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Week 1

Which Button Do You Push to Get God to Come Out?

Day 1

Which Button Do You Push to Get God to Come Out?

Jesus answered, "I am the way, and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. If you really knew me, you would know my Father as well. From now on, you do know him and have seen him." John 14:6-7

The rural high school student seated at the computer card catalog looked puzzled and exasperated. All lunch period, the pretty, dark-haired sophomore had been there in front of the screen. Other students came and went around her.

Noticing this, Linda, the librarian, approached the girl. She wondered what the student was researching. Why didn't the girl look around the library for the listing she had on the computer screen?

"Another English class research project?" Linda wondered. "Probably." The student seemed stuck. Linda moved closer and asked her, "May I help you?"

"I'm trying to find this book." The student pointed to the screen.

"Yes," the librarian replied, "and the book you want is here in the library. No one has it checked out."

Still the teen sat in the chair scanning the screen, the keyboard, the hard drive, looking for anything that would give her a clue as to what to do next.

"Do you need more help?" Linda asked.

"Yes," the student said. "I really need this book! Which button do you push to get the book to come out?"

Even without looking for a button, we can find the way, the truth and the life. The button to push that brings God is the Bible. He speaks to us through it and gives us directions for a better life. Tried it your own way? I did. Try it God's way. Let him surprise you. His answers aren't even in the A-Z alphabet!

Thinking you're going to hit a wall? God moves it!

Rough times and smoother ones are part of the journey. Why not let him guide you every day and laugh at his surprises with me?

Further study: Psalm 19:7-8



Week 1

Which Button Do You Push to Get God to Come Out?

Day 4

You'll Never Be a Pest in God's Eyes!

Come, let us bow down in worship, let us kneel before the LORD our Maker.
Psalm 95:6.

The seven-year-old proudly brought her pet in a fancy insect cage to show off at school.

"It's a caterpillar," Carlie explained. Then she told how this amazing creature would turn into a butterfly and look beautiful. She carefully held the squirming creature in her hand so all the class could pet its smooth, striped skin and let it curl with delight in their hands.

"I've been letting it sleep in its cage by my bed," she added.

There was a whole room full of "Ooos" and "Ahhhs" as the boys and girls moved forward to take a closer look. They thought they probably had seen something like this in the dirt before, but Carlie gave them reason to take a second look. How long before it turned into a butterfly? They all wanted to see!

Recognizing its special qualities, the children took the pet for a walk and picked fresh leaves for the caterpillar's afternoon snack. In the afternoon, Carlie and her friends said, "He's feeling so lonely! Just look at that sad face!" So they brought it out again for another round of petting and admiration.

Never had a pet had a life like this! Late in the day, I got a close look at Carlie's pet while it was sleeping. To the children, the creature was perfect. But I knew his type: this pampered creature was never going to change to a butterfly.

It was, in truth, a cutworm!

The cutworm is famous in gardening circles, taking first choice of juicy vegetable plants. Gentle gardeners everywhere premeditate its murder using poison, a trowel, a bucket of water, or a garden tiller. There's nothing left for even a decent burial.

How do I know? I'd done it, of course. If Carlie knew that "murderer" was stamped across my forehead, she'd never leave her pet with me for a minute.

Carlie would never allow any kind of bad end for her pet.

Nor would God wish bad for us. We are all precious creatures in his eyes. Even those of us who act like cutworms are unique and appreciated. In the same way that Carlie and the children loved and cared for their caterpillar, God cares for us.

God doesn't think of us as too stressed, too busy, or too sick to be loved. We're not! We are just what God wants: someone who is one of a kind and who is a custom-designed piece!



You deserve the best and he has it for you. Cutworms, slugs, and squash beetles may be the hungry, the bad, the ugly. They're part of God's universe. You are one, part of God's flock, never, ever to be left behind.

Further study: Genesis 1:26-27



Questions Week 1: Which Button Do You Push to Get God to Come Out?

Who is God to you at this point in your life?

Give an example of God in your or someone else's life.

What can you do for yourself today in thoughts and action to appreciate the gift you are from God?

Predict how much change there would be if you bombarded someone with love for six months who seemed to be unlovable?

Reflections:



Week 2

Is This Heart-Thumping Terror Or Just another Monday?

Day 1

Heart-Thumping Terror in Everyday Life and the 100% Proven Cure

When I am afraid, I will trust in you. In God, whose word I praise, in God I trust; I will not be afraid. What can mortal man do to me? Psalm 56:3-4

Her head was buzzing with fatigue and she was seeing stars by the time Sandra arrived home from a Women's Prayer Conference. It had been a long and sleepy four-hour drive. Now it was 2:30 a.m. The night was dark and moonless. Her husband was sleeping soundly.

As she entered the house quietly through the side door, Sandra tiptoed down the hall into the bedroom so she wouldn't wake Jim, her husband.

