up as God's judge. We are now the supreme judge of all the universe, and we're judging Him.

Kevin Stone

We take a look at the conquest of Canaan. We can say, as Jeff was saying, we can say, well, I don't understand this, I don't like this, it makes me

uncomfortable. But as soon as we say, this was wrong or this was not fair, we are saying that we have a keener sense of justice than God does. And that's not anything that any of us want to be saying. God is perfectly just and fair. It was judgment day for the Canaanites, and God used the Israelites as an instrument to bring about His judgment. God could have done any number of things to wipe out the Canaanites and to judge them for their wickedness. He could have sent a flood, could have sent a typhoon, He could have sent an earthquake, could have opened up the earth and swallowed them all. Fire and brimstone, He did that with another city. He could have done that with all of Canaan, but He didn't choose to do any of those things. Instead, in this instance, in this particular case, He brought in the Israelites and allowed them to possess the land. And so, it was a blessing for God's people that He had redeemed out of Egypt and was also a judgment on the Canaanites after centuries of giving them time to turn from their wicked ways.

Shea Houdmann

Okay, Kevin, that's an excellent point that I think is very important for us to remember and for anyone who comes to these passages to remember, is that the Canaanites, it's not like these were peaceful, innocent people just hanging out in the land, minding their own business, going about lives as farmers or whatever. No, the archaeologists are still discovering today the depth of the wickedness of the Canaanites.

Shea Houdmann

A lot of ancient cultures did some things that today, they're abhorrent. I can't imagine participating in these sort of things. Bestiality, child sacrifice, all sorts of weird fertility rituals and stuff going on. And the Canaanites were among the worst that archaeologists have discovered in ancient times. So, when the Bible talks about the wickedness of the Amorites, the wickedness of the Canaanites, the land vomiting them out, even the very land they're living on is grossed out by the things that they're doing. So, God sending the Israelites to enact judgment on a wicked people, that has to be kept in mind.

Shea Houdmann

I mean, even today, if there was somewhere in the world where the people were doing the sort of things that the Canaanites were doing in ancient times, we'd be outraged and nations would come together, send their military in to stop the people who were doing that.

Shea Houdmann

That's what God is doing here. Ancient times, I mean, you ask, like, why not just send a flood or bring down fire? Well, one, that would destroy the whole promised land that the Israelites were about to take possession of. But God using a military to bring justice is really no different than Him doing it through supernatural or natural means. For example, in the time of Isaiah, God sent an angel to wipe out a whole bunch of Assyrians who were about to attack Jerusalem. So, God has other means of doing it. In this instance, He decided to use the Israelites as His instrument of justice. Let's remember, this was justice. This was punishment for the extreme abhorrent wickedness of the Canaanites. And that's something that's very important to remember.

Jeff Laird

It's also important to remember that this was not something that came out of the blue. In other words, the Israelites didn't show up and this came as a complete and total shock to everybody in Canaan. These were things that had been said, had been told, had been explained. In the case of Saul, who's there several centuries after Israel's already been in this land, you're talking about people who've had hundreds of years of hearing about the God of Israel. And God makes that point of saying they've had plenty of time to understand.

Jeff Laird

Also, when we look at God's battle plan that He gives, just before the passages that we read in Deuteronomy, God gives an explanation of how the Israelites are supposed to conduct their warfare. And war is never humane per se, but the ancient world didn't have anything remotely resembling what we consider the Geneva Conventions and things like that. There was no such thing as that. So, the things that now we would consider war crimes back then were just considered normal warfare.

Jeff Laird

However, God told the Israelites things like, before you move on a city, you have to send advance warning. You have to tell them that you're coming and give them an opportunity to integrate. And that opportunity was to actually integrate, not be subjected as slaves or all be murdered, but to actually be absorbed into the Israelite culture to a certain extent. There was an opportunity for the soldiers who were afraid or who had a field to plant or a new wife, Israeli soldiers, to not participate in the battle. God told them things

like, don't mess up the land. There's even ecological things that are going on in there.

Jeff Laird

So, when God sends the people in there, there is plenty of advance notice, both politically and immediately. So, typically what you would wind up with is if you actually follow this, you're bringing yourself to a city, you've given warning, you've told them what's going on. Probably the only people who haven't evacuated and aren't there are the really hardened ones, the ones who are definitely committed to how this is going to go.

Jeff Laird

Also interesting when we look at scripture is that this idea where he says, you're going to go in there and you're going to wipe them out. There's an explicit command for that, only given twice. So, it's the general policy, it's the general procedure that Israel is supposed to have. That in and of itself may also be a political propaganda thing. You know, hey, the official policy of Israel is this, so be warned. But it's only ever actually commanded two times.

