

Bible Answers to Bible Questions

& Interesting Facts About the Holy Word of God

BEREAN BIBLE INSTITUTE, INC.

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Issue 3

From the President's Desk

A Global Impact

Berean Bible Institute has been training pastors, missionaries, and leaders for twenty-seven years. When BBI was founded, the stated purpose was to provide a Bible institute that would focus exclusively on training and preparing pastors, missionaries, and leaders who would proclaim the Gospel of the Grace of God. We praise the Lord that our alumni are already serving in ministry all around the world. We also praise the Lord because we continue to fulfill our purpose and mission. Currently, we are training students in twelve countries, including the United States. Over the years, we have seen the need to adapt to those who desire to train for ministry but are outside the traveling range of our physical facilities, so we stepped out in faith by creating a platform to provide needed ministry training that can be done from almost anywhere in the world. We are honored to be used by the Lord to train leaders who are making a global impact for the Lord Jesus Christ, and we most certainly could not do it without the financial support of those who believe in our mission. If you believe in the mission of Berean Bible Institute, I would like to ask you to consider joining our team and support what God is doing through BBI.

A New BBI Board Member

I want to announce the addition of a new member to the Berean Bible Institute Board of Directors. At our last meeting, the BBI board unanimously decided to invite Mr. Randy Wiskirchen to join the BBI Board of Directors. Randy is currently President of the Kettle Moraine Bible Church Board of Elders where he has served for over 21 years. Randy and his wife Penni are alumni of BBI and are parents to four adult children and nine grandchildren. Randy

was a business owner and does consulting work for Christian ministries.

Have You Considered Training for Ministry?

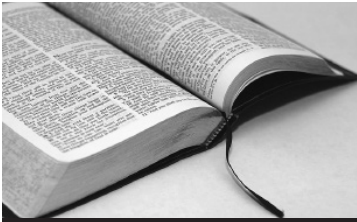
Today we see young people pursuing all sorts of occupations. When is the last time a parent or a godly adult encouraged or challenged a young person to pray about going into the pastorate or serving as a missionary? From time to time, I am asked why BBI is not producing more pastors and missionaries. To be honest, we are training more individuals who are preparing for ministry than we ever have. However, more must be done to encourage both young and not-so-young to prayerfully consider going into the ministry. The local church is God's fertile soil and serves as a wonderful environment whereby those attending can begin to discover their gifts and use them to serve the Lord. BBI stands ready to help prepare those whom God leads into the ministry so that they might fulfill God's calling on their lives.

Congratulations are in Order!

We would like to congratulate Pastor Kevin Craesmeyer on being called to the pastorate at Preakness Bible Church in Wayne, New Jersey. Pastor Kevin and his wife Beatriz have three daughters as well as a boy on the way. Pastor Kevin continues to take courses at BBI while serving in this historic Grace Church. We praise the Lord for our students who faithfully serve the Lord Jesus Christ and boldly proclaim the Gospel of God's magnificent grace. Please keep Pastor Kevin, Beatriz, and their family in your prayers as they diligently serve the Lord at Preakness Bible Church.

Dr. Robert E. Nix, President

"All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works." II Timothy 3:16



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QUESTION: Would it be all right if, in the case of unwell seniors, I didn't ask for their healing but that God would help them through what they're going through, even if that means going home to God? Sometimes it seems focusing my prayers on praying for their unsaved family and friends to accept God's salvation seems more appropriate than requesting for their dying loved one to stay here on earth. I believe with all my heart God is with us every step of the way back home to him.

ANSWER: I think every one of us can relate to ministering to a faithful believer in failing health. It is a difficult time. As we stand by their bedside, we reflect on the powerful example they have set for us in serving the Lord. When they become bedridden with pain and confusion, we want to see them go back to healthier days. We want to keep them here with us for our benefit and comfort. Yet, that is not always what is best for them or, even, other people.

I think of Jesus Who, in His humanity, was certainly not looking forward to the painful death that awaited Him. As He prayed, sweating drops of blood on Mount Olivet (Luke 22:44), for the Father to *"let this cup pass from Me"* (Matt. 26:39), Jesus was requesting that He be able to avoid the trial and pain that awaited Him that very night. Jesus acknowledged to three of His disciples that night on the mount that His *"soul was exceeding sorrowful, even unto death"* (Matt. 26:38). Yet, His request was prefaced and reliant on two things: *"if it be possible"* and *"nevertheless, not as I will, but as Thou will"* (Matt. 26:39). We can learn many things from Jesus' actions on the night of His betrayal.

