

## **Week 32 – Tough Questions – Why Can't We See God? Does God Really Forgive All My Sins?**

Hey, Tim Perry here, pastor of Spiritual Discovery at Christ Community Church. I want to welcome you to Week 32 of Tough Questions. Just a reminder that our kids are the ones in charge here for a few weeks so they're sending us their questions.

Lydia and Liam have sent me a great question this week that I want to talk about for a couple of minutes. **"Why can't we see God?"** The implication is pretty clear, isn't it – if we could just see God, he would be so much easier to believe in and talk to and know what He wants us to do – right? It would be so much easier to introduce our friends to Him, whom we want to believe in Him if we could just make Him more visible. Well, it turns out that they had this problem in the Old Testament as well – even though God was showing up and doing miracles, Moses comes to God and says, "God can you somehow make yourself even more visible to me so that I would have more confidence in my leadership?" And here's what happened:

***18 Then Moses said, "Now show me your glory."***

***19 And the LORD said, "I will cause all my goodness to pass in front of you, and I will proclaim my name, the LORD, in your presence. I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. 20 But," he said, "you cannot see my face, for no one may see me and live." Exodus 33:18-20***

And if you remember that story, God takes Moses and he puts him in a little cleft of a rock and He says, "Moses, turn your back to me and I'm going to walk past you. I'm going to make it safe for you to be exposed to my glory."

Well, we have examples of overexposure all the time in our world that we can appreciate. This dude, for example, what's it look like that he's been overexposed to – the sun – right? Some of you might have really bad sunburns right now because of the intense heat. This guy, the same thing – went out and had a little bit of fun and got a sunburn just to prove a point. Overexposure can be dangerous even when we're talking about just the sunshine.

Think about other examples though. Can you tell what this dude's doing? This guy is operating an electric arc welder. The intensity and frequency of light that this machine puts off makes it impossible to operate that with just your naked eyes so the operator has to have a mask on to protect himself from being overexposed.

Now how did that work out with Moses? How could Moses have protected himself from overexposure of God? Here's another passage I want you to look at with me:

***34 But whenever he entered the LORD's presence to speak with him, he removed the veil until he came out. And when he came out and told the Israelites what he had been commanded, 35 they saw that his face was radiant. Then Moses would put the veil back over his face until he went in to speak with the LORD. Exodus 34:34-35***

So Moses would wear a veil when he walked around among the Israelites. He would go to this special tent called the Tent of Meeting and he would hear God's voice and see some kind of visible representation of God while he was in that tent and he spoke conversationally with God. When he came out and told the Israelites what he had been commanded, they saw that his face was radiant – almost like a sunburn, and then Moses would put the veil back over his face until he went in to speak with the Lord.

So Moses is getting just the right amount of visible exposure to God in order to continue to show other people that, yes, God is here – He's showing up – just the right amount of exposure.

Now think about that in terms of technology today. We take the power of laser light which can cut through steel, and isn't it amazing that we can use that same technology in just the right amount to operate on somebody's eye. This is a photograph of lasik surgery – of someone actually getting their eye actually corrected with laser light. That's a little bit of what's happening here.

Well, at some point – God puts himself on full view – no need for sunglasses, no need for a mask, no need for a veil. And how does he do that? He does that in the person of Jesus. Listen to this out of the book of Hebrews:

*1 In the past God spoke to our ancestors through the prophets at many times and in various ways, <sup>2</sup>but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom also he made the universe. <sup>3</sup>The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word. Hebrews 1:1-3*

The son is the radiance of God's glory. So when we look at Jesus, we are looking at an exact representation of God. We're looking at God himself. It's the best way in which God can make himself visible. So Liam and Lydia, you sent us a great question. Keep sending us your questions. If this idea about God showing his glory has kind of hit a nerve and you have some questions for me, hit on the comment tab there and I'd like to dialogue with you about it.

Well, here's another great question sent in by Abigail. **"God, will you forgive all my sins?"** – all my sins, not just some of them. I bet it's a question everybody watching this video has asked at some point. God, will you forgive everything? Even the most shameful things?

