

## ***The questions kids always ask in primary SRE classes***

By Ministry Support Team

Does the thought of an eight-year-old with his hand in the air bursting to ask you questions about God scare you? Just a little? For many of us, answering the questions of students in our SRE classes is a mixture of exhilarating, wonderful and terrifying, with a little self-doubt to follow. It's an art that most of us improve with over time.

Below is a selection of questions that regularly come up in primary SRE classes. Thinking through these in advance, when you're not in the hot seat, is a great way to prepare to answer well.

### **a) Who made God?**

This question may seem obscure, but it does come up regularly. Depending on time, it may be necessary to come back to this question later or give the opportunity for follow up questions at another time.

If you choose to answer, remember to keep it simple and clear. We are talking about God, who is much bigger than us. Stick to what the Bible is clear about.

*Example; "The Bible says that God made everything, the sky, the trees and plants, animals, and people. But no one made God, he was there in the beginning, and he always is. He is much bigger and more amazing than we can even imagine! The Bible is how we can know God better and that's what we do in SRE, find out more about God and what he is like from the Bible each week."*

This response is longer than necessary but gives some options about what could be helpful.

### **b) Is my \_\_\_ going to heaven/hell?**

It is wise to avoid speaking of hell in SRE classes as often it leads to misunderstandings. The Teacher's Manual provides age-appropriate ways to explain these concepts.

It's also helpful to focus on what the Bible does tell us rather than what is unclear or not mentioned. One response in this style might be, *"The Bible says that heaven is where God is with his people and everything is set right. There is no crying or sadness or pain. I wish I knew more about it but for now I can trust God that it's going to be great."*

If a student asks this question with distress, it might be more helpful to respond to the emotion rather than answering the question directly. For example, *"Sounds like you're really*

sad about your \_\_\_\_\_. I would be too. I pray about things that makes me sad because I know God loves me and wants to hear all about it. You could do that too." It might be possible to offer to say a short prayer right then and there. This not only shows care for the student's suffering but models an appropriate Christian response to the class.

c) **How is Jesus also God?** (Variations of questions on the Trinity)

It is important to recognise that God is beyond our full understanding and in one sense, there will be no answer to this question that is fully satisfying. Sometimes we are tempted to make God 'smaller' so he is less overwhelming or scary for kids, but it is important to be faithful to what the Bible says. No one fully understands how the Trinity 'works' and it is ok to acknowledge this. It demonstrates that the Bible is our authority and we do appreciate that God is much bigger than us.

Possible answers; *"The Bible describes God as three and one. God the Father, God the son (Jesus) and God the Holy Spirit. Somehow, he is three and one, at the same time. The word we use for that is Trinity. It's one thing about God we can't fully understand, and I feel ok about that because it reminds me that God is SO MUCH bigger than us. If I understood everything about him, he wouldn't be greater than me. The Bible does tell us lots we can be 100% sure of about God, one of the things it says about him the most is that he is 'abounding in love and faithfulness' (Ps34:6). He is good, he loves us, and he doesn't change."*

Or, *"We know that Jesus is God because after he had risen from the dead, Thomas knelt and said to him, 'My Lord and my God!' and Jesus accepted his worship. (John 20:28)."*

You might give a shorter response than the first one, that picks up only one or two of the points made here, depending on the age of the students. It also isn't necessary to know the Bible references when you quote parts of the Bible. It is ok to say, *"I can find where it says that in the Bible and let you know next week."*

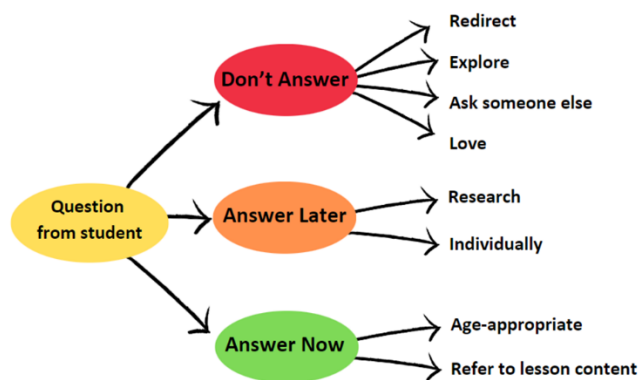
There is a helpful article from Tim Beilharz here:

<https://www.youthworks.net/articles/analogies-of-the-trinity>

d) **Is Santa real?**

This is not a question you can answer in SRE. Use the options from the 'Don't Answer' part of the diagram: Redirect, Explore, Ask someone else and Love.

