

## Frequently Asked Questions About The Bible

Q1. It sometime says in the Bible that our lives are per-ordained, yet at the same time it also says that we have free will. How is it possible that we're making our own choices when our lives were destined since the beginning?

A1. People have been asking this question for almost as long as there have been people. Let's look at an important passage of scripture that talks about this to see if it helps us understand.

*Romans 8:28,29 – And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose. For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. (NIV)*

There are a couple of things that we learn about God from these verses. God is active and He is working. This means that God is in control and that He can and does change the circumstances that we constantly interact with. God is not passive. He didn't just create the world and walk away. At the same time the promise that God will work for good is conditional. This promise only applies to those who love God. Love requires free will. We trust God and we decide to desire what He desires for us. We partner with God and He promises to work for our good.

The second part of this is more difficult to explain. We live in time and space. We have a past, present, and future. God doesn't have any of these. God is. Remember that God's real name is I AM. God already knows every choice you and I will ever make. God has decided that those who choose to love Him will become like Jesus. That is God's promise to us. He has decided that we will become like Jesus. However, even when we trust God and love Jesus we get to decide this process goes.

Let's assume that we all start out as square blocks and that to be like Jesus we need to be round balls. For a block to become a ball some material is going to have to be removed or at least reshaped. I can choose to be a hard block like rock and then the material will have to be chipped away. This is likely to hurt. I could also choose to soft to be soft like clay. In this case the reshaping probably won't hurt so much. It is my choice, but I must remember that God has promised to reshape me.

The worst choice would be to decide that God does not exist. I cannot trust someone I don't believe exists. I cannot love someone I don't believe exists. In this case I am free to do whatever I would like. God will keep working to draw me to Him, but if I really don't want that He will let me go my own way.

Q2. God tested Abraham's faith when he said to sacrifice his only son. He also tested Job's faith when He handed Satan everything that he had. Why does God test our faith? Correct me if I am wrong, I thought we aren't supposed to question God's abilities or test God. Why does He test us?

A2. The simple answer goes back to what we looked at in the first question. God is working in us to make us like Jesus. Jesus had to endure many tests and trials for us. Through those tests and trials He demonstrated His love for God and us.

Your question is an illustration of a constant temptation that we all struggle with. Satan desires for us to question God's goodness. Satan knows that we don't need to believe that God is evil to miss out on God's desire for us. All we have to believe is that God is mostly good, sort of like us. As soon as we believe this we begin to question God. We know our motives are not pure. We are selfish and we test other people to control them. We have a hard time believing that God has nothing but good in store for us.

How do you make your muscles stronger? If you want to get stronger you have to exercise. If God desires for you to confront some great challenge to your faith, then what would He do to prepare you for that? I think

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these two passages of scripture give us the answer.

*James 1:2-4 -- Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance. Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything. (NIV)*

*1 Peter 1:6,7 -- In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. These have come so that your faith -- of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire -- may be proved genuine and may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed. (NIV)*

Both of these passages tell us that trials and suffering are a part of every believer's life. We should expect them and we should rejoice when we are going through them, because we are growing stronger. James tells us that if we don't avoid the tests, then we will become more and more like Jesus. Peter tells us that this will honor Jesus when He returns for us.

Look at this passage from the Old Testament to see the other side of this.

*NIV Judges 3:1-7 – These are the nations the LORD left to test all those Israelites who had not experienced any of the wars in Canaan (he did this only to teach warfare to the descendants of the Israelites who had not had previous battle experience): the five rulers of the Philistines, all the Canaanites, the Sidonians, and the Hivites living in the Lebanon mountains from Mount Baal Hermon to Lebo Hamath. They were left to test the Israelites to see whether they would obey the LORD's commands, which he had given their forefathers through Moses. The Israelites lived among the Canaanites, Hittites, Amorites, Perizzites, Hivites and Jebusites. They took their daughters in marriage and gave their own daughters to their sons, and served their gods. The Israelites did evil in the eyes of the LORD; they forgot the LORD their God and served the Baals and the Asherahs.*

Here God's chosen people are given a test and a choice. Most of the time they fail the test and make a bad choice. This doesn't change God's plan to bring Jesus through the children of Israel. It also doesn't change God's plan for Israel to a blessed people.

Q3. In Exodus 12, during the first passover sacrifice the Lord tells the Israelites to eat bread that is made without yeast. I believe He says this in other parts of the Bible as well. Is there a reason for not eating bread with yeast?

A3. Yeast in the Bible is often used as a symbol for evil, but yeast is not evil or unclean itself. The reason the Israelites were to eat bread without yeast during the Passover is to remember that they left Egypt in a hurry. Bread that doesn't need to rise, that is made without yeast, can be made, cooked, and eaten very quickly. When I make yeast bread the whole process takes about 5 hours.

Yes, there is a reason to not eat bread made with yeast. During communion we remember that Jesus released us from captivity to sin just as the Israelites at Passover remember that God released them from slavery in Egypt. Since Jesus began communion with a Passover meal and bread made without yeast we continue to do that today. Other than during communion, there is no reason to avoid eating bread made with yeast.

