

Life-Changing Questions

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To James Andrews, editor;
Peggy Coulter, Marketing Director;
Robin Crosslin, designer of each of my books,
who are unexcelled in their areas of expertise.

Books by Frank Chesser

Spirit of Liberalism

Portrait of God

Voyage of Faith

Thinking Right about God

The Heart of Isaiah

The Man of Chebar

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Foreword

Having viewed Frank Chesser's upcoming book, *Life-Changing Questions*, I am reminded of an occasion back in the 1980s when Frank was preaching a gospel meeting for us in Washington, Georgia. One night the preacher for the First Baptist Church was in attendance. Frank's sermon was "The Crucifixion of Christ." Following the service, the visiting preacher asked, "How is it humanly possible for one man to know that much Bible?" This question, I'm sure, has been asked by many after hearing Frank preach or after reading one of his books.

I confess that my vocabulary fails me in adequately giving a review of this book. Having viewed forewords of Frank's previous books, I wanted to come up with something not already said, and here it is: Frank has saved the best for the last. And considering his previous masterpieces, that is really saying something. You, with me, will likely notice there are no footnotes. For every Bible question there is a Bible answer. Frank is concerned with Bible answers, not in answers given by uninspired men.

As a friend of Frank's for more than fifty years, I feel qualified in mentioning that Frank is multitalented. Anyone who has gone fishing with him immediately gets my point. His fishing equipment consists of more than a pole, line, and hook. His tackle box is a fisherman's dream. I recall an occasion when Frank inspected my fishing equipment; he may still be laughing. However, according to his darling wife of more than fifty years, Frank has a problem remembering directions. Cherry says he can get lost in his own backyard.

Life-Changing Questions deserves to be on a best seller's list. To all lovers of God and His work, this book is a great addition to your library. To all who are concerned about false religions, including what progressives are doing to the church Jesus built, this book is a must. You will find it to be a page turner. From the first question in Genesis 3:9 to the last one in Malachi 3:8, Frank leaves no question unanswered—no stone unturned. The harmony and unity of the Bible are clearly revealed.

Thank God for Frank Chesser!

S. G. Gray, elder

Preface

Questions are potent verbal tools designed to promote personal thought and deliberation. Divine declarations are immeasurably powerful. But there is an extra touch of specialness about questions from God. They are arrows to the heart. They pierce the mind. They go straight to the core of the matter at hand. They negate the evasive spirit. They demand reflection, personal scrutiny, and a response.

This work is a study of questions from God in the Old Testament. It commences with His first question to Adam, “Where art thou?” (Gen. 3:9), and closes with His final question to Israel, which He answers Himself, “Will a man rob God?” (Mal. 3:8). These questions from God garnered from Genesis to Malachi are profound. They strike at the very heart of human need and motivation. They open the door to the heart of God and the heart of man. Man is a small, imperfect replica of the image of God. He cannot know his own heart until he journeys through the heart of God. God’s questions enable man to discern the heart of God. They provide for man’s entrance into areas of spiritual deliberation and perception previously missed. They promote comprehension of the “weightier matters of the law” (Matt. 23:23), between what is good, better, and best.

“For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope” (Rom. 15:4). The Old Testament refines man’s heart and disposition. It prepares man to think right about God and reason properly about His will in the New Testament. These questions from God in His “first testament” (Heb. 9:15), contain every principle essential for man’s journey from earth to heaven. They sharpen his spiritual senses. They nullify the argumentative spirit. They are expressions of the marvelous love of God in His attempt to draw man unto Himself.

Acknowledgments

This book is lovingly dedicated to James Andrews, Peggy Coulter, and Robin Crosslin. James, a true friend for over forty years, is enormously gifted in a number of areas of human endeavor. He is an accomplished mathematician, preacher, teacher, missionary, and editor. As owner of Publishing Designs, he has edited and published each of my seven books that God's good providence has enabled me to write. His counsel in bringing these efforts to fruition has been invaluable.

