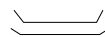
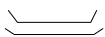
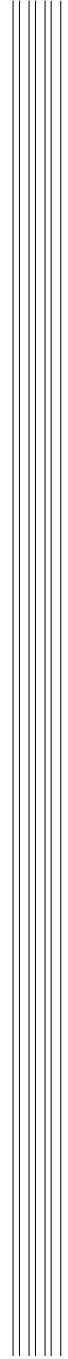
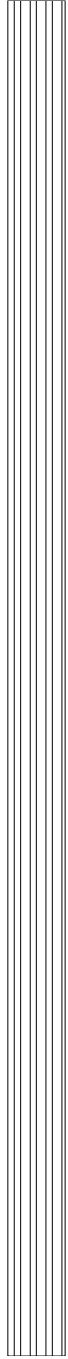


Coptic Orthodox Patriarchate
Bishopric of Youth Bookstore

Youth Concerns

(Questions & Answers)

H.G. Bishop Moussa
Bishop of Youth





Preface

Many young people in lands of immigration, asked me to re-write and categorize the questions and answers that I received in many conventions.

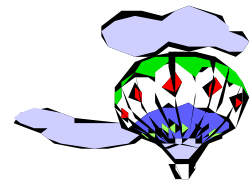
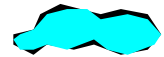
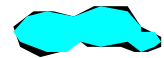
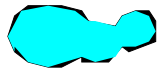
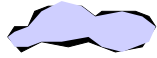
It was a difficult task for me. But, as a surprise I received this well prepared this collection in a very nice way, from **Lisa Agaybi**, one of our spiritual daughters in Sydney.

I thank the lord for his love and support, without him we are nothing. I thank my beloved Bishops, priests and Youth Workes that prepared and guided the conventions. **H.H. Pope Shenouda** is our beloved & shepherded, and the heavenly gift to our Coptic Orthodox Church.

Repeating my thanks to **Liza**, I wish the best for our precious young people, though the intercessions of St Mary, and the prayers of H.H. Pope Shenouda III,

Bishop Moussa

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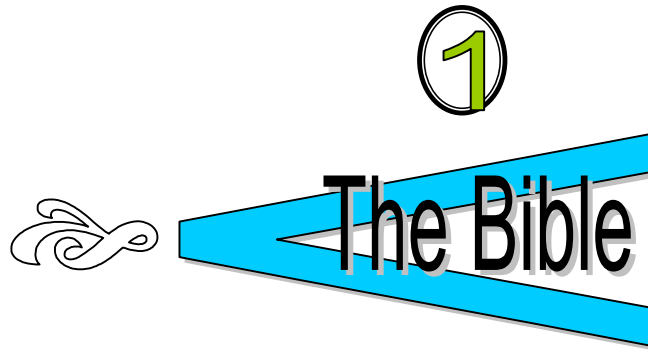
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1- Is the Bible supposed to be taken literally, that is, word for word?

Yes, it is to be taken literally, but sometimes the Bible means something spiritually. An example of this is when Jesus said, *“If your eye causes you to sin, pluck it out”* (Matthew 18:9), Christ didn’t mean this literally, but meant if something tempts you to sin, turn away from it.

2- In the book of Genesis, what do the “waters” refer to in the Creation of the world: “Thus God made the firmament and divided the waters which were under the firmament from the waters which were above the firmament; and it was so” (1:7)?

The waters “above” refers to the rain and the waters “below” refer to the oceans.

3- When God created the world, was each day a period of 24 hours?

No. Creation occurred before the sun and moon were in existence, and each day of creation was a long period of time, for example, we are still living in the seventh day. So do not deal with the days of creation in 24 hour time.

4- Why did people in the Old Testament practice polygamy (marriage to more than one wife)?

When God created Adam, He created only one Eve. But due to the sin of the people, the Lord overlooked some of their weaknesses, such as divorce and polygamy. However, in Christianity, due to the accomplishment of salvation, and the gift of the Holy Spirit, we have returned to the one Adam, and the one Eve.

5- Is it true that Cain and Abel married their sisters?

Yes. During the time of the first generation, marriage amongst brothers and sisters was permitted for the purpose of procreation. But gradually, it became forbidden.

6- What is the meaning of the words in the Psalm, “Be angry and do not sin” (Psalm 4:4)?

It is the emotions which lead to anger, but it is important to have your anger contained and controlled, so that you do not sin by insulting or swearing or fighting. It is better to be angry with yourself than be angry at others. Please practice self control, through prayer and the power of the Holy Spirit.

7- What is the meaning and significance of the three books of King Solomon (Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Songs)?

The three books of King Solomon correspond to the three steps in one's spiritual life: Proverbs is the book of "**wisdom**", Ecclesiastes is the book of "**vanity**", and Song of Songs is the book of "**love**". By "**wisdom**" we mean the spiritual wisdom from God, not the earthly philosophical wisdom. After gaining spiritual wisdom and being enlightened by God's divine light, you will come to the realisation that this world is "**vanity**", because all will vanish. And once you will come to the realisation about the world, you will look towards the Kingdom of Heaven and the King of Heaven, our beloved Lord Jesus Christ. You will devote yourself and your time to Him, and thereby you will be united to Him through love.

8- What is the meaning of the Bible verse "Do not be overly righteous nor be overly wise: why should you destroy yourselves?" (Ecclesiastes 7:16)?

It means we should be moderate in all things, because if, for example, you exaggerate in your religious life by increasing the number of prostrations you do, etc, it can lead to pride, and thereby harm you instead of doing you good.

9- What does the Song of Solomon symbolise?

