



THE GOD INTERVIEWS

Questions You Would Ask; Answers God Gives

Leafwood Publishers

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What Do You Want From Me?

Scene: Soundstage. Most of the room is strewn with cameras, half-wound cables, high-intensity lights, and disassembled microphones. Within view of three cameras sits a made-for-TV faux office scene featuring a conference table, set with two chairs opposite each other.

A forty-something woman in a business suit is in one chair. She shuffles through notes, reading and rereading, alternately taking a swig from a sweaty water bottle and checking her watch. Her leg bounces to an inaudible beat.

A Producer, Floor Director, Camera Operator, and a full contingent of production crew wait to record the interaction, should it take place. They nibble on snacks and kibitz about current events, family gossip, and plans for the weekend.

And then ... the room freezes in time as an awesome Presence steps onto the set. Unworldly bodyguards with flashing bodies and gleaming swords open a wide path for Him to take the seat across from the woman.

The crew moves as if by rote. The Floor Director hands a lavalier microphone to one of the bodyguards, who weaves it through the Guest's garments. The Producer gives a signal to begin recording. Without so much as a "lights, camera, action," the GOD Interview begins. The Guest's voice, strangely calm yet unbendingly firm, addresses the Reporter:

You asked to speak with Me.

Y y y. That is to say—yes, Ssssss-ir. Yes I did. But now . . . Here

I am. Ask Me anything.

Really? Anything?

Yes.

Okay. Well, I, uh, suddenly can't seem to read my notes.

You know, there is no need to be afraid.

Actually, I now realize there is. My clothes are a little soiled and pretty wrinkled . . . I'm not exactly perfectly prepared for this. Maybe this is a really bad idea. No, I'm sure it is. I'm really sorry I bothered You . . .

It is no bother.

He holds out a hand, hollowed out and scarred at the wrist, and stops the woman from leaving the table.

I am glad you asked to see Me.

You are?

Sure. I am not intimidated by questions, and quite honestly, there are no questions the mind I have given you could come up with that would shock Me or stump Me. Ask Me anything. I saw your list, and I would very much like to answer. Which of the questions is most pressing on your heart? I want to answer you first. Then, I will address the questions from your viewers.

Wow. My question? Okay . . . where to begin? Maybe I should give you some context.

If you would like, although, it is not strictly necessary.

Well, I'm just over forty . . .

I know.

Yes, well, I suppose You would. So you know my life's gotten pretty depressing. I don't like where I am—in fact, I'm not even sure I like who I am. I've never worked harder in my life or put in more pound-the-pavement hours, but my bank account is plunging to frightening levels. To top it off, I'm awfully lonely, and to make matters worse, I'm not pleasant to be around. I'm feeling useless—like You've put me on a shelf and moved on to another place without me.

Hmmm.

Well, that's why I want to talk to You. I've tried for years to do what I think would make You happy, but I'm wondering if I've succeeded at anything. Am I on the wrong track? Is that why I'm feeling so blah, so used up and valueless? What do You want from me? Tell me, and I'll try to measure up. But it's hard to measure to a standard I can't see. What do You want from me?

At church yesterday morning, I was at once shocked and heartened when our guest preacher (associate pastor Greg Norwine who is about my age) validated Reporter's (and my) issue. He, a solid, self-assured pastor admitted that he recently went through a season of asking God, at this middle-point, for confirmation and direction—a type of job performance review. He wanted to be sure he doesn't get too far down a road before being certain it's one God would have him follow.

Pastor Greg's answer came from words penned by a post-midlife apostle Paul, who had done a big self-evaluation as he sat imprisoned and facing a death sentence. Paul wrote, "For to me to live is Christ . . ."

(Phil.1:21). The pastor's definition of this kind of living was twofold: "The life filled with unsinkable joy is at once spent in exalting and serving Christ," he said.

