

Questions as Conversation Starters

Questions for an atheist friend:

1. Where do you think our sense of right and wrong ultimately comes from?

This invites reflection on morality which could lead to ethics, to human value, to accountability, to where the gospel provides a unique answer. (Gen. Ch 1; Mt. 5:1-12; Jn 1:1-18)

2. How do you think all that we see around us, the earth, the universe, human life, etc., came into being?

Many today believe in evolution, but how did anything come into being from nothing? What evidence are you basing your belief on? The Bible offers a bold answer to this question: It's claim is that our creator God brought it all into existence by speaking a word. The Bible also claims that Jesus is God come to earth for a specific purpose. Would you like to explore the evidence for this with me in the Bible?(Gen. Ch. 1; Jn. 1:1-3; Col. 1:15-20)

3. What do you think happens when we die — and do you think it matters how we live now?

Questions about death and purpose often lead to conversations about meaning, hope, and the afterlife. Biblical Christianity has the only coherent answer to these questions. I would love to explore this with you in the Bible. (Jn. 3:16-21, 36; 6:35, 47; 11:25-26; Mt. 16:27; Acts 17:30-31; Heb. 9:27; Job 19:25-27)

Questions for someone who was brought up going to church but as an adult left the faith deciding the Bible was not true.

4. What was it that made you start questioning or stepping away from what you were taught growing up?

It shows genuine interest and invites them to tell their story. Be a good listener. It may reveal emotional or intellectual barriers to faith. (Mt. 11:28-30; Jn. 10:7-18; 14:6; 11:25-26)

5. Do you ever think about the bigger questions — like why we're here or what life's all about?

Art and entertainment, in the form of movies, books, and music, often present various ways to find the ultimate fulfillment in life, but none of those pursuits can ever meet our deepest longings. They all fail, and many are highly destructive to those who pursue them. The Bible, on the other hand, tells us the truth about ourselves and about God, even when it is painful to hear. The Bible points us to the way of real meaning and real hope.

Would you like to explore this with me? (Mt. 11:28-29; Jn. 6:35-40; 10:7-18)

6. When you think back on your church experience, do you feel like you ever really heard what the core message of Christianity actually is?

Many who leave the church reject a distorted or incomplete version of Christianity, not the true gospel. You might be surprised at what the heart of the gospel is. I find it to be the greatest "good news" anyone can ever imagine while at the same time, possibly the most challenging. (Mk. 8:34-38; Jn. 6:35-40; Rom. 3:21-26)

Questions for a Muslim friend.

7. What are your beliefs about Jesus? Who do you think Jesus is?

This shows respect for them and possibly opens a door to talk about Jesus. You might respond to their answer with: the Bible describes Jesus as not merely a prophet, but as someone who had the authority to forgive sins and to give eternal life. Would you like to examine what it has to say about Jesus? (Jn. 1:1-18; 10:30; 14:6; 11:25-26; Col. 1:15-20)

8. Have you ever been curious about why Christians believe Jesus is more than a prophet?

It centers around who Jesus said he was. If he was a great prophet, he cannot lie to us. It is quite surprising what he said about his purpose. Would you like to investigate that with me? (Invite them to read through the Gospel of Mark with you.)

9. What would it mean to you to be assured of God's forgiveness and acceptance?

This is such an important issue for all of us. Contrary to what many religions believe, the Bible tells us we can have assurance of forgiveness through what Jesus accomplished in his life. It tells us that forgiveness is not possible through our own efforts, but it tells us it is only possible through what Jesus has done. Would you like to explore that with me? (Mk. 2:1-12; Rom. 4:5-8; Eph. 1:7; Col. 1:14; 1 Jn. 1:9; 5:13; on the topic of assurance, invite them to read through 1 John with you)

Approach conversations with everyone, regardless of their religious or atheistic background, with patience and humility. Guiding traits must be:

Love – Respect – Courage – Grace – Truth