She set her suitcase down gently in the dark. Then Sandra felt around for something she needed desperately—toothpaste! She closed her hand around the tube. Now she would be able to end this long day and go to bed with clean teeth. She went to the bathroom without turning on the light, squeezed the contents onto her toothbrush, and started brushing.

Immediately, Sandra knew it wasn't toothpaste! It was greasy. No fresh mint taste, either. It tasted like medicine. Yuck! Sandra snapped on the light, and then realized with a shock what the tube was: cream for clearing a yeast infection. She spit it out and kept spitting. Sandra hoped and prayed that it wasn't too late! Jim slept on. He had no clue his wife's life might be in danger, and she wasn't going to wake him.

Even though it was just hours before sunup, Sandra picked up the phone to call her close friend, wife of the local pharmacist. She told her about the greasy paste and what she had done.

"Ask Mel if I'm going to be okay!"

Sally nudged her husband until he groaned. Mel's sleepy reply was,

"Tell her she won't have to worry about yeast infections in her MOUTH for a long time!"

God is there for us in all hours of our need. It can be everyday challenges or life-threatening needs. Fear is not God's answer, but can be as common in our everyday life as a hiccup. His is assurance that no matter what you give to him, he will handle it. We can think of no solutions, but he can. When you are afraid, can you turn the challenge over to God?

Further study: 1 Peter 3:13-15



Week 3

Is Red Your Natural Face Color?

Day 1

Seth's Secret for Making Work More Fun

Do not offer the parts of your body to sin, as instruments of wickedness, but rather offer yourselves to God, as those who have been brought from death to life; and offer the parts of your body to him as instruments of righteousness. For sin shall not be your master, because you are not under law, but under grace. Romans 6:13-14

"Since Moses came, I haven't had a day off for the last seventeen days!" The muscled teen was knee deep in mud under a cloudless sky bleached white by a desert sun.

"Yeah," agreed another sweaty worker mixing mud for bricks. "We can't even use straw now with the adobe bricks. I'd say that the real problem around here is management! They don't understand what it takes to do the job!"

"That's right!" a tanned older man quipped as he angrily slung mud into a form. "He's interfering with my benefits! I don't like it! Since all the fish died because Moses turned the Nile to blood, I haven't been able to grill even one tilapia!"

"And how do they expect us to raise gardens for food when we don't have any time off while the sun is up?"

"And they keep cutting staff so we have four times as much to do with more lashes. The new managers are whipping crosshatch patterns on my back! They even refuse to let us go home early in bad sandstorms!"

"Just how do they expect the women and seniors to build all these pyramids? There's no respect around here!"

Then Seth came along for his shift, his loud jolly voice singing a joyful song. He took the heavy clay bricks out of the molds and stacked them neatly.

"That figures," complaining Korah mumbled. "He's only been married a week and a slave in this outfit for just a few weeks. Give him time."

But they did give him time. Seth continued to joyfully praise God and said, "I'm glad to have a job in these hard times. I have food, a wonderful wife and God, and I'm getting a good tan!"

Zooming forward about 3,500 years, this is the kind of conversation we might hear in any employee lounge. Are we going to be a Korah or a Seth?

I had to ask myself that very question. When my company came out the lowest in the region on employee morale, I gloated at first: "Now maybe they'll change this..." Then I stopped as my ears burned. I realized that with my complaining, I was part of the low spirits. It certainly undid my pledge to God and fellow employees to lift them with words, to give gift baskets for those fighting illness, and to bake cookies for the staff



now and then. All that was for nothing the second I said, “The real problem around here is....”

I failed to control my tongue. It’s a small part of the body, but more powerful and damaging than a fire fanned by the wind. A tongue rattling on can overtake friendships, kill love, cause families or groups to argue and split, and build walls taller than the highest mountain in the galaxy.

Seth had the real answer: controlling his tongue and his attitude.

Jesus wants us to build bridges, not walls. How well do we do that?

Further study: Ephesians 4:29-32



Week 5

There's Always Room for Improvement! It's the Biggest Room in the House!

Day 5

Who is Calling, Please?

The idols of the nations are silver and gold, made by the hands of men. They have mouths, but cannot speak, eyes, but they cannot see; they have ears, but cannot hear, nor is there breath in their mouths. Those who make them will be like them, and so will all who trust in them. Psalm 135:15-18

Paula had been sound asleep when the phone rang so late, she thought it might be a family emergency or about Uncle Harry, who was going downhill fast. "Huh?" she answered sleepily.

"Hel-lo." The recorded voice began, "I'm Ra-chel of Card Services. I'm calling to tell you your spec-ial of-fer of a 6.5 in-ter-est rate is about to expire." Paula slammed down the phone.

