

APOLOGETICS: HOW TO KNOW IF CHRISTIANITY IS TRUE ETC

Question #1:

 No.1 Christianity Expert: If You DON'T Believe In a God You NEED to Hear This!

36:30 How do I know if the Christian faith is true?

Response #1:

There are only two possible responses to any offer: (1) Thank you, yes; and (2) No, thank you. The third one is only a precursor to either. That is (3) "let me see if I want it or not".

A worldview is an axiom or a set of axioms, if you like. Axioms, by definition, are unprovable. You accept an axiom to use it to establish the truth of other things. A proposed axiom is obviously true or obviously false. If there is a question about the truth of an axiom, the best that one can do is grant its truth and see if it leads to the conclusions it posits. In short, "the proof of the pudding is in the eating."

How can you know that the Christian claim is true? By granting its truth and seeing if it leads to the conclusions it claims. Why would you do that? Because (1) you want to give it a fair shake; and (2) because you have seen that there are no downsides to testing it.

Compare this to tasting a delicacy. Barring actually tasting it, you have no way of knowing anything about how palatable it is. Others whom you may or may not trust may tell you that it's the greatest taste you could possibly imagine, but you would have to trust not only that they are honest but that their palate is similar or identical to yours. Why would you try it at all? Only if you thought it could be something you want and if you are persuaded that you won't be poisoned. You can easily check for poisons without injecting any part of the food. You could learn to run tests for poisons, obtain the equipment, material, and apparatus you need to run the tests and run them if you are averse to testing the delicacy on a living organism like yourself. If it proves to be free of all poisons, that only tells you that it is safe to test it out for yourself, but it won't tell you that you'll like the food. Likewise, you can easily prove that the Bible is not lying to you or courting you to harm you, but to establish whether it is true requires that you treat it like an unprovable axiom.

You have to give it the benefit of the doubt. You have to take its claims as true and see what happens when you apply them. If the results match its natural and prescribed conclusions, then you have no reason to reject it as a worldview. If they don't, no one has the right to fault you for rejecting it.

Question #2:

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43:14 Do people stay in the religion that they are brought up in?

Response #2:

I'll grant the statistics without dispute although I have some reservations about it.

Is it a lottery? Not from the biblical perspective.

1. The possession of free will, the ability to make choices in response to God, means that no one is bound beyond their own choice in how they respond to God. Being born to parents and in a culture that is favorably disposed to God does not preclude anybody from turning away from God. The alternative is also true. If people do not change their moral dispositions, it is because they prefer not to. Any argument indicating the inconvenience of doing so misses the point. The point is that it is possible to go against the grain if one wants to, and while relatively few do, those few are actually a very large number, so they are an indication that it is possible for everyone.

2. A whole book of the Bible, the Book of Jonah, was written to show how far God will go to bring not just one person (Abraham's story is partly a demonstration of God pulling one person out of a civilization that was extraordinarily hostile to Him, and his is not the only such story) but a whole city to salvation if the people in question are open to it. Where and under what conditions one is born is no barrier to God's Salvation as long as one is open to that salvation.

3. The geographical, political, and cultural experiences that God has allowed are all to ensure that anybody who wants to seek God in this world can find Him without being forced to deal with God or forced to not seek Him. In other words, the structure of human experience is for the sake of free choices to seek or not to seek God as anyone might want. Consider that there are many people today who accuse Christian missionaries of the past of ruining their lives by bringing their God to their otherwise insular cultures. Not everyone wants to have anything to do with God. Since God wants only those who want Him, it makes sense that He allows people to be born in the places and at the times where they can be free of any pressure to submit to Him if they are among those whom He knows are not interested in seeking Him. Of course, sometimes, He still has people born in times and places where they encounter the knowledge of Him and reject Him anyway but not everyone can do that. Some people would break in their ability to reject Him if they had more than a certain amount of exposure to Him and thus would only submit to God because they no longer have the ability to say no to Him. An example would be

the people of Sodom and Gomorrah in Abraham's time. It's not for nothing that they only had one righteous man among them whom they tried to kill too. Jesus said that if the miracles He did in His day were done in Sodom and Gomorrah, they would have repented. God wants everyone to repent, but He wants them to do so willingly. It is not hard for Him to force everybody into His eternal embrace, but He wants them to truly want Him too, to want to be part of His eternal family. For that reason, the people of Sodom and Gomorrah were not born in 1st century Palestine to witness Jesus's miracles and those who were could resist their witness and still crucify Him.