Peggy is James' counterpart in his work with Publishing Designs. Her masterful skills in marketing and design are essential to the great good that the company has accomplished for thirty-two years. They have published some of the best Bible study books by lady authors on the market today.

Robin Crosslin has mightily blessed my work by capturing to perfection the essence of each title in his exquisite craftsmanship on the cover of each book.

To Glenn Gray, a dear friend for over half a century, for his kind and encouraging words concerning this work, as well as the other books that I have penned. He and his wife Helen have been married for seventy years! Glenn began his preaching in 1956. The large bulk of his work involved mission churches, including Ukraine. He has served as an elder for twenty-five years. Glenn and his good wife are two of the best people I have ever known.

And to Cherry, without whose expertise in grammar and typing and continual encouragement, this work would never have been accomplished. Every gospel preacher knows the inestimable value of a helpmeet whose heart and life are devoted to God, truth, and spiritual things. Every husband and father who strives to be the spiritual head of his house understands well this great need. Cherry has fulfilled this need in my life's work to as close to perfection as one can get.

Frank Chesser
September 2020

1

ADAM, EVE, AND CAIN

Eternity! The mind of man shudders under the weight of the singularity of this thought. It wraps the mind in unutterable awe. The thinking part of man's being is traversed, leaving in its wake an endless trail of silence. Words lie helpless in their desire and attempt to draw verbal pictures of its reality. It defies the mind. It holds it hostage with no conditions for its release. Eternity's secrets are its own. Man knocks on its door with questions that will never be answered. The space of eternity is filled with its own essence. It is void of human thresholds. With regard to man, it belongs to itself. Solitariness is its dwelling place.

"In the beginning" (Gen. 1:1) marks the commencement of time. These three words broke the silence of eternity and opened the door to time. It is man's home on his transient journey to the forever of life. Time bore witness to its beginning with an eye to its own end. It was birthed to die. Its termination will be as sudden as its initiation. Eternity is time's womb, and death is its grave. God started it, and God will end it. When time dies, it will never be resurrected. Man's time on earth is measured by time itself. Time governs man's physical life. It calls him to wake, eat, work, play, rest, and sleep. Time has no control over itself. It cannot change gears, enabling it to speed up or slow down. The cycle of its life is immutable.

Time is a singular experience. It has no associates by which to be compared. It is distinctly unique, standing alone. When time brings a man to a terminal state, it is futile to petition time for more time. At time's inception, there was no backward look, for behind time is eternity. Everything material is limited by time, as is time itself, for time's final sunset was predestined in eternity. Time is not eternity's interlude, for eternity is bereft of beginnings or endings. If time's duration were to be a billion years, it would only be a microscopic pebble on the unending shores of eternity. When eternity bids goodbye to time, time will not be missed. There will be no void to fill.

It is only God, "the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity" (Isa. 57:15). He carved time out of eternity as a temporary parenthesis for man and material things and designated it as "the beginning" (Gen. 1:1). Man and matter are possessions of time, and both have a vaporous existence (James 4:14) and are

destined for extinction (2 Peter 3:10). The source of Adam's physical frame was the "dust of the ground" (Gen. 2:7), and Eve's was "one of his ribs" (v. 21). Since "God is a Spirit" (John 4:24), it was man's spirit that was made in the image and likeness of God (Gen. 1:26–27).

Where Art Thou?

The minds of the first human pair were as pure as God's. Their brows were free of the furrows of shame, and their countenances gleamed with unfettered joy. They greeted the dawn of each day in a state of consummate innocence. One act of sin ruined everything, and upon hearing "the voice of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day" (Gen. 3:8), Adam and Eve scurried to hide among the trees of the garden. God's first question to Adam was indescribably potent, "*Where art thou?*" (v. 9).