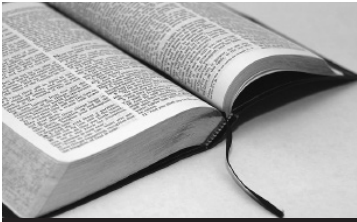
First, specific requests for our own circumstances or intercessions on behalf of others are not wrong. It is an emotional time when a loved one is dying, both for the one physically suffering and the surrounding family and friends. We often do not know how to pray. We are broken and pleading to the Lord on behalf of our suffering loved one. Life on earth is full of disappointments and difficulties; the best we can do in these times (and all times) is pray. It is not automatically selfish to pray for someone to make it through surgery safely or to be healed of their

ailment(s). The Lord cried out for Himself when he requested, *"let this cup pass from Me."*

Second, grieving is not a sin. Faithful believers who have lived surrendered lives on behalf of Jesus Christ are not called to rejoice FOR suffering, even as they can rejoice DESPITE suffering (II Cor. 12:9-10; Phil. 4:4; see also John 16:20; James 1:2-3; I Pet. 4:13-14). Believers may feel helpless at times, but we are never hopeless. It is due to our position in Christ and secure eternal destination that we grieve with hope (I Thess. 4:13). Even with our feelings of helplessness, Paul assured us that this is when God's strength is evident (II Cor. 12:10). So, even though Jesus felt so distraught unto death, He turned to the One Who could give Him the strength and direction that was needed, God the Father. We should also turn to the Father in these times, giving our anxiety to Him (Phil. 4:6-7) and casting our cares upon Him.

Finally, all this is dependent on the desire for God's will to be done. Part of God's will is for believers to allow the Holy Spirit to work our tribulations to bear the fruit of hope (Rom. 5:1-5). We may want our unresponsive loved one that is confined to the hospital bed to fully recover, but God knows what is best. We must recognize that the ultimate form of healing is to be absent from the body and present with the Lord (II Cor. 5:8). Death is gain for the believer (Phil. 1:21). If your loved one knows the Lord, the very best outcome is to go to the Lord in Heaven. And, yes, our attention should always be for the Lord to use the circumstances to draw unbelievers to Him, for we know their salvation is according to the desire of God (I Tim. 2:4).

In direct answer to your question: No, it is not wrong to pray for a believer who is suffering to be delivered from their circumstances through death, as long our ultimate desire is not our will be done but that God's desire is accomplished. I must admit, there have been times when I have stood by the bedside of a dear believer who was unresponsive and suffering, held their hand, and prayed that the Lord would take them home to be with Him. I still miss them and think of them often, but I can take



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joy in knowing my loss is their gain, and that God always knows the perfect outcome.

QUESTION: What are your thoughts on the blasphemy of the Spirit? Is this something that can happen today?

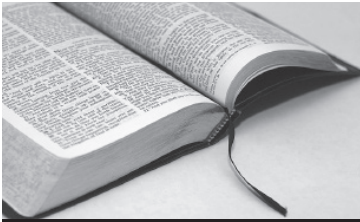
ANSWER: The phrase *“blasphemeth against the Holy Ghost”* appears in Matthew 12:31, Mark 3:29, and Luke 12:10. Unfortunately, many religious teachers ignore the context of these passages and apply this statement to all kinds of situations to keep their congregants in fear of somehow losing their salvation. Meanwhile, the context of these passages is of utmost importance.