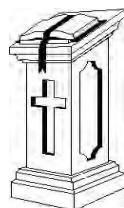
This very holy book speaks about the relationship between our beloved Lord Jesus Christ (**the Beloved**), and the soul (**the Shulamite**). It can also be interpreted as the relationship between the Lord and the Church. And thirdly, it can relate to St Mary, in parts. It has been said that if the Old Testament is a holy book, then the Song of Songs is the holiest of holies. There are some people who consider this book to be representing the sensual relationship between a man and a woman, but this book should not be considered this way. We may take it, however, to also symbolise the spiritual and holy union that occurs between a man and woman in marriage, for the love that is shared in marriage is spiritual "**agape**" love.

10- What is the meaning of the verse, "Catch us the foxes, the little foxes that spoil the vines" (Songs 2:15)?

These "**small foxes**" represent the small sins. Sometimes we disregard small sins as being insignificant, but these small sins are actually more dangerous than big sins because they will grow. Therefore we must be alert in order to catch and destroy these small sins before giving them the chance to grow.

11- Why did Jesus convert water to wine at the wedding of Cana, if the Bible speaks against alcohol?

The wine which the Lord converted from water was not fermented, it was refreshing grape juice, and for this reason, the master of the house commented, "**Every man at the beginning sets out the good wine, and when men have well drunk, then that which is inferior, but you have kept the good wine until now**" (John 2:10).



12- What does it mean when Christ says, “To look at a woman lustfully you have already committed adultery” (Matthew 5:28)?

The point here is that it is wrong to look in order to fulfil some kind of lust, or feed some sort of lust, because if this is the intention, you have already committed adultery in your heart, and eventually you will even commit the sin. But if you are strong, even if you will look, and feel any desire, you will have self control, and making the sign of the Cross, you will overcome. It is natural to have these desires, but through the power and grace of God, you will keep yourself holy at the same time.

13- What is the meaning of “the world” in the Bible, because in one place the Lord says, “For God so loved the world”, and then in another he says, “Do not love the world”?

The word “**world**” in the Bible has three interpretations and if we do not understand each meaning, it can lead to confusion:

- 1- **“For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life” (John 3:16).** Here the “**world**” means the people - “**whoever**”. Therefore, God loves everybody in the world, and created us in His own image; you also must love everyone in the world in Christ, in a pure, fruitful, building way. To deal with the world as people equals love.
- 2- **“Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him” (1 John 2:15).** This verse relates to the “**things**” of the world; “**things**” being sins *such* as adultery and pride.
- 3- **“Adulterers and adulteresses! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Whoever therefore wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God” (James 4:4).** This *verse* emphasises how much the sin of adultery is displeasing to God. Both James and 1 John explain how we must hate the world as sin, but love the world as people. This is because we are servants of the Lord, and members in the huge body of mankind, and it is our purpose to witness in front of everybody for the Lord.

14- What is meant by the Bible verse “when I am weak, then I am strong” (2 Corinthians 12:10)?

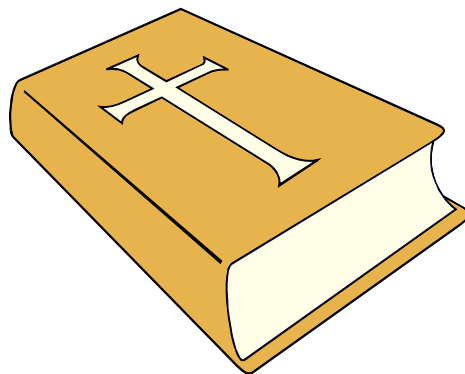
It means that in times of weakness I am going to ask for the power of God to help me and strengthen me. We can obtain this power through reading the Bible, reading spiritual books, receiving the Holy Communion, praying from the Agbia, and through repeating over and over, “**My Lord Jesus Christ have mercy upon me!**” This small prayer is called the “**arrow prayer**” because it pierces the heavens and reaches the Lord, and we receive a reply on the spot.

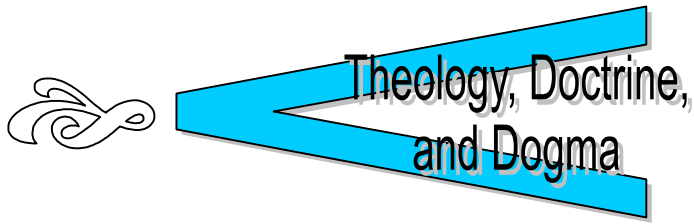
15- What is the meaning of the number of the beast 666 in the Book of Revelation?

It has so many interpretations, but the easiest is that, ***“it is the number of man”***, (***Revelation 13:18***), because man was created on the sixth day. Through this God is saying, ***“My church do not be afraid from your enemies, because your enemies are only men”***; 666 representing several powers trying to attack the church, which can be such things as Islam, Communism, and Atheism, but through the power of the Lord, the church will be victorious and shall overcome at last.

16- Where in the Bible does it say that people who went to heaven are alive?

In the Bible, God said, ***“I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. God is not the God of the dead, but of the living”*** (***Matthew 22:32***). And as we know, at the time of God saying these words, these three people were already dead in the flesh, but alive in the spirit. Also in the Bible, we read the story about Lazarus and the rich man, whom after they died physically, were conversing with Abraham, and the rich man even felt concern for the brothers he left behind on earth. Hence, although dead in body, they are alive in spirit.





17- Where do our Orthodox traditions and teachings come from?

