

Rain 001

Things don't always work out the way we want them to, or the way we think they will. Sometimes we don't even see it coming. We get hit with some form of pain out of nowhere leaving us feeling desperate and helpless. That's the way life is. Still, it makes us wonder how God can let these things happen to us. How God can just stand by and watch us suffer. Where is God when it really hurts? Maybe God is actually closer to us than we think. Maybe it's when we're in these situations, where everything seems to be falling apart, that God gets an opportunity to remind us of how much he really loves us.

Flame 002

Love those shoes. Really? The same way I love my wife? What's up with the word "love"? It doesn't have much meaning when we use it so loosely. Maybe we don't really get it. Maybe we don't understand what real love is. What it involves to really love somebody. What it means to give yourself to someone else. We mistake things like friendship, commitment, or lust for love, but God wired us a certain way to experience all that love was really meant to be. Not to hold us back or to make us miss out on the best that life has to offer. God created love, and wants us to feel it all in the way it's meant to be felt.

Trees 003

We want to know why we are here. If our lives really matter. How our religion is relevant to this life. Today. We want to understand what significance this minute, hour, week, month, and year has to our lives. To our world. We need a God who cares about this life, in this world, right now. We want to understand why everything we think, everything we say, and everything we do matters. We don't want to just sit back and wait for something to happen or someday to come. We want to know if all the choices we make now will shape our world and lives for eternity. Because we want our lives to have meaning today, and our lives today to have meaning forever.

Sunday 004

Why do we do the things we do? Why do we go to church or give money away? Because we're supposed to or because we think God needs it? Do we honestly put on our best clothes for an hour once a week, stand and sit at all the right times, and sing all the appropriate songs for God's sake, or because it'll make us look better to the world around us? We're tired of all the empty rituals and routines. And so is God. God hates it when we call ourselves Christians but ignore all the things he really cares about. He hates it when we go through hollow religious routines out of some feeling of duty or obligation. God doesn't want the meaningless rituals. God wants our hearts.

Noise 005

Why is silence so hard to deal with? Why is it so much easier for us to live our lives with a lot of things going on all the time than to just be in silence? We're constantly surrounded with "voices" that are influencing us on how to think, feel, and behave. Movies, music, TV, Internet, cell phones, and a never-ending barrage of advertising. There's always something going on. Always noise in our lives. But maybe there's a connection between the amount of noise in our lives and our inability to hear God. If God sometimes feels distant to us, maybe it's not because he's not talking to us, but simply because we aren't really listening.

Kickball 006

We always think we know what's missing from our lives in order to really make us happy, don't we? If only I had that car, or that job, or if only I could lose those 15 lbs, then I'd be happy. Really? How often do we want something only to find out that it wasn't that great after all? Sometimes we ask God for things and if he doesn't deliver right away, we start questioning whether God really understands or even cares. Do we really trust God? Do we trust that God is good and sees a bigger picture than we ever could? It's easy to want what's right in front of us, but maybe God knows what's better for us, and sometimes we just can't see it.

Luggage 007

Maybe a friend turned their back on you. Maybe someone you loved betrayed you. We all have wounds and we end up carrying around these things that people have done to us for weeks, months, and sometimes even years. It isn't always easy to forgive these people and after a while these hurts can get really heavy. So the only way to feel better seems to be somehow getting back at the people that hurt us, to get revenge. But does revenge ever truly satisfy? Maybe forgiving isn't something you do for someone else to let them off the hook. Maybe forgiveness is about you. God didn't create you to carry these wounds around. God created you to be free.

Dust 008

Believing in God is important, but what about God believing in us? Believing that we can actually be the kind of people we were meant to be. People of love, compassion, peace, forgiveness, and hope. People who try to do the right thing all of the time. Who act on the endless opportunities around us every day for good, beauty, and truth. It's easy for us to sometimes get down on ourselves. To feel "not good enough" or feel like we don't have what it takes. But maybe if we had more insight into the culture that Jesus grew up in and some of the radical things he did, we'd understand the faith that God has in all of us.

Bullhorn 009

God loves everyone, so a Christian should, too. In fact, Jesus said that the most important thing in life is to love God with everything we've got and love others the same way. But it's not always easy to love everyone around us, is it? Sometimes we strongly disagree with other people's political views, religious beliefs,

behaviours, or something else, and it makes it hard to love them when we feel like we're right and they're very wrong. But Jesus doesn't separate loving God and loving others. So maybe the best way for us to show our love for God is actually by loving other people no matter how hard it sometimes is. Maybe it's the only way.