Q4. Sabbath is a day that we praise the Lord. How come Christians do on Sundays and Jews have Sabbath Friday to Saturday.

A4. Both Christians and Jews share the understanding that Sunday is the first day of the week. They do differ in

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their understanding of the day as the Jewish day begins at sundown and the Christian day begins at sunrise. At least this is true in regard to the Sabbath or day of rest. It turns out that this is another one of those areas where many Christians also disagree.

The instructions in Exodus and Leviticus on the Sabbath do not specify when the day of rest begins and ends. The Jewish understanding of the day is taken from this pattern in Genesis 1 – “There was evening and morning, a day.” Here’s an interesting thought I found on this:

Here's an interesting thought to consider: in the Bible, a day doesn't begin at sunrise--it begins with sunset. (read more about it in Eugene Peterson's book "Working the Angles: The Shape of Pastoral Integrity").

What this means is that we begin our day resting (i.e. at night) and then we arise to join him in what he's already been doing all night long! Neat!

Maybe this is a good reason to schedule prayer and meditation in the morning so as to reinforce the biblical notion of time and find out what God has been doing and how we can join him in it! For what it's worth... (source: <http://calvaryonline.blogspot.com/2011/04/when-does-day-begin-at-sunrise-or-sunset.html>)

Your question was why we pick different days as our day to praise God. In the Old Testament it is very clear that God set aside the seventh day of the week as a day of rest. God’s intent is that we would take one day a week to acknowledge that He is the creator. We remember that God is working for us by resting from our work. The principle of taking a day to remember that God is in control has not changed.

What changed everything was the resurrection. Jesus rose from the grave on the first day of the week. (see John 20:1) The promise of eternal life is the core of the good news that Jesus came to bring. The early church recognized this and began celebrating this big event on the first day of the week. (see Acts 20:7 and 1 Corinthians 16:2)

Long ago in this country Sunday was identified as a day of rest and businesses were closed. Everyone gathered together to praise God and then enjoy the company of fellow believers. Now it is very difficult to tell the difference between the days of the week. There are two important things I hope you will always remember. The first is that worship and praise were never intended to be limited to one day of the week. We should be serving God and praising Him every day of our lives. The second is that God intended for us to rest. We think everything depends on us. Rest is intended to remind us that everything depends on God.

Q5. It seems like the number 7 is referred to a lot. Is there a specific reason why? What significance does it have with God? Why is the number 6 associated with the devil? Or 666?

A6. In the Hebrew, seven is (shevah). It is from the root (savah), to be full or satisfied, have enough of. (from <http://www.biblestudy.org/bibleref/meaning-of-numbers-in-bible/7.html>)

This number occurs frequently in Scripture, and in such connections as lead to the supposition that it has some typical meaning. On the seventh day God rested, and hallowed it (Ge 2:2,3) The division of time into weeks of seven days each accounts for many instances of the occurrence of this number. This number has been called the symbol of perfection, and also the symbol of rest. "Jacob's seven years' service to Laban; Pharaoh's seven

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fat oxen and seven lean ones; the seven branches of the golden candlestick; the seven trumpets and the seven priests who sounded them; the seven days' siege of Jericho; the seven churches, seven spirits, seven stars, seven seals, seven vials, and many others, sufficiently prove the importance of this sacred number" (see) (Le 25:4 1Sa 2:5 Ps 12:6 79:12 Pr 26:16 ) (Isa 4:1 Mt 18:21,22 Lu 17:4) The feast of Passover (Ex 12:15,16) the feast of Weeks (De 16:9) of Tabernacles (De 13:15) and the Jubilee (Le 25:8) were all ordered by seven. Seven is the number of sacrifice (2Ch 29:21 Job 42:8) of purification and consecration (Le 42:6,17 8:11,33 14:9,51) of forgiveness (Mt 18:21,22 Lu 17:4) of reward (De 28:7 1Sa 2:5) and of punishment (Le 26:21,24,28 De 28:25) It is used for any round number in such passages as (Job 5:19 Pr 26:16,25 Isa 4:1 Mt 12:45) It is used also to mean "abundantly" (Ge 4:15,24 Le 26:24 Ps 79:12) (from Easton's Bible Dictionary)

One explanation that I've heard is that the number seven represents the combination of the 4 essential physical elements (earth, wind, water, fire) and 3 essential personalities of God (God, Jesus, Holy Spirit). Regardless, the key is that God uses the number 7 in the Bible to communicate completeness or perfection.

The number 6 is just one short of 7. It is the opposite of 7 in that it is incomplete. Satan is a great being, but he is incomplete because he doesn't recognize God's supremacy. Remember that when the Bible wants to give something emphasis it uses repetition. A common phrase in the book of Revelation is Holy, Holy, Holy. God is perfect and distinct from all creation. This is the greatest emphasis that John could give to God's holiness. In the same way Satan is represented by the number 666. He is always less than God and will always be less than God.