God's questions are not designed to elicit information. God is omniscient. He knows all that is knowable. He knows every thought of every mind. He said to Israel, "I know the things that come into your mind, every one of them" (Ezek. 11:5). He knows the weight of the mountains and hills (Isa. 40:12) and when every bird succumbs to death (Matt. 10:29) and the number of hairs on every head (v. 30). The basic intent of divine inquiries is to prompt man to think right about God, himself, and all related matters; to engage in personal scrutiny and reflection of one's life and conduct before God.

Adam needed to know why he was where he was. Is it not of eternal value for a man to know where and why he is at all times of his life? Noah needed to know why he was drunk, naked, and exposed in his tent (Gen. 9:21). The first generation from Egypt needed to know why they were wandering in the wilderness instead of enjoying rest, peace, and the material delights of the land of Canaan. They possessed head knowledge as to why (Num. 14:26–39) but not heart perception as is illustrated by their immediate (vv. 40–45) and later conduct (ch. 16).

Saul was informed of God's indictment of his usurpation of priestly functions (1 Sam. 13:8–14), but for almost the whole of his reign, he refused to allow God's rejection of his rule over Israel to promote personal analysis of his heart before God, and he paid for his failure with the loss of his life and soul (ch. 31). If David had slowed down in his lustful pursuit of Bathsheba long enough to inquire of himself, "Where am I in my relationship with God, and what am I doing?", he would likely never have "inquired after the woman" (2 Sam. 11:3).

At the commencement of his rule, Solomon confessed to God, "I am but a little child: I know not how to go out or come in" (1 Kings 3:7). If Solomon had maintained this humble disposition of heart, continually buttressed by personal

inspection and asking of himself, “Where am I in my walk with God?”, he would never have constructed a harem with 999 too many wives and concubines. Ezekiel described a righteous son who pondered the sins of his wicked father and refused to walk in his footsteps (Ezek. 18:14–17).

If Israel had mused upon the sins of the heathens, they would in all probability never have uttered those deadly sentiments: “We will have a king over us; that we also may be like all the nations” (1 Sam. 8:19–20). Perpetual solemn deliberation of one’s state in the sight of God’s omnipresent eye would likely have saved Israel from Assyrian captivity (2 Kings 17:23), Judah from Babylonian chains (25:11), the elders of Judah from “idols in their heart” (Ezek. 14:3), Jonah from the belly of the fish (Jonah 1:17), Peter from the devil’s fire (Luke 22:54–55), Ananias and Sapphira from lying to the Holy Spirit (Acts 5:3), and many in the church from apostasy (2 Thess. 2:3).

Who Told Thee That Thou Wast Naked?

When Adam answered God’s initial question by pointing to his nakedness, fear upon hearing God’s voice, and an attempt to conceal himself among the trees of the garden, God raised two additional questions: “*Who told thee that thou wast naked? Hast thou eaten of the tree, whereof I commanded thee that thou shouldest not eat?*” (Gen. 3:11). Every question that God has ever asked, from the “Where art thou” of Genesis 3:9 to the “Wherefore didst thou marvel” of Revelation 17:7, always gets to the heart of the issue and man’s need.

Adam needed to understand how he had moved from the world of God—God and perfection, man and innocence of Genesis 1–2—to the inexpressible tragedy of Genesis 3:6. This was the greatest catastrophe of the ages, from time’s beginning to its inevitable end, and this journey consisted of one step. Adam lived for 930 years (Gen. 5:5). Could there have possibly been a single day in his lengthy life when he was able to sever himself from the disastrous implications of the three questions that God asked of him? Were there not innumerable exquisite sunrises that were ruined as his first conscious moment attached itself to these three momentous inquiries that God asked of him in the final minutes of his life in Eden?

What Is This That Thou Hast Done?