On her way to work, Paula noticed the car was running on an eyedropper of gas, so she stopped to fuel up. As soon as she picked up the nozzle, the gas pump broke out in a female voice, "I'm so glad to *see you!* You're just the person I wanted to talk to!" The voice told her she was hungry for popcorn, a soda or candy bar available inside the station store. Right! It was 5:15 in the morning! "No talking gas pumps, please!" Paula found a well-used "mute" button and pushed it.

When she got home after a crazy work day, Paula took a deep breath, enjoyed a hot cup of tea, and then played back her messages. The first through seventh: "Hel-lo! This is an important message for Priscilla. If this is Priscilla, press one. If Priscilla cannot come to the phone, press two." No Priscilla at this number. Number eight call: "Hel-lo. This is an im-por-tant mes-sage about a state-sponsored Adopt-a-Wolf Program. If you want to save a life and have your very own wolf at your doorstep, and share the ex-per-i-ence of a lifetime, please press two now!" Number nine: "Hel-lo. We are calling to confirm Priscilla's order number DK309867-5 for two elephants and a month's supply of large animal food. You are one of the first fifty to order, so included is a free bonus African acacia tree so your new pets will feel welcome!" Paula had ordered no such thing!

Later, when she wanted to withdraw money to buy gifts, Paula heard, "Enter your three-digit identification number. Pick from the following options: 1) access accounts 2) check balance 3) trade account balances with someone else." She was so stunned trying to process this information, she didn't press anything. The message kept going. "That is not your number. Good-bye!" None of these offered a customer service option where she could talk to a real person to stop these calls. How Paula missed the personal touch!



Naturally, I have exaggerated this story. While our current lifestyle becomes dominated with push-button and recorded transactions, online bill-paying, and robotic customer service representatives, God's open door policy has not changed since the beginning. Relationships with him are personal. That's the bottom line. They involve sticking one's neck out, being concerned and genuinely interested. God does that with each person forever and always.

How can you improve your relationship with God today?

Further study: 1 John 3:1



Week 7

“A” Is For Action!

Day 2

Getting Over the Impossible

Jesus replied, “What is impossible with men is possible with God.” Luke 18:27

“I’m Jo and I’m a slob.” I could imagine standing up in a 12-step meeting and admitting this. Before God stepped in, I figured I could never overcome this habit. Not so.

Do most women have an immaculate home and never battle disorder, dirt, and chaos? One mother’s children learned to give themselves a bath, make their beds and fix their own meals by the time they were four. She never had any of them show up in a dripping mud-covered trash bag after being towed on an inner tube behind someone’s four-wheel drive.

“Dear Lord, please guide me and help me overcome my sloppiness.” Not long after, I forgot I’d asked Him. If you pray for rain, then get out your umbrella. If you pray for God to heal you of sloppy habits, then stock up on rags. I didn’t.

One day, the doorbell rang and I answered wearing my project clothes covered with a layer of drywall dust, which I’d tracked through the house. My hair stuck out of leg holes of the underwear on my head. On the porch were two women staring at me with their mouths open: Miss County Beauty Winner and her sponsor. They were just on time for

their appointment for coaching on the pageant speech. Miss Beauty’s immaculate hair sparkled with a tiara. Her heels and designer dress were stunning. The appointment was in my day planner, but I hadn’t looked at it that day. Grand Mal Embarrassment set in.

God has a sense of humor, you know that?

As a teacher, I added to my income by painting houses during the summer. I went to the first house to work. There was dog poop welded to the rug in the corner. I cleaned it up. Dust bunnies there were big enough to knit together into a Volkswagen. To say there was disorder in that house was like calling a boat wake the same as a tidal wave.

After that fifteen-hour day, I went home, vacuumed, cleaned toilets and washed dishes. “I can actually do this,” I realized.

The next house had an office and a kitchen that needing painting. Before I started the kitchen, I gathered up stinky used baby diapers littered along the wall. The cupboards moved, not because of a poltergeist, but because of ants: millions of them.

I went home to disinfect and organize my own cupboards.

“Very funny, God!” I told Him. “What’s next?”

The next three houses were about the same, and I changed for the better. Having an uncluttered house helps to have an uncluttered life.



Organization is constant, *not a one-time process*. All of us can organize most of the trouble spots at home and life in five-minute segments. Over time, none of it will be cluttered.

God indeed did the impossible with me as he can with you, and with a sense of humor at that. I have, at last, come to terms with how much organization is necessary for a smoother life with fewer dirty dishes and more time for adventure.

What impossible habit can you give to God today?

Further study: Exodus 3 and 4

Give yourself and others the lift of a smile and tickle to your funny bone each day!

Which Button Do You Push to Get God to Come Out?

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is available from this website (signed copies), from Jo's speaking engagements; from internet sites of Amazon, Barnes and Noble, as well as Intermedia Publishing, and can be ordered from any bookstore.

