

Another “Ask the Pastor” session with the confirmation class

Why are there only 12 disciples? Will we be with our families in heaven? Does God think pineapple should go on pizza?

by [Peter W. Marty](#) in the [May 24, 2017](#) issue



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For the final night of our church’s seventh and eighth grade confirmation class, members of the pastoral staff divide up the kids and send them off to different parts of the building for the popular “Ask the Pastor” session. Perched on stools, those of us fielding questions are supposed to take anything thrown at us. I did my best.

Will we get to be with our family in heaven? Let’s imagine so. But maybe we need to think of heaven less as an opportunity to love the people we already know and more as a chance to love everyone we meet. Heaven had better be something greater than having our wants satisfied. Right? It’s about God, not about us. God is at the center of life eternal.

Do you believe God thinks pineapple should be a pizza topping? Absolutely. If a judge sitting on an island in the Pacific can issue an order stopping the president of the United States, and if the McDonald's on that same island can serve spam, why wouldn't Hawaii's most valuable cash crop belong on pizza? (Don't forget that Jesus would have skipped the spam. He was a Jew.)

Why is everything in the Bible so complicated? Can't it just be straightforward? Well, you have to remember that the Bible was written by all kinds of people. Some of them never had the benefit of going through confirmation before they put down their ideas.

Why are there only 12 disciples? I don't really know, but I'm thinking it must be because somebody hadn't yet invented the 15-passenger van.

Who do you think goes to heaven and who goes to hell? First, I wouldn't worry about who goes where. Instead, just love God in incredibly generous ways. Second, according to Jesus, people who walk over the destitute and delight in judging, insulting, and excluding others seem bent on keeping themselves at the center of everything—which is hell. Heaven appears to be unending joy for all who delight in attending to those who know too few blessings in life.

Does God play sports? Whoa. That's a big one. Lots to do in overseeing the universe. If God plays a sport, let's assume it's tennis, because God likes to let love serve.

Does being a pastor interfere with your family life, especially on holidays? Well, being a pastor means pretty much giving up weekends for life. Between weddings and preaching and a whole lot of church stuff, I'm very busy. But the way we love and take care of each other in a family isn't confined to the weekends. I wish my kids were here to answer your question.

Did you like going to church when you were younger? Actually I did, most of the time, though not every experience with church or God knocked my socks off. But many of the really valuable things we do in life are not always exciting. I brush my teeth every morning and night but never stand in front of the mirror and consider that a thrill. Someday, however, if I'm old and rickety and still have a smile with real teeth, I'll be extra grateful for that discipline. Faith is similar in some ways.

Did Jesus have a last name? Yeah. Christ.

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