All our teachings and traditions are derived from the Bible. The Bible is the word of God, and it is our reference. If we need to know whether a teaching is right or wrong, the Bible is our thermometer. All our Orthodox teachings are Biblically rooted; nothing has been invented. Even if we consider the “**Praises of Kiahk**” where we praise St Mary saying, “**Blessed are you O Mary...**”, we find that these praises are derived from the Bible when St Mary said by the Holy Spirit, “*...for behold henceforth, all generations will call me blessed*” (*Luke 1:48*).

18- How do we know that the Orthodox faith is the correct faith?

Orthodoxy means correct teaching, correct life, and correct witnessing. The word “**Orthodox**” is composed of two words: “**Ortho**” meaning “**straightforward**”, and “**Doxa**” meaning “**glory**”. Therefore, orthodoxy means having the correct teaching and correct life which glorifies the Lord. In our church, we have correct teachings, and we are not saying that out of pride, but simply because of HISTORY - it is a historical fact that the Orthodox church has correct teachings. Secondly, all the teachings of our church are derived from the BIBLE. Thirdly, all the teachings of our church are derived from the TRADITIONS, sayings, and interpretations of the church fathers.

19- What are the differences between the Orthodox and Catholic churches?

There are 7 main areas in which the Orthodox Church disagrees with the Catholic Church:

- † The concept of purgatory.
- † The belief that the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father and Son, * the primacy of St Peter.
- † The infallibility of the Pope of Rome.
- † The immaculate conception of St Mary.
- † That sins can be forgiven through indulgences (**selling the forgiveness of sins**).
- † The acceptance of non Christians in marriage.

20- What are the differences between the Orthodox and Protestant churches?

There are 7 main areas in which the Protestant Churches are lacking and so differ with the Orthodox, or Apostolic churches. They don't believe in:

- † The seven sacraments. † The intercession of saints.
- † Salvation through faith and deeds.
- † Tradition. † Rituals.
- † the possibility that a believer may perish.
- † an apostolic chain.

21- Is there a view amongst the Orthodox churches, for having one head patriarch?

No, because throughout the history of Christianity, there has always been different Apostolic Sees: Rome, Alexandria, Antioch, Constantinople and Jerusalem. We believe that all the patriarchs are brothers, and of the same level. However, representing the Chalcedonic Orthodox churches, in a co-ordination role - not a supremacy role, is His Holiness Patriarch Bartholomew, who resides in Constantinople (**modern day Istanbul**), in Turkey. Constantinople being the only ancient Apostolic See in the Chalcedonic Orthodox churches. There are 14 patriarchs in the Chalcedonic Orthodox churches, and Patriarch Bartholomew is considered the first amongst equals. Therefore, just as we believe that the twelve apostles were equal, and no apostle had supremacy over the others, we also believe that all the patriarchs are equal.

22- Why does the Coptic Church only recognise three Ecumenical Councils?

Because these three Councils (**Nicea, Constantinople, and Ephesus**), took place before the division of the church.

23- What are the appropriate titles for the various levels of priesthood?

The Pope is given the title "**His Holiness**", for he is the father of the church, and he has, through the grace of God, holiness in his personality. Because he is chosen by God for this service, he is considered to be the blessed of God. The Bishop, being the head and responsible for the priesthood, is granted the title "**His Grace**". And the priest is given the title "**Reverend**", which is also a derivative of holiness.

24- What is the purpose of priesthood?

The purpose of priesthood is to officiate the sacraments and to instruct and edify the people, as St Paul writes to the Hebrews: "***For every priest taken from among men is appointed for men in things pertaining to God, that he may offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins... and no man takes this honour to himself, but he who is called by God, as Aaron was***" (1:4).

25- Why do priests wear black hats and black clothes?

The priest's hat is shaped like a dome, representing the fact that the priest belongs to the church. As for the types of people who wear black: the university professors. Thus the priest lawyer who defends us before God, confessions and gives us the professor who teaches us



black clothes, there are three lawyers, the judges and the wears black because he is a he is a judge who hears our absolution, and he is a Christianity.

26- Why are the icons in the church anointed with the Myron oil?

The Myron carries the work of the Holy Spirit, and the church is the house of God. In the past, the altar as well as the walls of the church were anointed, and this required people to remove their shoes before entering into the church because it is holy. Nowadays, however, anointing of the Myron is restricted to the altar and altar vessels, and icons in the church. The Myron gives the icon a spirit; it is a declaration that this saint is living and is among us. The icon of Jesus Christ is also anointed with the holy Myron oil. It keeps the mystery of the presence of the saint inside the church with us. We even consecrate the curtains and the walls and the vessels of the church in order to spiritualise them, because SPIRIT means life. When we ask this saint to intercede on our behalf, they can surely hear us, and they can pray on our behalf.

27- What is the symbolism in Coptic art?

Coptic art concentrates on the head more than on the body, and therefore at times, it may seem that the body is not in proportion with the head. Also, Coptic art focuses on the eyes, which are always portrayed larger than any other aspect of the head. The significance of the eyes are that they are watchful and concentrating on the vision to wards heaven. Hence, in art we focus on the eyes more than the head, and the head more than the body. There are many books and articles available concerning Coptic art, in more detail.

28- Why do we baptise children when they are babies?

In the same way that we cannot deprive babies of physical nutrition, we cannot deprive them of spiritual nutrition. But when the baby is older, he takes the decision whether to continue in God's way, or otherwise.

29- Why does the church baptise boys before girls, that is, boys after forty days and girls after eighty days?

Simply because this is a Biblical commandment from the Old Testament, and we have followed this commandment as is. It is also to remind us of the original sin which began with Eve tempting Adam with the apple. However, we must not forget that if we fell by the first Eve, we are saved through the second Eve, who is our beautiful mother St. Mary, because she gave birth to our Saviour and Redeemer.