Example, *"Oh that's a good question but we are talking about Jesus today! The Bible says that..."*, or *"Good question, maybe ask someone at home about that. Our story today is about Jesus. He's my favourite person to talk about. ..."*



### e) How do you know the Bible is true?

There are several ways to answer this question depending on how much time is available and the age of the students. This topic is usually not the focus of the lesson so it is wise to answer briefly and redirect back to the lesson content. There are lessons in 'Big Questions' that address this question and the Teacher's Manual provides guidance.

A short answer could be something like, *"The Bible was written by lots of different people, at different times as God directed them. And it all fits together to tell one big story of how God made people and loves people even though we stuffed things up. That's pretty amazing."*

It could also be helpful to answer personally, *"I've been reading the Bible for \_\_ years now and I'm convinced it is what it says it is, the Word of God. We can see God keeping his promises over huge stretches of history, and how he is always the same, always good and reaching out to save us."*

Another option, *"There is lots of evidence that the Bible we have today is accurate and the same as it was when parts of it were first written (like just after Jesus went up to heaven). Some people have spent years researching and writing books about it and you can find out more in your own time if you'd like to. The Bible describes itself as God's word, and points us to Jesus to see exactly what God is like. That's what we do in SRE, we read the Bible to find out about what God says. You can keep thinking about what you think as we go. And keep asking questions. It's good to keep thinking about all these things for yourself."*

### f) Doesn't science mean we can't believe in God anymore?

Variations of this question circle around the 'clash' between science and faith. There is so much that could be said to answer this question fully but not enough time in SRE, and it is not the focus of the lesson or age-appropriate. It is worth considering the 'question behind the question' with this one – does the child love science and think that means they can't love God too? Has the child heard this from a parent?

If you choose to answer this question, a possible response could be, *“Some people do think that science and God are against each other but no, there are lots of scientists who love and follow Jesus, just like there are people in all kinds of jobs and with all kinds of interests who love and follow Jesus.”*

Or, *“That’s a good question because sometimes people think that. There are some people who don’t believe in God and use scientific evidence to try and prove their points but there are also scientists who do believe in God. When people first began exploring the world, when science ‘began’, they did that believing, that God had made a wonderful world for us to explore and understand. It was because of belief in God that what we now call ‘science’ began. There’s lots more to discover on this topic that we can’t explore here, but you could investigate it more for yourself. Or ask others at home perhaps.”*

#### **g) My Dad says Jesus didn’t really rise from the dead.**

Perhaps not strictly a question but often the student is sharing this to see your reaction. It is important to show respect to parents in your response, even if it isn’t what we are teaching in SRE. A helpful response here will respectfully acknowledge other perspectives but direct the student to explore and decide for him/herself.

Example, *“Oh I see. Yes, some people think that. It does seem amazing because people don’t usually come back from the dead. The Bible is very clear about this, and there are lots of things Jesus says and does that show his disciples that he was really risen from the dead. Some of them felt unsure too at first. We’re going to read more of the Bible together in SRE this year and we can keep talking about what we discover. It’s a really important thing to think about.”*

So there you have it. These suggested answers are not the only right option. SRE teachers are always balancing a number of factors such as...

- What lesson content has been covered and what will be covered?
- Is this a genuine question or an attempt at distraction?
- Is there a ‘question behind the question’ that means a pastoral response is more fitting than a theological one?
- Is it possible to use the question and explore it together as a class and help the students find the answer themselves?

It is also important to remember that it is ok to say, *“I don’t know, I’ll find out about that.”*

Keen for more help answering questions? The updated Primary SRE Accreditation Module 2 is an excellent training to refresh your skills, even for experienced teachers. Find out more [here](#). There are also lots more helpful articles on answering questions, check these out:

<https://www.youthworks.net/articles/responding-to-questions-sre-part1>

<https://www.youthworks.net/articles/answering-questions-in-sre-part-2>

<https://www.youthworks.net/articles/tips-and-tricks-for-handling-difficult-questions-in-sre>

<https://www.youthworks.net/articles/the-invisible-backpack-i-carry-into-sre-every-week>