Nice words. They have a ring of truth to them because an ancient saint lived them out with great success. But are they a little out of touch for a woman of today? Could they possibly be of real use to us in our overwhelmed days that stretch on far into the night hours?

I wonder what answer Christ would give to the question of what He wants from each of us as His individual children. Since our interview scene is only fiction (like you hadn't figured that out), I needed to find an answer that would work in the world of nonfiction—the world where we live. So, I did the only thing available to a modern woman and the next best thing to a live interview—I combed through the words God spoke about Himself and the direction He gave to His people about what He expected of them. And, wouldn't you know it, I found a pointed and specific answer to our precise question.

Now, it'll take some unpacking to see how it applies to real life, but it's right there spelled out in black and white—or on tablets or on scrolls or however it was originally recorded several millennia ago by the prophet Micah.

God, what do You want from us?, the people asked. *Do You want sacrifice? Do You want homage? Do You want the people and things most precious to us? What do You want from us?* That's exactly what God's people were asking Him in Micah 6:6-7:

You say, "What can I bring with me
 when I come before the Lord,
 when I bow before God on high?
 Should I come before him with burnt offerings,
 with year-old calves?
 Will the LORD be pleased with a thousand male sheep?
 Will he be pleased with ten thousand rivers of oil?"

Should I give my first child for the evil I have done?
Should I give my very own child for my sin?” (ncv)

With each question, the obvious, if unspoken, answer from the Almighty Lord was, *No, of course that's not what I want.* And then, since they just didn't get it (don't quibble, we don't often get it either), here's what He said, plain and simple in the next verse:

The LORD has told you, human, what is good;
he has told you what he wants from you:
to do what is right to other people,
love being kind to others,
and live humbly, obeying your God. (Mic. 6:8 ncv)

To put it the way I memorized it in Sunday school decades ago, the Lord requires of us these three simple things: to act justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God.

If that's what He required of His people in Old Testament times, did His expectations change under the new agreement put in place when Jesus died and rose again? I don't think so. Because when Jesus was talking to both scoffers and followers in Matthew 9:13, He echoed the Micah passage with this directive: “I desire mercy, and not sacrifice.” In Mark 12:33 He added, “To love [the Lord] with all . . . [your] strength, and to love one's neighbor as yourself, is much more than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices.” He supplemented that with a grave indictment of the religious leaders of His day, “Woe to you. . . . [You] neglect justice and the love of God” (Luke 11:42).

Clearly, His expectations haven't changed: justice, mercy, and knowing our place before Creator God—clear and concise. But are they as simple as they appear at first glance, and how do they impact life as we know it? To uncover the truth about what this trilogy of requirements means in real time, let's address each phrase individually.

To Act Justly

I love the line in the imaginary interview where the Reporter says, “I’ve tried for years to do what I think would make You happy.” In essence she’s saying, along with many of us, *I’ve tried to do the right thing at every opportunity. True, I haven’t always succeeded, but I’ve tried. Does that count for anything?*

We all have that innate sense of right and wrong. We all have a tendency to do wrong that, truth be told, offends even our own sense of behaving justly. I suspect this innate sense of right and wrong is placed there by our Creator, the one Who establishes the measure of justice for the universe. According to *Easton’s Bible Dictionary*, “Justice is not an optional product of [God’s] will, but an unchangeable principle of his very nature.”¹

God’s justice makes me happy in one sense. He can be trusted to accurately weigh and measure the actions of others and hold them accountable to an exacting standard. I want *honorable* and *fair* to be the watchwords of others’ dealings with me—in business practices, in relationships, in matters of medicine and law, and in everyday life.

Surely you’ll agree that those who serve the greater good in our society need to be honorable. Not long ago when the economic dominoes began to tumble as the American banking industry was called to account for bad loans, mismanagement, or simply poor business decisions, the blame-game started. The Republicans blamed the Democratic-controlled Congress. The Democrats blamed the Republican in the White House. Instead of searching for a just solution, they searched for scapegoats. As for me (one of those lumped into the “voting public” category who have little control over unfolding events like these), I just wanted to blame ’em all and throw ’em out of office come November.