One is at Jericho and the other is with the Amalekites in Samuel. And as far as we can tell, in neither case was it fully, completely, totally carried out. And those times when it wasn't carried out, exactly the things that God said was going to happen are what happened. So, we don't necessarily want to excuse or brush away something by saying, yeah, but it didn't really happen very often.

Jeff Laird

That being said, as we talk about this narrative concept, when we see this happening, this is not something that was the general procedure for Israel for the entire world. There's no evidence that Israel tried to expand their borders beyond the promised land. There's no evidence that they thought that they needed to apply this into perpetuity after a city or a place was conquered or taken over. They understood it to be something that was meant for that time, that place, that specific circumstance. So, there's nothing in scripture that allows us to apply that elsewhere. And there's nothing in scripture that makes us think that this was something that happened everywhere, all the time, constantly, because it didn't.

Kevin Stone

Exactly right. In fact, Deuteronomy chapter 20 makes a clear distinction between what was the battle plan for cities inside of Canaan versus cities outside of Canaan, outside of the promised land that Israel had trouble with, too. There was a clear distinction made, and the total annihilation of a city was those were reserved, Jeff, as you were saying, for particular cities inside the promised land.

Kevin Stone

I love how, in scripture, we see that God, even in times of judgment, always provides mercy. We see this with the story of Rahab in Joshua chapter 2, and several interesting things about the story of Rahab. One is when the spies come and she receives them in peace, Hebrew says she does this by faith. She receives them, she says, we all are terrified of you guys, because we know how God delivered you from Egypt. We have heard about the Red Sea, and we know that, Rahab says, we know that God is giving you our land. We know what the outcome of this is going to be. And Rahab, in faith, accepts the one true God, and God spares her and her family. I love this story, because it shows that even in judgment, there is mercy available. There is mercy extended. And Rahab, of course, actually ends up in the line of Christ. She is part of the genealogy that we read there in Matthew. And it is just a wonderful thing that this family, Rahab's family, slated for destruction, but yet is spared and is actually blessed as part of God's people because of her faith.

Kevin Stone

We also see that the Gibeonites, they were Canaanites, they were not annihilated either. They were spared, and Israel made a covenant with them. And later on, God was very clear that they needed to keep that covenant that they had made with these Canaanites and their descendants. So I love the fact that we see God's mercy at work, even in the times of very severe judgment.

Shea Houdmann

It's also interesting to note how the first city that Israelites attacked entering the Promised Land was Jericho. And God was very clear, you are to destroy everything. But even in that, as you mentioned, Kevin, Rahab and her family were spared. What would happen to the rest of the Canaanites if they heard, wow, the Israelites came in and they completely destroyed Jericho? Which was a prominent city, was known to be a military outpost at that time. I think that

would strike fear into everyone else in Canaan, hopefully leading them to flee, to take that opportunity to, okay, the Israelites are coming, God has given them this land, I'm getting out of here.

Shea Houdmann

So like Jeff was saying, by the time Israelites reached the other cities, the only people who were there were probably the armies, the military, the people who were like, no, I'm not leaving. I am going to fight for my right to live in this ungodly way, that sort of thing. So it's even interesting to see that an overwhelming military victory like Jericho hopefully caused a lot of the Canaanites to flee to other lands rather than stay in the land that they ultimately knew was not going to be theirs for much longer.

Shea Houdmann

Sort of similar to take the end of World War II. The United States dropped atomic bombs on two cities in Japan. And why did they do that? I mean, obviously they killed men, women, children, they killed military civilians, everyone that led Japan to surrender. So it's kind of like the shock and awe concept is, look, this is serious. If you don't take this as a warning, even worse things are going to happen to you. So it's kind of that overwhelming military force concept that could ultimately in the less deaths on both sides, as devastating as the attacks were, they had a purpose in forcing the other side to surrender and to flee sooner rather than later.

Shea Houdmann

So it's, again, as difficult as it is to read a passage like that, you have to remember why would God do it that way? Then as you see later on in the book of Joshua, God did not give this exact same command to every city the Israelites conquered. In some cities, they were allowed to keep things as plunder. They were allowed to even leave the women and children alive. So I think that plays a factor in this as well.

Kevin Stone

And that's also, I think, important to stress that God made the reason for the conquest, for the killing of the Canaanites very clear. And that was the wickedness of the Canaanites. In Deuteronomy chapter 9 and verse 5, the Israelites are told this, that it's not because of your righteousness or the uprightness of your heart that you are going in to possess their land, but because of the wickedness of these nations, the Lord your God is driving them

out from before you, that he may confirm the word of the Lord that he swore to your fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob. So it wasn't just that Israel was special to God and all of that. It was specifically a judgment on the wickedness of the Canaanites.