Now, although this 3rd point focuses on the negative, namely, that people are born in times and places where they are not forced to respond positively to God, God's reason is actually positive. Times and places were created by Him to give all human beings perfect reasons and opportunities to seek Him. Consider that godless cultures tend to become inhospitable to human life in short order and this contributes in no small part to some of them seeking God. The fact that not many do seek God even in spite of that (something that Jesus attested to by declaring that only very few people find the gate to salvation and enter it) only proves the depravity of the human heart.

In conclusion, it's not a lottery. It's a deliberate provision to give every human being all the opportunity that they need and could possibly want to seek God if they want. That they don't take it is a choice on their part, not a failing on God's part.

Question #3:

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46:19 Why can't God fix pain?

50:28

- I. Why would God create people knowing that they would choose to sin and that would mean eternal suffering for them? Isn't that cruel?
- II. Why do people suffer if God exists?

Response #3:

To be charitable, the first question can be rolled into the last one. It is more meaningful to ask why there is pain if God is loving and can fix it rather than why God can't because the claim in the question that God can't would need to be proved.

Part I:

I hold a different position from Lennox here. It is the Bible's position that indeed God created everyone knowing exactly what they would choose. That is not determinism; it is foreknowledge. Foreknowledge is, in creature terms, a function of intellect, not an action. God's creation of all things knowing all choices that all His moral creatures would make is not determinism because it does not preclude any choices but rather confirms them. If He didn't create, no choices would be made. Whether He creates or not, God cannot but know because His knowledge is perfectly comprehensive of all things.

How to make sense of this? The first thing about it is that despite the emotions that the question is suffused with, this is wholly a pragmatic question. Creation is God's decision, His prerogative as God. It is insane to deny God His prerogatives. Choices are His moral creatures' prerogative, and even though God is perfectly within His rights and does have the ability to deny them this prerogative, He does not so that their choices are completely theirs. God has the right to create and His moral creatures have the right (divinely granted) to choose their attitude toward Him. That God has foreknowledge is part of the fabric and definition of reality so much so that we can say that it cannot be helped, but it does not interact with the rights and abilities of God's moral creatures to choose.

The issue is that there is a logical fallacy that is generally taken for granted as sound reasoning in the apologetics community. It is the notion that God's foreknowledge precludes free choice. This is manifestly untrue because being smart enough to know what another moral agent will do does not have a causative effect on that moral agent's actions. The moral agent is completely free to act whether the intelligent agent knows what they will do or not. That the intelligent agent is God and that He created the moral agent has nothing to do with anything here. So, determinism is the wrong claim for God's act of creation using His foreknowledge.

The next consideration is how this is absurd reasoning for anyone. God has the right to create and has created. Anyone who exists had neither the right nor the ability to negotiate or dictate the terms of their existence to God prior to their existence for the obvious reason that they did not exist yet! If we have no say in whether and how we will exist, it only makes sense to respond to the fact of our existence in the most reasonable way that we can. In other words, the complaint that God is cruel for creating people knowing that they will choose wrong already infringes on God's prerogatives. He has a right to create even knowing what the consequences of doing so will be because He is God just as we have the right to submit to Him or reject Him even knowing what the consequences of either choice will be.

The sensible thing, it seems to me, would be to make the most of the situation for ourselves now that we know that we exist. Since it is obvious that our existence is

not our idea and since it is also obvious that we have moral and intellectual agency, it only follows that we should seek out the reason for our existence as soon as we become aware or conscious of the fact of our existence. While God has the right to do whatever He wants, it is only to be expected that a loving God who wants us to make choices about our attitude to Him will leave clues that will ultimately lead us to Him and an intimation of His purpose for us. It is a choice to or not to seek out these clues and to or not to submit to Him and that purpose when we find Him and learn of it. If we elect not to do that, it is not His fault that He created us knowing that we would choose not to. That is a choice that we, not He, made.

