Bible Topics

1. **Define God –** 
   1. Philosophically/Biblically: God is the all-powerful, all-knowing, all-good, all-present, etc. creator of the universe
      1. c.f.: Philosophical proofs for the existence of God. Cosmological, Teleological, Anthropological, Transcendental, Ontological, Ethical, Practical.
      2. The Bible NEVER proves the existence of God. It presupposes/assumes it. And it asserts that the one who says “There is no God” is a fool (Psalm 14:1).
   2. Mysteriologically/Biblically: God is Father, Son and Holy Spirit…Three distinct persons in one indivisible essence/God.
   3. Anthropologically: A god is that which is trusted and relied upon wholeheartedly to help us in times of need and to give us all good things. This definition applies equally to the true God and to idols. An idol is that which you trust instead of God.
   4. What is God?
      1. Simple Answer: The true God is three persons in one divine essence;
      2. Further explanation: *Immanently*, they are the unbegotten, the begotten, and the one who proceeds; *Economically* he what he has done according to the scriptures.
2. **Why is there a God? –** 
   1. Simple Answer: This is an incoherent/nonsensical question.
      1. This is an incoherent question because you can only ask “why” of something that has a beginning (e.g., why does it rain? Why did Jesus die on the cross? Why did the Reformation happen). But God (and God alone) is eternal (without beginning or end).
   2. Similar legitimate question: Why did God create? - Bible doesn’t say, but there have been appropriate theological answers deduced from biblical teaching.
      1. God is love (1 John),
         1. love is charity, charity gives.
         2. In order to give there must be a recipient.
         3. God loves within himself, Father loves the Son, etc.; but since his love knows no bounds, *God created creation in order to confer his benefits upon it*.
      2. NOT because he’s lonely (he is eternal and tri-personal); Not because he is bored (God lacks nothing, and is tri personal)
3. **Is God self existent (uncaused/uncreated/eternal) and immutable (unchanging)?**
   1. Simple Answer: Yes (e.g., 1 Tim 1:17) and yes (e.g., Malachi 3:6)
   2. Qualification: He is *imminently/essentially* (within Himself) immutable; but *economically* (working outside himself) he can “do a new thing”
4. **What is the Trinity –** 
   1. Simple Answer: A label for the reality that God is three persons in one God.
   2. The (Holy) Trinity is the name *the church has given* to identify the true God as being *one essence/God in three distinct persons*. Jesus says to make disciples “Baptizing them in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit” (Matt. 28:19)
   3. Trinity is a noun that means “three”, but the adjective “triune” is more precise, “three-in-one”.
5. **Is God’s love unconditional?** 
   1. Simple Answer: Depends on what you mean by “love” and “unconditional”.
   2. This is a very common, yet ambiguous question. First thing to note is that the Scriptures never say “God’s love is unconditional”. Therefore, if His love is unconditional, it would have to be logically *deduced* from Scripture.
      1. In order to deduce from scripture; we must first define the words “love” and “unconditional”.
         1. Conditional means “Depends upon something external”; syn: *contingent, depentant.* A conditional sentence uses the “If A, then necessarily B” structure.
            1. Scripture never says God’s love is unconditional. On the contrary, it says in many places that God’s favor is conditional/contingent/dependant. E.g., Exodus,”but showing love and great mercy to those who love me and keep my commandments.” John “If you love me, you will keep my commandments, and I will ask the Father and he will send another helper, John 14:15-16, (If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love , John 15:10)
         2. Love =
            1. Giving (grace, charity) and creating, and life. “God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son”
            2. Sacrificing “Greater love has no man than this, that he lay down his life for his friends”. “Husbands love your wives as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her.”
            3. Love as attitude or conduct “Love is patient, love is kind, it does not envy or boast”…
            4. opposite of hate – “Jacob I loved, Esau I hated”
            5. opposite of wrath/punishment? “Punishing the children for the sin of the father…but showing steadfast love…to those who love me…(Exodus 20:5-6).
            6. Problem is we tend to define love according to our own standards, where God is above all standards.
            7. God’s giving and creating nature is who he is, and that doesn’t change. Sin is stealing and destroying (thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy – John 10:10). The loving response to sin is, wrath. God created hell out of love, to separate his people from those who choose sin and death.

(If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love , John 15:10). Suggests that **Jesus’ love is unconditional, but whether you abide in that love is conditional upon keeping his commandments**.

* 1. To unpack the question more specifically:
     1. *Is God’s nature/essence, (which is love – 1 John 4:8), dependent/conditional upon anything outside of Himself?* No.
        1. This is why theologians have called God’s “wrath” His “alien work”.
     2. *Is your reception of God’s love (Grace, the promise of salvation, etc.) dependant on anything outside of God?* No.
        1. It is contingent on faith (Romans 4:16), but faith is God’s work also. (Ephesians 2:8-9).
     3. *Does God love those who reject him?* Yes. (see Matthew 23:37; 1 Tim 2:4)
     4. *Is God’s love received by those who reject him?* No.
     5. *Will God cast anyone he loves into hell?* Yes, insofar as he continues to those who reject Him, (or at least, He loves them now before the parousia).
     6. *Does God love his enemies?* Yes, (at least economically in the present time, see Luke 23:34).
     7. *Does God love Satan?* Irrelevant speculation
     8. *Will God conditionally withhold his grace in response to temporal circumstances?* Yes. In this sense then; God’s “Love” is not unconditional.
        1. First, the grace of salvation is conditional upon the sacrifice and resurrection of Jesus Christ. (Romans 3:25; 1 Cor. 15:17).
        2. Second, whether the sacrifice of Jesus Christ applies to you is conditional/contingent upon faith. (depends on faith Rom. 4:16, Phil. 3:9)
        3. Third, faith is contingent upon the Holy Spirit/God (Rom. 9:16).
        4. Fourth, the Holy Spirit is by nature non-contingent (John 3:8) he submits Himself to be contingent upon the preached Word, and the preached Word is contingent upon the Holy Spirit.