Lump 010

A lot of us have done things in our lives that we're ashamed of. Some are small things, and some of us have really big and devastating things. Some of us even have things that people close to us don't know about. Personal junk that we keep to ourselves so we don't have to deal with it. Because we don't know how to deal with it, do we? We're afraid that if we try it's just going to make everything worse. But no matter how big our junk is, no matter how much what we've done has impacted the way other people feel about us or how we feel about ourselves, it hasn't changed how God feels about us. God loves us, he always has and always will, and there's nothing we can do to change that.

Rhythm 011

What does it mean to have a relationship with God? What does it look like? For a lot of us it's a hard thing to fully understand. If God is an infinite spirit with no shape or form, how can we possibly relate to that? And what about Jesus? He said he came to give everyone life in its fullest. He came to show us how to live. Maybe it's through trusting Jesus and living the kind of life he taught us to live – a life of truth, love, justice, compassion, forgiveness, and sacrifice – that we have a relationship with God. Maybe the way we live every day, every single choice we make, determines how in tune with God we are.

Matthew 012

Suffering the loss of someone we love can be the most difficult thing in life to deal with. One moment we have them and the next they're gone. What are we supposed to do? How are we supposed to feel? The truth is, there's no certain way we're "supposed" to feel. Whatever we're feeling, it's okay. It's okay to feel shock, anger, denial or whatever we may feel. It's okay. And if we don't feel anything at all, that's okay too. It's okay to have no answers and no explanations. Because sometimes all the reasoning and comforting words in the world just isn't what we need. What might help us however is to understand how Jesus dealt with this kind of loss

Rich 013

There's a popular bumper sticker that reads "God Bless America," but hasn't America already been blessed? It's easy for us to fall into a mindset of viewing "our" world as "the" world, because it's all we generally see. We're constantly bombarded with images of the latest styles and models of everything, and it can easily leave us feeling like what we have isn't enough because we see people that have even more than us. But how does what we have compare to what most people in the world have? Maybe what we have is enough; maybe it's more than enough. Maybe God has blessed us with everything we have so we can bless and give to others.

Breathe 014

With everything that we've got going on every day, how many of us ever think about our breathing, about the meaning of breathing? Yet, for thousands of years, people have understood that our physical breath is a picture of a deeper spiritual reality. In the Bible, the word for "breath" is the same as the word for "spirit." There's an inherent dilemma at the core of what makes us human. We've all been created in the image of God and possess immense power and strength. And at the same time our lives are incredibly vulnerable and fragile. Maybe if we had more insight into the meaning of breathing, we would better understand how God created us as human beings.

You 015

Some of the central claims of the Christian faith are the source of many discussions and heated debates. But are we always debating the right things? Maybe some of our discussions would change significantly if we had more insight into the actual circumstances that surrounded the first people of the Christian movement – if we had a better understanding of the things they did in the context of the world they lived in. Maybe some of the claims of the Christian faith that we typically perceive to be unique aren't really that special at all. And at the same time maybe we don't always put enough emphasis on the things that truly should matter in our lives.

Store 016

We all get angry about things from time to time – some of us more often than others. For some of us, it feels like we're constantly on the brink of losing it, where it doesn't take much to get angry about anything. And this kind of anger can be seen everywhere we go – at work, in traffic, at the store, at home. But what is really at its root? Anger is often looked at as a bad thing, but are there things actually worth getting angry about? Maybe if we had a better understanding of our anger and where it comes from, we could learn how to channel it towards something constructive – something that's bigger than ourselves.

Today 017

How much time and energy do we spend wishing things were how they used to be? We often think about times in our past when things were different and want our lives to be like that again. Some of us have even come to believe that our best days may actually be behind us. But if we're in some way hung up on the past, what does that mean for our lives now? How are we and those around us affected if we're not fully present? If we're longing for the way things used to be, what does that really say about our understanding and appreciation of our lives today? Maybe we need to learn to embrace our past for what it is, in order to live our lives to the fullest, right here, right now.

Name 018

We all compare ourselves to others. We spend our lives wondering what others think and say about us. Some of us even wish we were someone else. We question why we are the way we are and not the way we wish we could be. Some of us have let the expectations of others dictate who we've become. We act a certain way to be accepted but know that we're being untrue. But why are we so concerned with what other people think, say, or look like? What does it say about us if we are unable to accept who we are? Maybe if we really knew our true selves, we wouldn't give so much attention to other peoples' lives and live more in tune with the life God wants for us.