Pragmatically speaking, a person who is self-centered or humanity-centered enough to impugn God's character for creating human beings who were going to choose to reject Him and spend eternity in the Lake of Fire would be self-centered and humanity-centered enough to try to make the most of an already bad situation. Since it is evident that human minds can be changed, such a person would be bent on making sure to choose in the direction of eternal self-preservation and to get others to make a similar choice. After all, we don't know whom God knows will make such a horrific choice.

Philosophically speaking, the fact that God wants willing "subjects" who will be His family in eternity means that everyone who can make a choice must exist to make a choice. Besides that, the notion that only the thing that is needed or wanted should exist completely dispenses with the obvious reality of "furniture." The universe is full of things that only exist because they are part of the furniture of something else, that is, they exist to provide context to something that matters. For example, a car exists to transport people from one point to another. The argument that only those whom God knows will choose to submit to Him should exist is exactly the same as arguing that the only thing that should exist in a car is the seat that the passenger will sit in to travel. The whole car is necessary for the passenger to move. While the passenger may never bother with the engine bay or the trunk and while they don't sit on the roof or on the doors, the utility and necessity of these parts of the car are without question. Without the engine and the engine bay, for example, it is certainly worth questioning how the car will move anywhere without the passenger essentially carrying it. Likewise, while God's eternal objective is to have an eternal family, creating only that eternal family, while possible, dispenses with the mechanism that defines them. They are a group of willing moral creatures who choose Him for a father. That is, they make choices in time within the context of a universe that is calibrated to allow those choices. That universe is defined by certain parameters including the existence of other moral creatures who prefer the opposite choice. Therefore, while it is certainly in the best interest of those moral creatures who prefer the wrong choice to choose eternal submission to God and despite the objection of such creatures to their existence, they do serve a

purpose beyond their own appetites. They exist to provide a context within which the other creatures make the choices that make them God's eternal family. This is together with the fact that these hostile moral creatures are provided by God with every reason and every opportunity, both positive and negative, to make the choice that is eternally good for them. In other words, while being generous to them, God is also wisely using them to advance His purpose for creating the universe.

Again, this may be unpalatable to those who don't like God and how He does things, but that is not the issue. The question has an answer, a biblical one that is good for anyone who is willing to hear it. The fact that anyone thinks is cruel is just a subjective sentiment about a comprehensible, reasonable fact of reality much like a dislike of the sun for its heat has nothing to do with whether the sun exists or not. To the extent that this is an exploration of the question of whether Christianity is true as a worldview, this answer is not only the Bible's claim but it is also both internally coherent and consistent with apparent reality in every respect, so it does advance the claim that the Bible is true.

Part II:

The biblical position is that suffering does not exist in a vacuum. When Adam acted in rebellion against God by eating the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, two things happened:

1. He brought on a sentence of death and suffering upon himself (and his progeny, in a complex way) into the world;
2. His body changed because of that fruit and he passed on that body to his descendants and because of that change, they gained a predisposition to hostility and rebellion against God, and that predisposition resulted in actions against God that brought further suffering and death into the world.

In short, because Adam disobeyed, death and suffering was made his experience in this world, and his body changed and that change passed down to his descendants who also disobeyed as a result and have more suffering and death as a result.

An implication of this argument is that some people suffer because of others just as many people benefit because of others. This is a well-understood fact of life. For example, in political systems, favor is shown to people because of the people that they are associated with. The same is true in economic and social systems. In general, people's merits rub off on those that they are closely associated with. Likewise, people don't often make an easy or strict difference between someone out of favor and those closely associated with them. Ostracism in the society becomes a stigma for one's spouse, children, and even loyal friends. This is also a biblical principle that may be known as blessing by association and cursing by association. A famous demonstration of this is how anyone who treated Abraham well was going

to be blessed for it. Another is how anyone who touched the loot from Jericho would suffer Jericho's curse, a warning that ultimately resulted in the deaths of Achan and his family. So, the earth can be cursed for Adam's sake and all his descendants end up under a curse that they will only sustain their lives by painful work just because they are Adam's children. Is this fair to the children? It would be if the children were good where Adam was bad. The follow-up that the children should be allowed to do something first before suffering Adam's curse ignores that Adam was on probation with a perfect world and if he failed despite having neither cause nor natural predilection to do so, it is only fair to have his children who now have that predilection to earn that incredible generosity back.