First, each of the passages occurs during Jesus' earthly ministry. Jesus was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel (Matt. 15:24) in order to confirm the promises given unto their fathers (Rom. 15:8). Dispensationally, Jesus Christ came under the Covenant program that God made with Israel. Any non-Israelite (Gentile, Samaritan) would need to arrive at eternal life by arranging themselves under Israel's covenant (Exod. 12:48; John 4:22; Acts 2:10). Jesus Christ came to progress that Covenant program by serving as the Messiah Who would transition the nation from the Old Covenant (Mosaic Law) to the New Covenant (Heb. 12:24). The Holy Spirit plays an important part in applying the benefits of the New Covenant. It was the Holy Spirit who would evidence, convict, and rebirth (John 16:7-11). To reject Him would be to reject eternal life. The covenant required an initial recognition of God's working (through Spiritual evidence such as tongues, healings, revelations, etc.), repentance of national sins (I Kings 8:23, 33-40, 44-50), turning to the Messiah (John 1:12; 3:36; 5:40; 6:35-37; 7:37; 14:6;), and persisting in following Him until His Second Coming (Matt. 10:22; Heb. 3:14; James 1:12; I Pet. 1:5-9; II Pet. 2:20-21; Rev. 2:10; 3:10). In order to enter the land, the individual would have to place their faith in the Sent One to accomplish all that God covenanted with the nation. To reject the working of God through the Holy Spirit meant they would not enter into the Kingdom.

Second, Matthew 12 and Mark 3 have similar

(if not the same) contexts; that is, the danger of attributing the work of God to the Devil. To do so meant rejecting the offer of salvation. Using the Matthew 12 account, the Pharisees, having decided they needed to rid themselves of Jesus (v. 14), saw their opportunity after Jesus healed a demon possessed man (v. 22). The Pharisees attributed Jesus' ability to cast out demons to Satan (v. 24), thereby, blaspheming the Holy Spirit Who was actually the cause of the miracle. Jesus responds by, first, stating the absurdity of their claim (vs. 25-27) and, second, announcing what was really happening: the Spirit of God was verifying the promised, prophesied Kingdom through the Jesus Christ (vs. 28, 30). Then, we have our statement: *“All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men: but the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven unto men”* (v. 31). And, in verse 32, Jesus states that they could deny His claims, but they could not deny the evidence done by the Holy Spirit. So, then, the warning against *“blaspheming against the Holy Spirit”* has to do with denying God's working through the verification of the Holy Spirit. If they continued to attribute the Spirit's work through Jesus (and through His apostles after His ascension) to Satan, they were choosing to deny God and would not enter into the Kingdom.

Finally, the context of Luke 12 is Jesus warning His followers against the untruths of the Pharisees. They should not fear them more than their Christ. The consequences of turning from Christ were eternal, whereas the results of rejecting the ungodly Jewish leaders was temporary. Luke 12 makes it clear that not acknowledging the claims of Jesus Christ and rejecting the evidence of the Holy Spirit were really one and the same (vs. 8-10) with one vital difference: the nation could initially reject the Son of Man (and they would by calling for His crucifixion) but not the powerful work of the Holy Spirit after the Son's ascension (early Acts and Revelation). Jesus on the cross cried out, *“Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do”* (Luke 23:34), but the Holy Spirit would make God's work undeniable, and to deny the Spirit's work (blaspheming) would equal eternal rejection of the offer of eternal life by God with the Son.



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The blasphemy of the Holy Spirit really has a direct link to the covenant nature of God working with the nation of Israel. For a religious leader today to use this warning to keep people in fearful rejection to a church or a religion is a gross misunderstanding of Scripture and an abuse of the grace God is offering today.

Today, in this Dispensation of Grace under which we live, Israel and her covenant program has been temporarily set aside as God offers mercy to all regardless of one's lineage or nation (Rom. 11:32). Salvation today comes by an individual's faith alone in the finished work of Jesus Christ (Rom. 3:22-26; Eph. 2:8-9). When a person trusts in the death,

burial, and resurrection of Christ to save them, their salvation is complete (Col. 2:10a); they are saved eternally (Eph. 1:13-14); nothing can ever separate them from God again (Rom. 8:35-39). It is impossible for a believer to blaspheme against the Holy Ghost in the way it is used in the Gospel accounts. The only loose application we could make with this phrase today is when someone rejects salvation offered through the Grace of God and faithfulness of the work of Jesus Christ. Paul mentions this person would have "*fallen from grace*" (Gal. 5:4); in other words, they have spurned the offer of salvation through God's grace and are trying to earn salvation themselves by being righteous through the Law. This person, too, would be an unbeliever. The true believer HAS the Holy Spirit indwelling him or her (Rom. 8:3-4, 11), and securely awaits and anticipates an eternal existence in Heaven where righteousness reigns (Rom. 8:16-18; Gal. 5:5).

(The questions in this edition were answered by Matthew Ritchey, BBI Editor.)

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