Kevin Stone

And God plays no favorites. He's no respecter of persons in this way, that just a couple chapters later in Deuteronomy, God says, and Israel, if you end up doing the same things that the Canaanites were doing, then guess what? You also will be removed from the land. Deuteronomy 11 verses 16 and following, take care lest your heart be deceived and you turn aside and serve other gods and worship them, then the anger of the Lord will be kindled against you, and you will perish quickly off the good land that the Lord is giving you.

Kevin Stone

So the rule was the same for everybody. You worship the Lord your God, you do not get involved with these detestable practices that went along with idolatry. And so Israel, I'm using you to remove the Canaanites and remove the idols from the land, but you're going to be held to the same standard. You cannot follow in the Canaanites' footsteps. Unfortunately, that's exactly what Israel ended up doing. Centuries later, God had to remove Israel from the land as well. It is because of this that we call it, people call it genocide, but it was definitely not an ethnic cleansing. It was, this was not race-based. This was not based on anything other than the wickedness of the Canaanites being judged by a just and righteous God.

Jeff Laird

And that judgment, as you said, also comes with that tempering of mercy. It's really difficult for us to read these passages and fully comprehend the things that are happening. There's a ton of stuff that happened in the Bible that, according to our culture, our culture, our modern Western culture, we look at and we just cannot imagine. We just absolutely cannot imagine. And culture changes. And that doesn't mean that everything in the past was okay, or that everything in the present is okay. It just means that some of these things do alter themselves. They do change.

Jeff Laird

I'm from a generation who essentially does not know what a draft really is, a military draft.

So those of us who were born in the very, very late 70s, early 80s, haven't seen that at all. So the idea that the government would show up and say, guess what? You have to go to war. You have to join the military. We would look at that and say, I don't know. That's hard to comprehend. Whereas people who were living in a country in the 20s, 30s, 40s, that's just an expected part of life in any country is that, yes, men could be pulled into service.

Jeff Laird

Some of the things that happened in these incidents, and the two that we've mentioned are just two of the more interesting ones. There's other times where there's things that are commanded that are really difficult. And we say, but why would they treat people that way? Why would they do this? Why would they do that? And we start applying all of these modern concepts to it, which again, it's not because we want to look back at those things and say, oh no, they were okay because that's just how they did things. We just have to remember that just like looking at a guy in the 20s and saying, what do you mean the government came and forced him to go to war? Yes, in that culture, that was considered exactly the way things went.

Jeff Laird

So when we see some of that mercy, the temperance judgment, we do see times where God allows for, for example, women and children to be able to be integrated instead of destroyed. And instead of looking at that and saying, that's an opportunity to integrate, to survive, we say, well, that's some sort of capture captive. We use terms like rape and everything else like that.

Jeff Laird

Without getting into the entire thing, the whole concept of what marriage meant and didn't mean was very, very different in that time. So the idea of saying, we're not going to wipe you out. We will give you the opportunity to be part of the culture. That was kind of a standard ish thing to go along with. Again, when we're saying all these things, don't hear in any of this, that we're looking at this and saying, it's no big deal. It's okay. It's fine. No, it's, it's not. I am not comfortable at all with those things. So I, that's, that's where I am on issues like that. I'm saying, you're right. I, if I was God, I would not have done that or I wouldn't have written it down or whatever because that's my perspective and that's who I am.

Jeff Laird

But in all of that, I have to remember that I am not God that we're talking about a God who's a creator. He has a point. He has a purpose. And this whole narrative thing also includes what's going to happen in the end. Kevin, like you were saying, it was judgment day. Every single human being who is born is going to face death and judgment before God. And what happens after that is by far more important and more influential than what happens in life. That's not to say that what happens in life is meaningless. It doesn't mean that these things don't matter, but we have to keep that in the narrative. Even as I'm uncomfortable with it, even as I don't like it, I have to remember that all of this comes with the context of God as a creator with this plan that he has in mind.

Jeff Laird

I can't just read Genesis and Numbers and Deuteronomy and Samuel and say, this is awful, this is terrible. I then also have to go to Revelation and see where all of these horrible things that happen are balanced. They're justified. They're fixed. They're made whole. So it doesn't make it easier, but it does give me a place to be that I'm not jumping off a theological cliff.

Shea Houdmann

Jeff, that's a tremendous point and so helpful for us to remember the context, what was going on, what wasn't going on, and why God commanded. And I've heard us several times in this conversation mention women and children, and ultimately that's where this becomes difficult. If it's you attack this city, kill all the men, it's like, oh, that kind of makes sense. Don't want men who you just lost in a battle to you kind of sleeping in the house next door to you. I mean, it just completely makes sense.

