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who devote their lives to healing, caring and  
supporting the millions who are suffering  
through man's inhumanity to man.

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JHS Books  
P.O. Box 613, Dorking RH4 9JT  
[www.jhsbooks.com](http://www.jhsbooks.com)  
(Further copies can be ordered from the above address or website)

A CIP catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

ISBN: 978-0-9956802-6-5

Designed and typeset: by janie louise hunt  
Cover photograph: janie louise hunt

Printed and bound in Great Britain by  
Biddles Books, Kings Lynn, Norfolk PE32 1SF  
[www.biddles.co.uk](http://www.biddles.co.uk)

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# The Questions Within

J O H N S A H L



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## Introduction

“If God is the creator of the world and loves everyone, how do you explain pain and suffering?”

That is a good question. How do we answer other basic questions or objections to belief and practice of the Christian life in following Jesus Christ?

That opening Question relates to one of seven subjects in this book for which I attempt to give some guidance, explanation and thoughts for you to consider. This is not a scholar’s book for we have hundreds, if not thousands, of those already available, often giving somewhat complex answers to questions which Jesus dealt with in simple terms.

Complexity was not a feature of Christ’s teaching as He preached the ‘Good News’ of the Gospel. When 3000 people committed their lives to following Christ on one day after His resurrection (Acts 2 v.41), loving God, each other and their neighbours, it was not because they had all gained a scholar’s degree in theology.

There are, however, many great Christian authors who have contributed so much to my own understanding, beliefs

and trust in the faith we share and to whom I owe a great debt. You will find relevant quotations from them as you read through the book.

This book is non-denominational. I write simply as a Christian trying to follow Jesus who offers us truth, forgiveness, hope and a love that has the power to change our lives forever.





## 1. Which Love Makes the Real Difference to Life?

“Many years ago, when I worked as a volunteer at a hospital, I got to know a little girl named Liz who was suffering from a rare & serious disease. Her only chance of recovery appeared to be a blood transfusion from her 5-year old brother, who had miraculously survived the same disease and had developed the antibodies needed to combat the illness. The doctor explained the situation to her little brother, and asked the little boy if he would be willing to give his blood to his sister.

I saw him hesitate for only a moment before taking a deep breath and saying, “Yes I’ll do it if it will save her.” As the transfusion progressed, he lay in bed next to his sister and smiled, as we all did, seeing the color returning to her cheeks. Then his face grew pale and his smile faded. He looked up at the doctor and asked with a trembling voice, “Will I die right away, or how soon?”<sup>(1)</sup>

True love can be measured by what we are prepared to sacrifice for the people we love. This small five-year old boy thought the doctor had meant that he would lose his

“...learning is not even knowledge because facts have to be experienced to be known, whereas love can teach in an instant what a hundred volumes cannot.”

ST FRANCIS OF ASSISI

life in order to save his sister from dying and he was willing to do that for her. I read that story quite by chance on the internet and found it both moving and humbling.

If someone asked you to define the word ‘love’, what response might you make? What love would the questioner be referring to? Love for your wife, husband or children, for your parents, other family members, close friends or, perhaps, God. Unfortunately, we use only one word in English to express – ‘love’ - and it is frequently used quite indiscriminately to cover a variety of relationships with people, animals, nature and even material possessions, like homes and cars. To illustrate how the word ‘love’ can be devalued, my purchase of waste-bin liners featured the command, ‘Don’t Waste Love’.

The Greeks do not have this problem for they have four words to express different kinds of love. ‘Agape’ is first and foremost because it denotes a pure love specially related to the love of God.

Then for immediate family love they use the word ‘Storge’ and for important friendships ‘Phileo’ is most appropriate. Last, but not least, is the word ‘Eros’ which refers to romantic love including sexual relationship.

These are all serious human relationships which require commitments to one another but ‘Eros’ is the only word which includes a sexual union. What society has done is

to reduce the meaning of ‘Eros’ to just a physical event and so ‘having sex with someone’, is referred to as ‘making love’ when it is often simply sexual lust with no ‘love’ commitment on either side between the couple concerned. Indeed, we introduced a new phrase to cover some of this behaviour, namely, ‘one-night stands’.

Some children are growing up with little sense of what true love means and the commitments it involves, with casual sex being promoted and portrayed through films, plays, magazines and television productions as one of the key experiences in life. In 2015 I saw posters in hospitals advertising free contraceptives to anyone aged between 13 and 21 years. What message does that give to school children who see the posters?

Even more sophisticated means of contraception and if that fails, abortion, effectively on demand, have largely removed the fear of unwanted pregnancies.

But where has this supposed sexual freedom led us? In recent years the NHS has reported abortion levels of more than 180,000 children per year in England & Wales. There are five legal ‘grounds’ on which an abortion can be authorised by two registered medical practitioners. “In 2013 the vast majority (97% 180,680) of abortions were undertaken on ground ‘C’ condition which states: “the pregnancy has not exceeded its twenty-fourth week and that the continuance of the pregnancy would involve risk,