30- Why are males and females separated when inside the church?

It is not something doctrinal or dogmatic; but simply a matter of concentration.

31- Why are men given Holy Communion before women?

Simply because women are more humble than men! So I ask you to please stay humble and accept this regulation. Out of humility we do not think about who is first, but we prefer who is last.

32- Is the Holy Communion 100% Body and Blood of Christ? And if it is, why can't we see it as such?

If you saw blood would you drink it? And if you saw flesh would you eat it? It is very difficult and that's why the Lord hides this and gives us the spiritual blessing without us seeing it physically.

33- We hear in stories of the Wilderness Fathers that they may go without Holy Communion for a long time, even though our church says that 40 days without Holy Communion makes one spiritually dead. So what becomes of these fathers?

For these Desert Fathers, the rule would surely differ because they live in complete solitude for long periods of time. Some of these fathers may have a small Church inside their cave and occasionally, other desert fathers gather together and celebrate the Holy Mass. Yes, we must take the Holy Communion regularly so that we may abide in the Lord, however, these Wilderness Fathers are abiding constantly in the Lord, day and night, through prayer, praises, Bible reading, fasting, and contemplation. So this will definitely compensate them.

34- Why does our Church have nuns and consecrated deaconesses, and what's the difference?

Our Church consecrates both for the purpose of service. Both live a celibate life, but nuns live in the convent and spend their time praying, while the consecrated deaconesses are actively serving in the church.

35- What is the meaning of the Cape and Crown in marriage?

In the marriage ceremony, both the Bride and Groom wear a crown. This symbolises responsibility, and that they will face spiritual struggles in their marriage, such as the struggle to bring their children up in the Lord. But through the grace of God they will be victorious, and therefore they wear the crown of victory. The reason why the groom wears the cape is because, from this point on, he will be considered the “**priest**” of the home. He must make sure his home is like a church with prayers, hymns, holy pictures, holy atmosphere, and so on.

36- Does the Coptic Church recognise marriages performed in other churches, such as the Catholic Church?

Yes, but we recognise it as being a “**Catholic**” marriage, or a “**Protestant**” marriage. But if intermarriage with a Coptic person occurs, the couple then must enter Orthodoxy through the door of baptism and the sacraments.

37- Why do the Orthodox and Catholic churches have confession, but the Protestant church doesn't?

In the Bible, the Lord said to St. Peter, “*And I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven*” (Matthew 16:19). The Lord chose the priests to be the servant of this sacrament and to receive the confessions of people. This verse is repeated three times in the New Testament and because the Orthodox churches and Catholic churches are apostolic churches, they have and practice this sacrament. In the 15th century when the Protestant Church was formed, they took the decision to abolish the Seven Sacraments, including confession. However, we are praying that within the next few years, the Protestant church will come back to the original church and tradition.

38- Why do we make the sign of the cross from left to right, but the Greek Orthodox do it from right to left?

It is just a matter of local tradition. In our eastern mentality, the left is considered the place of darkness and dishonour, and the right is the place of honour and righteousness. So when we make the sign of the cross we are being taken from the place of dishonour to the place of honour. In Greek tradition, the right is considered distant from the heart and the left is the place close to the heart, so when the Greeks make the sign of the cross, they are being taken from the place far from God, to the place close to God, and thereby they ask the Holy Spirit to come and dwell within them. It makes no difference either way because in both situations, we are asking the Holy Spirit to dwell within us and strengthen us.

39- Where is Heaven?

In the Bible, we find that there are three heavens, as well as the Heaven of Heavens where Jesus is. The first heaven is the heaven of the birds, or the sky; the second is the galaxy of the stars and planets, or outer space; the third heaven is Paradise where all the Saints are in waiting for the Day of Resurrection, or the Second Coming. It was Paradise that Paul the Apostle saw, and then proclaimed that he saw things, which cannot be described in words. The fourth heaven is the Heaven of Heavens, and it is to this place that the righteous souls will go to on the day of Resurrection.

40- How many heavens are there?

In the Bible, we read that there are three heavens, as well as the Heaven of heavens. The first heaven is the heaven of the birds; the second is the galaxy of planets and stars; the third heaven is Paradise, which St. Paul the Apostle saw and proclaimed, when he returned, that he saw things that cannot be described in words. This is also the place where the righteous souls are waiting for the day of judgement. The fourth heaven is the Heaven of heavens, which is the “**Heavenly Jerusalem**”; to this place the righteous souls will proceed to on the Day of Resurrection.

41- What is the difference between Heaven and Paradise?

While the earth is still in existence, the souls of the righteous believers will go to Paradise, and the souls of the wicked will go to Hades, awaiting the day of Judgement and Resurrection. In that day, which will be the end of the world, the resurrection of bodies and souls will occur, and those in Paradise will proceed to the kingdom of Heaven, and those in Hades will go to hell and there have their eternal destiny.

42- Are these the last days?

It is not important for us to concentrate on when the last days will be, but it is necessary for us to be ready at all times, by always repenting and preparing ourselves spiritually.

43- Is all the turmoil and violence and sin in the world today a sign of the Second Coming?

You may consider it a sign, for there are many signs; but the coming of the Lord will be a total surprise. We do not have the capacity to determine an exact date. There is one sign that has not occurred yet, and this is the conversion of the Jews to Christianity (***Romans 11***). We are not sure how this will happen. Another sign is the coming of the Antichrist; whether this be a religion, a person, or otherwise is not clear. What is required of me is that I be ready and alert and repentant.