That’s just about the absolute antithesis of what God’s expectations of acting justly would call for. Bible commentary writer Michael J. Wilkins explains this way: “It is right to want to see justice prevail. But

it is wrong when my ego gets in the way—when I retaliate to prove that I am strong, that I am superior to the other person, that I am the almighty righteous cop for God.”²

Yes, I’m quick to call for just behavior on someone else’s part—and in some cases, it might even be my right to do so. But that’s not what God’s holy requirement through the prophet Micah is concerned about. He tells *me* to “act justly.” This is not a place where He calls me to hold *someone else* to a just standard. Rather, the requirement is to do justice myself.

I’ve already admitted to you that I’ve fallen far short of the exacting standard of a just God. No matter the details of how, how often, or when I’ve repented and tried to salvage my own messed-up situations, the bottom line is I simply don’t measure up, any more than our reporter friend does. I know it. She knows it. You know it about yourself. God knows it about all of us.



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Discussion Questions

1. Justice is one of the key requirements God has for us. Using Psalm 37:28 as your example, paint a word picture of your definition of justice.

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2. Reporter, who found herself face-to-face with the Living Christ, caught a glimpse of herself standing before Him. Read Isaiah 53:6 to learn what God did to establish you in right standing before Him. Write about your response to this gift of mercy.

Author's Note

You might want to get out your Bible and your journal to chronicle your thoughts. Better yet, why not gather some trusted friends and fellow readers to hash these out together?

About the Author

Julie-Allyson Ieron is a perceptive journalist who investigates God's truth and crafts her discoveries in ways that engage your mind and resonate with your heart. Her passion is to open God's Word alongside you to equip you to apply its riches to your daily joys, questions, and challenges.

Julie recently celebrated twenty-five years as an author, writing coach, editor, and conference speaker. Her ministry-defining project released in 2010: *The Julie-Allyson Ieron Bible Reference Collection* on WORDsearch 9.0. It features nine of Julie's books linked with seventy-five Bible reference resources. Many of her books are available in MP3 audio and e-book.

Julie's personal life is as dynamic as her writing. She is her dad's medical advocate, plays violin in her church's orchestra and regional hymn sing ensemble, and plays a killer game of Scrabble™.

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“Theologically sound and compelling. . . . Julie delivers clear truth and real answers to life’s tough questions with creative ingenuity.”

– **Miriam Neff, Founder, www.widowconnection.com, author of *Where Do I Go From Here? Bold Living after Unwanted Change***

IMAGINE HEARING GOD RESPOND PERSONALLY,
INTIMATELY TO YOUR MOST GUT-LEVEL QUESTIONS.

What do You want from me?

Why have You allowed bad things to happen to me?

Why did You make me the way I am?

Julie creates a fun forum to ask your questions and explore God’s reasons for creating you and placing you at this moment. You’ll find her fictional characters engaging, and her nothing-but-the-truth handling of Bible promises relevant to your everyday realities.

“The God Interviews resound with human pathos and reverberate with truths that transform. Cleverly set in a television studio with its make and break realities, the interviews reveal our Lord as alive and active in today’s challenging world. Each chapter sparkles with wit, unerring honesty, and biblical soundness.”

– **Marlene Chase, former Editor in Chief of Salvation Army National Publications; author of *Beside Still Waters, Our God Comes, and Pictures from the Word*.**

“I’ve often encountered times where I recognized that the strength to do a task did not come from within the scared little pastor’s wife from San Diego. It came from Christ. I see in Julie’s *The God Interviews* a similar truth – that Christ truly cares about the concerns and questions of a woman’s heart.”

– **Beverly LaHaye, founder of Concerned Women for America, author of best-seller *The Spirit-controlled Woman***