Shea Houdmann

Women, that becomes a little bit harder until you remember how often women in the Old Testament led the people of Israel astray. There are times where like Balak and Balaam potentially sent Moabite women into the Israelite camp in order to lead them astray. Solomon was led astray to worship other gods by pagan wives. So, okay, we can make sense that adult women, if they were raised in this culture, worship false gods, they will lead Israel astray. And that was one of the big things that God warned about. So we can even understand that.

Shea Houdmann

It's truly when it gets to children is when this becomes truly difficult.

I mean, just the mind picture of Israelites having to kill infinities, I don't want to picture that. It is extremely difficult. If I could ever do something like that, even if I had a direct command from God, that's just so foreign to our culture to do. So that's where it becomes super, super difficult.

Shea Houdmann

But just look at, say, the example of the Amalekites we've mentioned earlier. Well, Saul was commanded to completely eradicate the Amalekites. And then he says, I did, I did. I killed everyone except these animals. Well, then less than a generation later, a group of Amalekites come in and attack David and his men. So clearly Saul was lying.

Shea Houdmann

And then even later in the Book of Esther, Xerxes' assistant Haman is said to be a descendant of Agag, the king of the Amalekites. And here he was leading a plot to try to kill all of the Jews throughout the entire kingdom. So someone that Saul let stay alive, possibly a child, later grew up to be attempted genocide against the Israelites. So you have to understand God knows the future. God knows what the ultimate result will be if the children are left alive.

Shea Houdmann

And this is not a view that I hold, but I've had it. I've heard some people argue for it before in that in a culture like the Canaanites that where they were worshipping false gods, they were committing abhorrent practices, horrible, brutal things you can imagine, that even the young children would be tremendously affected by this, that they'd be so damaged by what their parents had been participating in and what they'd been exposed to that they would not be able to live a life, even if they were adopted by a loving Israelite family, they were still severely damaged. And so in a spiritual sense, spiritual forces, demonic all those sorts of things, we don't completely discount that. But that might be the explanation of why the children had to be killed. So I'm not saying that's the reason, but I've heard that argued before. But to say that just because we don't understand why God would make a command like that doesn't mean there's not a very good reason for a command like that. May seem brutal or unnecessary, but God knows far more than we do. And ultimately we have to trust him and know that he is good. An he is just. And he would not command something like this were it not for the ultimate good.

Jeff Laird

And Shea if its alright I wanted to make sure that we make another point on this that I think is important to slip in there. We made the point that we are not justifying so to speak, these things in the sense that we aren't not telling people that you have to like this or that you should enjoy this, or that there's something wrong with being uncomfortable with it.

Jeff Laird

I also want to make sure we're careful on the other side to say that no one is apologizing for God. You know us expressing that we have trouble with this. We struggle with this. This is difficult for us to understand. All comes under the umbrella of submission to the idea that God is God and we are not. But I don't want anyone to make the mistake of thinking that what we are saying is we need to make excuses for God. We need to find a way to put a positive spin on this. I don't think we need to put a positive spin, I think its meant to be seen as just as horrible and awful as it was. Kevin you mentioned the idea of judgement. Judgement is a very terrible thing. So as we look at this we can struggle with saying I don't understand and I don't like it. But nothing that the three of us are saying here is a way of saying, here let's do some PR for God. No, God commanded these things, there there and there written down and this is the way it happened. We are struggling with how do we understand it and how do we grapple with it? And in no sense are we trying to say that we are trying to protect God's reputation in all this. We are not apologizing for him because he doesn't need it.

Shea Houdmann

Absolutely Jeff. Very good reminder. The three of us have absolutely no doubt that God is just. That God is righteous. That He had good and holy reasons for commanding the things that he did. And we trust God. This is a difficult passage. That's why this series is difficult passages in the Bible. But with that said, that does not mean, this is no means makes us trust God less or to feel like apologize for something that's in the Bible. We're admitting that its difficult. We're admitting that in our modern context not everything make sense. But we don't have to make prefect sense of everything God says and does in order to trust him. And to trust his ways are higher than our ways. And that God is just and holy and worthy of both our trust and adoration for who he is and what he does.

Shea Houdmann

So this has been the intro episode into our new, difficult passages in the Bible series. This particular one on why did God order the genocide of the Canaanites. Hope our conversation today has been helpful to you. Help you to understand the issue better. Invite you to study these passages, look to God's word, then ultimately look to the God you can trust and surrender your ability to understand everything that he has done and commanded to your ultimate trust that he is good and that he knows what he is doing. Got questions? The Bible has answers and we'll help you find them.