44- What becomes of the world after the revelation of Jesus Christ?

This world will end, and we will live with the Lord in the Kingdom of Heaven forever after.

45- What is purgatory?

The word “**purgatory**” is derived from the word “**purge**” which means to cleanse, purify. The Catholics believe that after death we shall go to a place called “**Purgatory**” where we shall suffer the pains of purifying fire to purify us from all our sins so that on the Last day we shall be cleansed in order to proceed to the kingdom of Heaven. However, we definitely reject this belief because if the purifying fire will cleanse us from sin, then Christ’s death was in vain. The only way we are saved and purified is by the Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ. Another proof against the concept of Purgatory is that on the Cross, the Lord said to the thief, “***Today you will be with Me in Paradise***” (***Luke 23:43***) not Purgatory.

46- Will we know and recognise each other in Heaven?

From the Bible we understand that in Heaven, they do know each other, and this is evident in the parable of Jesus about the rich man and Lazarus; they knew each other, and they knew Abraham, and they were speaking together, and they knew what was happening on earth. So according to this Biblical reference, yes we will recognise and know each other.

47- Will all Christians go to heaven, or only some denominations?

There are two levels: firstly, the Christians - those who believe in the divinity and incarnation and redemption of Christ - basically, those who believe in the Christian creed. Secondly, there are Christians who are Orthodox, Catholic and Protestant. Each differ in details concerning doctrines, the sacraments and priesthood and fellowship with the saints, but we agree on the major concept of Christianity which is the Creed, and so therefore we are ALL Christians. Therefore we must never condemn other Christian denominations that believe in the Lord, saying that they are not going to heaven. This is not our capacity and is completely illogical, because they believe in the creed which is the essence of Christianity.

48- If someone is baptised, does that mean they'll go to Heaven even if they are bad?

Baptism does not mean you become a slave of God - God also needs your consent, and so when you get older and commit sin, it is your decision to repent and walk with God, or to be unrepentant and walk without God. When you are baptised as a child, that was according to your mother's faith, but now that you are older, you can make your own decision - baptism will put you on the way to the Kingdom, but you have the free will to continue and be saved, or to go astray.

49- If someone has lead a "good" life, but doesn't know the law of God, will he go to heaven or hell?

According to the Bible, we read that those who have no law have within them the natural, moral law, (**the conscience**) and they will be judged accordingly. But today, there is no excuse because everybody has the opportunity to know God. If he is keen and honest to know the Truth, God will never hesitate to introduce Himself to him.

50- Did God create angels sinless, and if not, can angels sin?

God created the angels before the creation of the world and before time. They were created holy, but given free will, just like human beings. They had a period of test, and so, those who stayed holy remained in heaven and from the end of that period of test unto eternity, they cannot sin. Those who did not remain holy, such as Satan, were cast out and condemned.

51- If God is the creator of everything, does that mean He also created sin?

Sin is not something to be created. Sin is the negative aspect of goodness - it is the absence of goodness. And therefore, not something to be created.

52- If God knew from the beginning that man was going to fall, why did He create man?

God can solve all our problems, and change whatever is darkness into light. God gives us the free will to decide which path to follow. So, instead of wondering why God creates us when we sin, try repenting, in order to enjoy the Kingdom of Heaven. Also, in the Bible, it is written that the declared things are ours, and the secret things are the Lord's. Once a man asked the Lord this same question, in contemplation, and the Lord answered him saying "My dear son, obey what is written in the Bible and do not be concerned about My justice and My love. When you come here you will see that My justice is infinite and My love is infinite, so do not worry and do not ask Me now; you will know when you come here".

53- If God is merciful, why didn't He have mercy on the fallen angels?

The difference between Satan and man is that Satan tempted himself, whereas man was tempted by Satan.

54- How did Satan, who was an angel in heaven, fall?

Before the foundation of the world, God created the angels with free will, and allowed a period of test. The angels were content being illuminated by the light of God, however, Satan rejected this light by wanting to be illuminated of himself. Hence, he wanted to put his throne above the throne of God, and so, like the cord of a lamp pulled out from the socket, he was cast into total darkness. Because God created Satan in the beginning, He can eradicate Satan, but God left Satan in order to give us the opportunity to experience free will; to choose between the way of light, and the way of darkness.

55- If Christ died for us, why do we have to die now?

Our death was in four areas - physical, spiritual, moral and eternal. Thus through death, we are going to bury this sinful, weak, mortal nature and take a new nature in a heavenly, immortal form.

56- When did Satan know the nature of Christ?

When Jesus Christ was crucified and when He died, His human soul separated from His human body, but the divinity NEVER separated from either His body or soul. His soul went to Hades, and His body was buried in the tomb. When His soul went to Hades, Satan tried to capture it, thinking it to be just like any other soul. But he was surprised, because this human soul was one and united with the divinity, and the current of divinity shocked Satan. Thus, it was at that moment that Satan recognised the power of Jesus Christ, and recognised who Jesus Christ was. Satan was defeated, and was crushed underfoot by Christ. The Lord then opened the gates of paradise for the souls of the righteous to enter. It was the divinity of Christ, which enabled the body in the tomb to rise and be resurrected on the third day. Now the salvation process is accomplished.

57- Why did Satan not realise who Jesus Christ was, before He descended into Hades?

Because during Christ's time on earth, He never fully revealed His divinity. At times the devils would declare, "**You are the Son of God!**" And then the Lord would conceal His divinity. Therefore the devil was confused, because he would see Christ at times performing miracles, and then at other times he would see Him crying, and hungry. Thus, it was only when Christ descended into Hades through the cross, to free the souls of the righteous, that Satan knew the identity of our Lord Jesus Christ.