In short, God owes no one a perfect life or perfect circumstances in the absence of the absence of suffering and death, and when His gift of it has been abused by a perfect specimen representative of a population, He is under even less of an obligation to provide such a thing to any other member of that population much less all of them. In fact, wisdom demands that now He should have them appreciate it enough to work for it to earn it. Obviously, it is impossible for us to earn God's blessings since we are so hostile to Him from the get-go, but realizing that we need them and that we don't deserve them leads us to looking for a way into His good graces, which is what God wants anyway: us in His good graces.

So, suffering and death exist to guide arrogant rebels like us back to God. That we don't take the hint is a choice that we make. That we decide to see them as an indictment on God's character is also a choice. Even the political idealists insisting that we can create a utopia have no problem inflicting or allowing suffering "for the greater good." How much more would a true God of perfect wisdom and perfect power understand how to patiently lead arrogant human beings toward peace with Him for their benefit by showing them how hostility toward Him can only produce suffering and death for them?

Question #4:

 No.1 Christianity Expert: If You DON'T Believe In a God You NEED to Hear This!

56:14 What About The Humans Before Jesus?

Response #4:

Luke 12:48 is clear that ignorance will not absolve anyone.

As for the people who preexisted the incarnation of Jesus Christ, the Bible is also clear that it was faith in the Promised Messiah that saved them. There has never been any other means of salvation.

The question needs to be recast in a different light. Heaven is looked at as some kind of prize to win and Hell, more accurately, the Lake of Fire, as some nightmare to escape. Both understandings are correct but limited. Inasmuch as one should be doing everything they can to avoid ending up in the Lake of Fire, the more important question anyone should be asking is "do I want to miss out on an eternal familial relationship with God Almighty?" That question has so many consequences to it that it is more important to address oneself to it than it is to look at the consequences. If you knew God, would you really be happy to not have Him as your father eternally? Conversely, would you want Him as your father eternally if you knew Him? This is really what all this about. The Lake of Fire is God's ratification of the rejection of all those who chose against Him for whatever reason they liked. Heaven is not even the end goal for those who choose God; a new Creation with a perfect and perfectly accommodating Earth where God will live with all His children is the end goal. So, instead of thinking about delights one is missing out on and the torture that one is threatened with, as valid as those things are, it is more important to ask ourselves whether we want to be in God's eternal family given that that means that we will be His subjects eternally.

That question has been viable since the beginning of human creation. There is no part of the world and no time in history when it has not been asked with or without words of everyone capable of thought from the moment that they could think (Psalm 19:1-4a; Romans 1:19-20). It has always been the responsibility of every morally capable human being (the vast majority by far) to go out and find out what this question is demanding of them and what the right answer is. This is what having the ability to make a free choice is all about. No one is exempt from that responsibility, not for the sake of when they existed, exist, will exist or for the sake of where they existed, existed, or will exist. The only people exempted are those who came into this world incapable of moral choices or who did not live long enough to make such choices. Everybody else had, has, and will continue to have that responsibility until God's family has been filled.

Question #5:

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58:53 Do All Religions Provide Meaning And Psychological Comfort?

Response #5:

Maybe they do. There is no biblical reason that prohibits that possibility. The issue is that meaning and psychological comfort are also subjective. What comforts one person may not comfort another and what one is satisfied with for a meaning may

not satisfy another. This is obvious in the fact that many reject Christianity even after tasting it while others not only accept it but dive as deep into it as they can for all it can give.

The reality of an eternal relationship with a true God can fill one person with a purpose to live and endure the hardships of life while someone else feels deprived of the good things of life in pursuit of this relationship. One person may be comforted in the midst of life's troubles and the contemplation of death when they consider their Christian faith and another may be embittered by the same consideration in the same set of circumstances. Some have moved from Christianity to religions of different stripes because the offerings of these religions are more meaningful, satisfying, and comforting to them. Some have dispensed with the notion of a God altogether preferring to make their own meaning and create their own comfort.