God inquired of Eve, “*What is this that thou hast done?*” (Gen. 3:13). Personal contemplation is one of man’s greatest needs. Of himself the psalmist declared, “I commune with mine own heart: and my spirit made diligent search” (Ps. 77:6). Proficiency abounds in probing the heart of one’s neighbor. The majority of people know more about their neighbor’s heart and life than their

own. They spend more time there. “David’s anger was greatly kindled against the man” (2 Sam. 12:5) who robbed the poor man of his lamb, while exhibiting a dismissive spirit over depriving Uriah of his wife in order to gratify his own lust.

Jonah was eager to witness the destruction of an entire city while oblivious to his perverse spirit, destitute of human pity. The Pharisee, blind to his own self-righteous spirit, donned the black robes of judgment, exalted himself, and paraded his good works before God, peering down from his lofty perch with a censorious eye on a lowly publican (Luke 18:9–14). He prayed “with himself” (v. 11). He, not God, was the object of his prayer. He was incapable of discerning his true state before God. He burned the bridge of mercy over which he would have to pass for the salvation of his soul. “For he shall have judgment without mercy, that hath shewed no mercy; and mercy rejoiceth against judgment” (James 2:13).

Eve needed to take a long lingering look at what she had done. Satan’s intent in his approach to Eve was to induce her to improper thinking about God. He suggested that God’s prohibition regarding the tree of knowledge of good and evil was an attempt to bar her from greater blessings than those presently possessed. Eating the forbidden fruit would enable her to equal God in wisdom and knowledge. In the course of this brief conversation, Eve changed her thinking about God. God’s question was designed to mend the impairment in her mind. As a man “thinketh in his heart, so is he” (Prov. 23:7). Man is the product of his thinking. No man can think wrong and do right. A heart bent on evil is the source of wicked words and deeds (Matt. 12:35). The world of Noah’s day was a perpetual stream of human depravity because its inhabitants possessed hearts that were “only evil continually” (Gen. 6:5). Thinking right about God is the key to “bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ” (2 Cor. 10:5).

“And Adam knew Eve his wife; and she conceived, and bare Cain, and said, I have gotten a man from the Lord” (Gen. 4:1). Cain was the world’s first baby. He was a gift from God. Eve’s acknowledgment of this truth is evidence that she had returned to thinking right about God. Her heart beat with joy as she gazed at the lovely and innocent countenance of her first child. God told Eve, “In sorrow thou shalt bring forth children” (3:16), but Jesus said, “A woman when she is in travail hath sorrow, because her hour is come: but as soon as she is delivered of the child, she remembereth no more the anguish, for joy that a man is born into the world” (John 16:21). Eve’s heart beat with double joy at the birth of Abel. Children belong to God (Ps. 127:3). Figuratively speaking, the womb is God’s home where He sits and weaves together the various parts of

the baby's body in preparation for its birth (139:13–16). In condemnation of Judah's grievous sin of offering their children as sacrifices to idols, God said, "Thou hast slain my children" (Ezek. 16:21).

God provided a pattern for Cain and Abel's entrance into His presence for worship and fellowship. Abel's offering by faith was accepted (Heb. 11:4), but Cain's self-will offering was rejected. Cain's sacrifice was an expression of the influence of Satan, to whom he belonged, and the nature of his heart (1 John 3:12). Cain hung his head in anger and dejection.

"God is love" (1 John 4:8). God loved Cain and desired his repentance. The extreme brevity of this account of the first human family raises a thousand unanswered questions. One would think that no two sons have ever been reared in a more intensively permeated home environment of spiritual instruction than Cain and Abel. Surely Adam and Eve spared no effort in instruction and discipline, training their minds in righteousness, speaking to them often of their own failure in Eden and the consequences of their action, constantly addressing the nature of God, Satan, temptation, sin, and their own human frailty. It is stunning that Cain would mature into adulthood, only to grant his allegiance to Satan and be known as one whose "works were evil" (3:12).

If Thou Doest Well, Shalt Thou Not Be Accepted?