58- Why did Jesus Christ have to be the one to save us?

God knew from the beginning that man was going to sin, and He was not only going to forgive them, but He was also going to redeem them. But first we need to understand what are the qualifications of a redeemer:

- 1- He must be man because humans who are sinners are men (**men meaning human**).
- 2- He must die, because the wage of sin is death.
- 3- He must be sinless, because if he was sinful he also will be in need of **redemption**.
- 4- He must be unlimited, because our sin is unlimited.
- 5- He must be a creator, in order to create a new nature. To fulfil these requirements, God had to be incarnated in the form of man, and dwell among men, and die - thus He was the unification of humanity and divinity. Through humanity He was man and died; and through divinity He is unlimited and the Creator and He is sinless.

59- What proof is there that St Mary was not born sinless?

If St Mary was born immaculate, that is sinless, then she would not have had a need for salvation. However, this is not the case, because St Mary herself declared, "**My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit has rejoiced in God my Saviour**" (*Luke 1:47*).

60- Why in Jerusalem does the light in the tomb appear on Saturday instead of Easter Sunday?

The light that appears in the tomb is a symbol that the salvation process has taken place and that Christ was in Hades freeing the souls of the righteous from the place of darkness to the place of light.

61- What is your opinion about near death experiences?

There is a book called "**Life After Life**" which tells of the experiences of people who clinically die and then come back to life. They mention such things as travelling through tunnels and seeing bright lights and so on. We do not believe in the details of this book, but these experiences would definitely give the world an idea that there is another life after this life, and this is a good support for Christianity.

62- Does a person who is brain dead, still have a spirit?

For sure no, because our soul is intellectual, being always related to the mind. And so, in the case of brain death, the soul has already left the body.

63- What is the Church's opinion concerning the phenomena of people's hands dripping oil?

Our church is not fond of these types of conversations with the saints. In our Coptic Orthodox concept and spirit, whenever we experience a miracle we hide it, or keep it restricted to only a few people, because we are always cautious of the intervention of Satan in these types of situations. He can deceive us and even appear as an angel of light. Once we begin to advertise the miracle, Satan comes inside and tries to pull us outside the goal of the miracle. Situations like this may start out correct, but end up Satanic because Satan comes to spoil everything. We tell, for example, of the miracles of the late Pope Kyrillos in order to strengthen the people, but there is a big difference between this and advertising a miracle for no clear benefit except self-pride.

64- Why are the Jews the chosen people of God if they don't believe Christ is the Son of God?

Before crucifixion, the Jews were the chosen people of God, however, they are no longer. The Christians are now the chosen people of God.

65- Why are men allowed to be priests but not women?

For women to be priests is Biblically wrong, historically wrong and traditionally wrong. Nowhere in the Bible is there reference to women becoming priests. Women can serve in the church by being deaconesses, for they are active members in the church, serving the orphans, the needy, the aged and so on. In addition, it is not spiritual to be longing for priesthood, because for sure those who desire priesthood, want it for egocentric reasons. You must know that priesthood is a cross, not a privilege. And if women were permitted to be priests, the first woman to qualify would have been the pure virgin St. Mary. Therefore, let us not focus on priesthood, but on holiness.

66- Why do we not believe in reincarnation?

Reincarnation is the belief that when a person dies, his soul reappears in another body, and when that body dies, his soul reappears in another body, and so on. The question becomes therefore, is this person a complete human being, who will give an account of their deeds? It is impossible, for their soul and body keep changing. We do not believe in this, for we believe that every human being has one soul and one body, and this soul after death proceeds to paradise, and not another body.





Social, Contemporary, and general issues

67- What is the meaning of life?

Life is to enjoy the love of the Lord, and to convey the love of the Lord to others through service, and to prepare yourself for eternity where you will live with the Lord forever.

68- Are we to socialise only with Christian people?

Your spiritual love must be given to all people, and not be isolated to just Christians. There is a big difference between friends and acquaintances. Your friends should be Christian, to help you build your spiritual life, but you can have many acquaintances in society - at school, at university, at work, and so on. When I say “**socialise with them**”, I mean be on good terms with them, have pure Christian love for them, caring and sharing with them. If they are sick you must visit them, if a family member or friend has passed away, you must go and give your condolences, if they are celebrating a feast, such as Ramadan, you must give them your best wishes. Therefore you must have pure Christian love towards them, but do not have an intimate relationship with them because they differ in their thoughts, their principles, their ideas, their philosophies and their practices. Have friends from within the church, and have as many acquaintances as you like in society. Express your Christian love to them; go with them when it is right, and withdraw from them when they do wrong.

69- I have tried to talk to my non-Christian friends about God, but they never seem interested. What can I do?

It is better to talk to them through your example and not through words. If you are holy, and you pray for them, and you genuinely like them and care for them, a time will come for talking to them. But first you must start by being a good example, and then the Lord will open the door for them, on a certain day and in a certain way.

70- How can I stop someone from having a relationship with a non-Christian?

Pray for them, and try to convince them that through what they are doing, they will lose Christ. Also ask your priest to support you in this task, and give him their details.

71- What can I do for my parents who are not religious?

Pray for them, love them, be a good example in front of them, invite them to the church, and ask your priest to help you in this matter.

72- I am under so much pressure and I can't stand it any more. What can I do?