In conclusion, it is subjective. This does not put Christianity on a par with everything else for the single reason that Christianity does not exist for subjective satisfaction even though it does provide that to those who find it so.

Question #6:

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01:04:48 If I do not believe, am I going to Hell?

Response #6:

Covered in Response #4. While Hell is not a pleasant place — far from it — it is the only alternative to being part of God's family in eternity, something that those who will be in Hell do not want.

A word is worth adding to Lennox's really good response here. Hell is a real place of great pain and suffering, indescribable pain and suffering in fact, but it also exists because of something about God's nature. Ecclesiastes says that nothing God has made will ever cease to exist (Ecclesiastes 3:14). This is in keeping with the perfection of His nature. God's perfect knowledge ensures that He knows all the consequences of every creative act that He performs before He performs it. His perfect power ensures that He has perfect control of everything that He creates. These two things together mean that He can never do anything that He will later regret or rethink (poor understandings of passages like Genesis 6:6 notwithstanding) and that He can never create anything that later confounds Him.

In other words, every action of God is eternally deliberate and perfectly controlled. Nothing exists by mistake and nothing is accidentally left out of existence. This means that everything that God has done is an eternal act. When God creates anyone, that person is meant to exist in perpetuity. There is no wait-and-see involved in the divine Mind regarding that person. Therefore, a choice of attitudes toward God that is made by that person is an eternal one once it is confirmed and ratified by their refusal or negligence to change it before they die. Therefore, what consequences are attached to that choice are also eternal. Anyone who rejects peace and reconciliation to God and passes from this life doing so has chosen eternal estrangement from Him. This has massive consequences.

First, the Universe belongs to God. It is His production. He is under no obligation to hand it over to anyone for any reason. He is also under no obligation to sustain it for anyone at all. If, then, someone rejects Him, not only does He have no obligation to bring such a person into His eternal Home, but He also has no obligation to sustain that person's wellbeing with His universe. That is, He has no obligation to take such a person into "Heaven" and none to leave them on "Earth."

Second, beyond our personhood, which God has granted to us all, a total autonomy over our choices, we have nothing. So, if God takes every good thing from the universe that He made and leaves it to us, every effort to make a paradise of it will be met with remarkable frustration. To demonstrate, regardless of the arrogant posturing about man's exploits on the earth, we really have done nothing more than stir a pot. We have added nothing to what God made and taken nothing from what He has made. Everything we do will be undone by time. So has it always been. Such progress as we have made has been due to God's magnanimity toward us rather than in spite of Him. A universe abandoned by God will be a ruin, an unfixable, frustrating, psychologically destroying ruin. This is even without adding His cursing, that is, a divine aspect of displeasure toward such a universe.

Third, people who reject God and act in ways to demonstrate that rejection have no right to demand or expect an escape from punishment through "oblivion." Why punishment? Because you cannot throw someone's offer of friendship and reconciliation in their face after treating them poorly and expect them to be nice to you after the fact. All human beings except Jesus Christ have acted insolently toward God. Then, God in incredible generosity, provided a way to reconcile us to Himself, and we essentially say to Him, "look, I'm good enough for you as I am. There is no need for some kind of reconciliation." There is no way that His answer to that is not pure derision. So, the universe that He leaves to us will not only be wholly devoid of any of His gifts, but it will also be full of all His displeasure. Thus, Hell. In fact, Hell, biblically, is this current universe destroyed, laid waste and overflowing with fire and brimstone. It is God's way of saying to the recalcitrant

rebels: "You insist that you don't need or want me; well, here's a universe to build up from scratch and all eternity to do so. Make your own paradise."

Question #7:

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01:07:26 If A Serial Killer Repented Would They Be Forgiven?

Response #7:

If you destroyed a person's car and set it on fire, you may have done something way worse than if you cut him off in traffic, but both offenses were committed against him. It is true that we all are our own persons in the sense that we have been given the divine right to choose our own individual responses to God, but God is still our Maker, our Creator. All hurt that we suffer is an offense against Him because we are His creation. For the same reason, any poor treatment by ourselves of our own selves and our "victim-less" offenses such as the white lies that we tell that — we claim — hurt no one are offenses against Him. Everything belongs to Him, and He has the right to expect us to treat ourselves and the universe that He made for us in the way that He Himself has ordained for us and it to be treated. Whereas one offense may be worse than another, because they are all against Him and because He is a perfectly Holy and perfectly Just God, they all carry the same penalty: Death or, in other words, eternal separation from Him. Adam and Eve only ate a fruit after all. Who did they hurt by doing so? They were not serial killers and yet, without Jesus's sacrifice, they would have ended up in the Lake of Fire too.