Well, I've got news for you, Abigail. Yes, God will forgive even our worst sins. We've got to understand how God's forgiveness works.

God's forgiveness is not like the way **Muslims** teach about God and sin. Did you know that **Muslims**, people who believe in **Islam**, teach that there's an angel who follows you around in your world. And one angel sits on one shoulder and records all of the good things that you do. But there's a second angel that also follows you

around according to **Islam**, and he's over on the other shoulder and he's writing down all the bad things that you do. And so whether or not you get to go be with God in paradise, depends on whether or not the good things that you do stack up and ultimately outweigh the bad things that you do – so that at the very end of your life, God is going to do an accounting procedure and just make a determination based on whether the good things you've done outweigh the bad things that you've done. It looks a little bit like this, you know. God maybe keeps a couple of buckets up there, and every time you do something bad, he drops a rock in your bad bucket. God also knows all the good stuff that you do and he's going to drop a rock in your good-stuff bucket when he notes that you're doing something good. So this is a whole system in which you have to work your way to paradise with God. You have to make sure you do more good things than bad things.

That's not at all what **Christianity** teaches. Christianity teaches that, yes, God is holy. Yes God sees every good thing that we do and God sees every bad thing that we do. And Christianity even teaches that at Judgment Day, God is going to assess the good things and the bad things. But get this – the ultimate outcome of being judged by God is not going to depend on the relative amount of good stuff and bad stuff that we have done. So, Abigail, I've got great news for you. Here's what God's forgiveness is contingent on – it's confession and repentance on our part. God forgives when we repent. Listen to this:

***<sup>5</sup> This is the message we have heard from him and declare to you: God is light; in him there is no darkness at all.....<sup>7</sup> if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin. 1 John 1:5-7***

So there's no use pretending that somehow God doesn't notice even the most tiny bad thing that we do. He notices everything. But get the rest of this:

***<sup>8</sup> If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. <sup>9</sup> If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness. 1 John 1:8-9***

So, Abigail, yes, God can forgive us of everything that we've done, but we've got to seek God. We've got to take ownership for the wrong that we've done and go to God with that. We can't just pretend that God is automatically going to forgive everything. He wants us to come to Him to make it right. The cool thing is that he does absolutely everything to totally, totally make it right.

Here's another added benefit of how forgiveness works in Christianity. When God forgives, God forgets! No keeping buckets up there with rocks stacking in them keeping track of everything. God forgets what he forgives.

***The LORD is compassionate and gracious,  
slow to anger, abounding in love.***

*<sup>9</sup> He will not always accuse,  
nor will he harbor his anger forever;  
<sup>10</sup> he does not treat us as our sins deserve  
or repay us according to our iniquities.  
<sup>11</sup> For as high as the heavens are above the earth,  
so great is his love for those who fear him;  
<sup>12</sup> as far as the east is from the west,  
so far has he removed our transgressions from us. Psalm 103:8-12*

So, Abigail, I've got good news for you. When you confess something and when God forgives – God also forgets.

Now there's one last added benefit about Christianity that I think makes it unique among all other kind of religions that you'll find out there. And that's this: that when we experience God's forgiveness, we can then become a forgiver just like God is. I mean, wouldn't it be great if we lived in a world that when people forgive us, they forget about it? But you and I both know, that it's hard to forget when somebody hurts you. It's hard to forgive, but if we go to God and we learn what forgiveness is like from Him, then we can enter our relationships with other people in a unique way. We don't have to try to stack up rocks to keep track of how good people are to us and how bad people are, and when good people outweigh their bad things, then we like them. But when bad people do more bad things than good, then we don't like them. We don't have to keep track. We don't have to keep account. God gives us the same capacity in His name to forgive others that He gives to us when we come and confess to Him.

Abigail, that is a great question! If more and more people would live like this – we would have a world filled with so much more peace and enjoyment. Thank you for raising that excellent question.

If you've got a comment for me, hit on the link down there at the bottom of the blog post and I'd love to have a conversation with you about it.

Thanks for joining me this week. This has been Tim Perry, Pastor of Spiritual Discover at Christ Community Church. We'll catch you next week.