For sure we have pressure coming from the outside - through the instincts, from the world and from Satan. But why do you forget that through the Holy Spirit, and divine grace, and the Lord residing in you, that you can have power over this power that you are feeling? The power which surrounds us in the world is limited and the power of God is unlimited. The problem occurs when we are not regular in taking this spiritual power from God, then we feel weak. If you, being limited, come into contact with the Unlimited, who is God, you will feel strong and victorious over these pressures around you.

73- What can I do when my parents drive me crazy?

It is important first to look at yourself. Are you egocentric and unwilling to let your parents share in your life? This is surely not correct because you are in need of your parents advice and guidance, and you cannot rely on your own wisdom. These days we may feel that we know everything, but we must consider that there are four areas of growth and maturity in a human being: physical growth, psychological growth, mental growth and spiritual growth. During the teenage years, physical growth is sudden, but the other areas mature gradually. So do not forget or neglect that there is a gap in maturity during the teen years. This gap is to be filled by guidance from God and the Holy Scriptures, the guidance of your spiritual father, and the guidance from your parents at home.

Sometimes their ways can be annoying and seem over-protective, but you must bear in mind the motive behind their actions, which is love and care. Therefore you must feel this need for communicating with them and be convinced that at present you are not yet mature in all four areas. Even in sexual life there are two main areas of growth: the physical and the psychological. Again the physical is sudden, but the psychological is gradual - during your teenage years you are in a stage called "**general heterosexuality**" which means you are looking at the opposite sex in general; today you may like someone but tomorrow you may not. This is not because you are bad, but this is the life and science and psychology of this age group. After your teen years, you come to another stage called "**selective heterosexuality**", and it is at this stage that you are now ready to choose your partner in life. In addition, during your teenage years, you are not yet ready mentally, nor spiritually, for at this age you will not have the attitude of asking for God's guidance in examining the spiritual life of both yourself and your partner. Therefore in order to select the right partner in life, it is necessary that you recognise these four areas of growth.



74- Why should youth respect their parents?

Young people must respect their parents because:

- 1- Your parents love you more than you love yourself.
- 2- They have more experience than you.
- 3- They are respecting your personality, desires, thinking, and decisions, but through love they want to participate with you in your life so that decisions made can be the result of team discussion, rather than taken individually. If you make decisions individually, you are going to commit many mistakes, so you need their guidance. Bear in mind also, that although your physical growth jumped at once, your mental growth and your spiritual growth are gradual. So, you need the guidance and wisdom of your parents. Please take their blessings. This is a commandment of the Bible.

75- Is it wrong to tell my friends the wrong I've done instead of a priest?

Your friend may have different views to you, and so may mislead you in his advice. A priest, however, who has wisdom and experience will never mislead you. Also, how can you guarantee that the friend you have today will still be your friend tomorrow, and will keep what you have said secret? Therefore please do not rush to tell secrets to your friends. A priest, however, will always respect your confidentiality. And finally, only the priest can give you absolution for your sins, not your friend.

76- Why do Egyptians gossip so much?

It is not only Egyptians who gossip, but all nationalities. And gossiping only hurts those who do something wrong. Therefore, don't do anything wrong, and no one will gossip about you.

77- Why are Egyptians so strict in regards to boys and girls talking together?

We are not strict, but cautious, for talking, results in phone calls, and phone calls result in dating, and dating may result in many harmful sins. Therefore, we always encourage group relationships, holy relationships, limited relationships.

78- Sometimes I feel pressured to have a boyfriend. Is it okay to have a boyfriend if I don't do anything wrong?

As His Holiness Pope Shenouda says, "**Have many boyfriends and many girlfriends**", but if you couple off, you may start out clean and holy, but who can guarantee what may happen? Can you guarantee yourself, or your partner, or Satan? Each day we pray, "**Lead us not into temptation...**" (*Matt. 6:13*), but by having a boyfriend or a girlfriend we are leading ourselves into temptation. Let your relations be in groups from within the church until the time comes for you to select your partner for marriage.



79- Is it wrong to have sexual desires?

Desires are natural and normal and if we didn't have them we would be abnormal. The desire itself is not wrong, but it can be the start of a wrong thing: "...***when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is fully grown brings forth death***" (James 1:15). Therefore, when desire starts you must control yourself not to sin, and try rather to have spiritual desires in order to help you keep control.

80- Is adultery something that happens only after marriage?

Sex before and after marriage is adultery. Sex inside of marriage is the right and pure thing; it is the only sex that can be a fruit of love and a way for love. It will increase the love between the two partners, and it will lead them to more spiritual love; because the Lord is the third person living with them and unifying them: man, woman, Jesus Christ - this is a true Christian marriage. If there is no Jesus Christ, it will just be a man-woman human relation, and it can be broken at any time. So have the Lord inside your life, inside your heart, inside your home, and for sure you will have a very happy life in marriage.

81- What happens when a girl is raped, but she is not ready to have the child?

She can let someone adopt the child, for we as Christians do not accept abortion, because abortion means depriving the child of life and it is not in our capacity to do this; it is the embryo's right to live. And as for our precious Christian girls, surely they would not put themselves in an attitude or situation to have this bitter experience. So take care, and be cautious. This does not mean that you must be always suspicious, but you must be as simple as the dove, and as wise as the serpent.

82- Is there anything wrong with going to parties?

It is up to you to decide this and to consider what occurs in parties. Is the party going to be in a Christian atmosphere, or are you going to lose your spiritual blessings by attending? We do not want you to live in isolation and seriousness, we want you to be happy, but you must select the party that will not hurt you spiritually.

83- What is wrong with smoking?