Therefore, since we are all in the same boat, serial killer and small-time pilferer as well as the teller of white lies alike, the same remedy applies to everyone. Anyone who chooses to believe in Jesus Christ is saved from the terrible consequences of rebellion against God, and anyone who does not remains subject to those consequences because Jesus Christ died for all sins from the little white lie that hurts no one to the serial murders, rapes, and pillaging that anyone may be concerned about.

Question #8:

▶ No.1 Christianity Expert: If You DON'T Believe In a God You NEED to Hear This!

01:11:11 How Do We Survive Job Loss From AI?

Response #8:

Good question. This goes back to why man was created in the first place. Rather than man being created to till the ground, the ground was created for man to till. Man was designed with creative energies. Work is an outlet for it. Regardless, the exertion of creative energies is not why man exists. Rather, the exertion of creative energies is how man fulfills the reason for his existence: namely to replace the angels who rebelled against God before man was created.

Man was created, then, for this reason: to willingly do what the rebellious angels would not do, namely, to choose an eternity of submission to God as His loving children and thus replace those angels who elected not to do so. Every business of life in this world is an opportunity to demonstrate this choice. That includes working at a job to support ourselves. Not even AI will remove the need to make that choice.

In short, I am not as pessimistic as others may be about AI. I take granted that the economy will change shape in some ways because of the new technology, but it will not mean that human beings no longer have jobs to work at. There will always be work for us to do. Whether or not it will be as rewarding as it used to be and whether or not it will be the same things we used to do remains to be seen. We will still need to work at providing for ourselves in this world and thus make a choice about how willing we are to submit to God in this matter.

Question #9:

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01:14:34 Will AI Restore Humanity Or Destroy It?

Response #9:

From a biblical point of view, neither. To the extent that we are looking back to some time in the past when human beings were "better" than we are now, there is a significant blind spot in our vision there. There is no model in the past that could reasonably be called better. There are only two states that human beings either exist in or can hope to exist in: (1) the sinful state in which we are constantly disobeying God and (2) the perfected state where we have been freed from the natural compunction that we have to rebel against God.

For this reason, there is no biblical reason to fear AI or worship it. Nothing will change because of it except for the impermanent things that always do, that is, the

way we do things. Human beings will still do the same things they have always done even if they do them differently than they did a decade ago or a century ago or a millennium ago.

Question #10:

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01:16:56 Is AI Conscious?

Response #10:

To the extent that consciousness is awareness of oneself and one's capacity to affect the world and be affected by it, to that extent, obviously not. The biblical understanding of consciousness is the possession of an ability to make moral choices and suffer consequences or enjoy rewards resulting from those choices. That is literally the image of God. Only humans and angels possess it. Nothing that man creates could possibly have it. Not even the animals and trees have it.

How do we know that AI doesn't have it? For us believers in Jesus, there is no question because you can only have it if God makes you that way. Besides that, the demonstration of it is the consideration of temporal choices with an eternal view even if the idea is to dispense with the reality of an eternity.

Question #11:

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01:20:56 What makes Humans Special in An Age of AI?

Response #11:

Refer to Response #8. Humans are quite a bit more than biological machines that graze and die. We exist to make moral choices that will determine our worthiness to replace the rebellious angels in God's eternal family. Even unconscious of this, we act exactly like there is something significantly more to us than just to work a job to eat, play, and die. For example, after the initial complaining and doomsdaying that follows upheavals like AI and the beginning of a war, people adjust to carry on

life as if nothing really changed...because in fact, nothing really did. How we express our choices may change but the fact of the choices themselves remains.

Question #12:

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01:22:57 What can we do to restore hope?

Response #12:

Become a Christian. Help others who are willing to also become Christians.