In view of the events that followed, it is clear that Cain has almost arrived at the close of any hope for the salvation of his soul. It is the "eleventh hour" of his life's day (Matt. 20:6). He has spurned all previous opportunities to expel Satan from the throne of his heart. He has dismissed divine, parental, and brotherly efforts to change the course of his life. The destiny of his soul hangs in the balance, and time is running out. God knocks at the door for a final time. Love and tenderness characterize God's first three questions to Cain. God queried, "Why art thou wroth? and why is thy countenance fallen?" (Gen. 4:6). God wanted Cain to probe his own heart, to reflect upon the "why" of God's rejection of his offering by asking, "*If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted?*" (v. 7).

Satan has not yet won the war for the soul of Cain. The battle yet rages. Cain can still think right and do right, and God will forgive and accept him. He can yet conquer sin that crouches at the door of his life, eager to devour him. Jesus said to Peter, "Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat: but I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not" (Luke 22:31–32). Satan wanted to triumph in this struggle for the soul of Cain, but God longed for his penitence, and in mercy He pleaded with him to "choose life, that both thou and thy seed may live" (Deut. 30:19).

Where Is Abel Thy Brother?

Cain made the wrong choice and it sealed his doom. He rebuffed God's gentle entreaties to the saving of his soul. He refused to allow humility to subdue his pride. He retained his wrath and killed his brother. God's fourth question, "*Where is Abel thy brother?*" was met with a lie, "I know not," and unexcelled arrogance of an evil heart: "Am I my brother's keeper?" (Gen. 4:9). God answered his own final question, "*What hast thou done?*" by pointing to Abel's blood that "crieth unto me from the ground" (v. 10). Cain soiled the earth with innocent blood, and God informed him that the earth would never let him forget what he had done. When Cain "went out from the presence of the Lord" (v. 16), he never came back. He would spend the remainder of his life wandering from place to place. His life would be void of permanency, security, victories, and contentment. The dawn of each day would only serve to remind him of the ugliness of his past and the hopelessness of his future. He was a man waiting to die as he had lived: lonely, without God, and barren of hope.

2

ABRAHAM, HAGAR, AND SARAH

When Adam and Eve sinned against God by eating the forbidden fruit, they created a problem for which they possessed no cure. Hiding in fear among the trees of the garden with fig leaves covering their private parts was a depiction of their helpless state. Grace always precedes judgment. Prior to passing judgment on the first human pair because of their sin, God's divine favor was manifested in His promise of redemption through the seed of woman (Gen. 3:15). For four thousand years, this seed nestled safely in the loins of the faithful remnant until it was deposited in the womb "of Mary, of whom was born Jesus, who is called Christ" (Matt. 1:16). Sin is not stagnant. It is never satisfied. It is always on the move, searching for another victim. It coiled around the heart of Cain to his ruin, and "Cain rose up against Abel his brother, and slew him" (Gen. 4:8).

"Cain went out from the presence of the Lord" (Gen. 4:16) and took his family tree with him. They corrupted the righteous descendants of Seth and laid the foundation for the global flood. Noah lay drunk and exposed in his tent, proving that the problem that started with 3:6 could not be remedied by even the most righteous of the earth. The coming reality of the divisions of Noah's descendants are set forth in chapter 10, and the how and why in chapter 11. Genesis 12:1–7 presses the nation, land, and seed promises that God made to Abraham. The incremental unfolding of the eternal plan of God to solve the problem of 3:6 commences with the first gospel sermon of verse 15. The seed of woman becomes the seed of Abraham through which God would bless "all families of the earth" (12:3). Inspiration describes this promise as the proclamation of the "gospel unto Abraham" (Gal. 3:8).

Whence Camest Thou?

Abraham's spiritual greatness was not devoid of failures, self-induced trials, and sins. God's promises to Abraham pointed to Canaan as the place wherein these promises would mature, be fulfilled, and be enjoyed (Gen. 12:1–7; 11:31; Acts 7:2–4; Heb. 11:8–9). At the first sign of trouble in Canaan, Abraham headed toward Egypt. There is much to suggest that this was one of the worst decisions