The young people are usually persuaded by their friends to start smoking, but out of deep and genuine love to everybody, please don't start smoking, and if you smoke, please give up. Because a time will come when you feel regret, but after destroying your health. Sometimes young people take things lightly and as some sort of fun, but this is not the correct way to deal with anything in life. We must deal with things seriously. Life is not fun only; fun is only one aspect of life. Please do not consider smoking as fun, because it will destroy you. You will lose your spiritual blessings because you won't have the power to fast, you will lose your will, you will lose your money, and you will lose your health.

84- What is wrong with drinking alcohol?

Drinking alcohol leads to liver failure. It destroys the health, it destroys one's personality, it destroys one's social relations and family relations. Do not deceive yourselves believing that you can control yourselves, for even if you might control yourself during normal times, in times of stress and depression, you will turn to alcohol, and this habit will result in addiction.



85- Is there anything wrong with having different types of hairstyles, because, for example, in Leviticus 19:27, it says, “You shall not shave the sides of your head...”?

The problem is not with the hairstyle, but with the essence of the person inside. When you cut your hair, what are you thinking about? Who are you trying to imitate? If you want to be different or distinguished, be different in your personality, your success, your achievements. The way you look; your hairstyle and your dressing, reveals how you think, and what you think about. The church cares about cutting the sins from your heart and mind rather than the hairs of your head

86- Why did Jesus have long hair if it says in the Bible men can't have long hair?

Because Jesus was anointed, dedicated and consecrated to the Lord. Even some of the monks today, who are consecrated, do not cut their hair.

87- Is listening to today's music wrong?

Today's music speaks to the emotions, and to the body, and instincts; it excites the emotions and hence the body. In addition, the majority of today's songs are filled with many negative, anti-Christian messages, so it is better to listen to music that will raise your heart towards Heaven and the Lord.

88- Is it wrong to sing non Coptic hymns in Church?

No, but there is something we need to be able to differentiate between : are these hymns lifting you spiritually or emotionally? Emotional music speaks to and excites the body, and so therefore, we must sing hymns which uplift us spiritually.

89- Does religion support medicine?

Of course. The Bible many times refers to medicine, especially in the book of Jeremiah, when he says, “**Is there no balm in Gilead, is there no physician there?**” We utilise medicine when we are ill, but we surrender our will to the Lord.

90- What do you think about the theory of Evolution?

These days, the concept, which was started by Darwin, is very misused. Evolution is just a theory and not the final word. The second point is that this theory is lacking concerning the start of life - Darwin says life began from a cell, but what happened before the cell? The third point is that the evolution theory is lacking concerning the gap between ape and man, known as 'the missing link.' Many people argue that we evolved from apes because we have similar features. But the similarities indicate that they were both created by the same, one God. God created animal with body and psyche, and He created man with body, psyche, mind and spirit. This spirit which was given to us by the Holy Spirit, is what we use to communicate with God; for “**God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them**” (Genesis 1:27). God made animal animal, and man man. Therefore where Darwin lacks, God answers and fulfils.



91- Do animals go to Heaven?

An animal is composed of Body and psyche (**emotions/feelings**). Humans are composed of Body, Psyche, Mind and Soul. It is through the soul that we come into contact with God, and it is our soul that goes to Heaven when we die. Because animals have no soul, they cannot communicate with God, and therefore they do not go to Heaven.

92- What does the church think about UFO's?

Until now, there is no strong scientific evidence supporting the existence of UFOs, and so it is not declared to be factual. Therefore, it is only mystical - it may be either military secrets or just imagination.

93- What is your impression of the internet?

The concept of the internet is good, however, information contained on the internet is not always good. St. Paul, in his first epistle to the Thessalonians (**5:20**) says, "**Test all things, hold fast to what is good**". You must take care concerning the internet, lest you:

- 1- Become addicted to the net.
- 2- Surf inappropriate sites.
- 3.- Participate in chat rooms. 4- Waste your time.
- 5- Fail to have good social relations through spending so much time and energy on the net.
- 6- Develop eye and posture problems from sitting in front of the PC for long periods of time. When surfing the net, be selective in choosing the good, and neglecting the bad and harmful.

94- What does the church think of abortion?

As Christians, we are pro-life, for it is the right of the embryo to live, unless for medical obligations, or the life of the mother is at risk.

95- What is the church's viewpoint concerning IVF (in-vitro fertilisation)?

The church believes that if the sperm is from the husband, and the ovum is from the wife, and surrogacy does not occur (**that is, the wife's mother or sister, for example, being the surrogate mother**), then IVF is accepted from a religious perspective. The need for IVF occurs when there is a hindrance in the female fallopian tubes that does not allow the sperm to fertilise the ovum; it is a mechanical barrier. Therefore, through IVF, the fertilisation of the ovum by a sperm takes place in a test tube or Petrie dish. The resulting embryo is then implanted in the uterus of the mother.

96- What is the church's view concerning euthanasia?

We must differentiate first of all between a person who is terminally ill, and a person with brain death. If the person is terminally ill, we cannot terminate his life, for it is not our capacity and it is not our right. This life is God's, and so, we must hope for a cure or a miracle. Brain death, however, is a commercial lie for the purpose of making money, for if a person is brain dead, it is impossible for them to come back to life. The heart is only working mechanically, but the brain is dead. Therefore, we do not consider it euthanasia in this case, but simply surrendering to the will of God, for this person is dead already.



97- How can saints and angels be everywhere at the same time?

Angels are made of light, and the spirits are also light. Light moves at a speed of 300,000 km per second. So too, angels can move throughout the churches in the speed of light.

98- Why does God give us gifts, if the gift will result in making us feel proud?

It is not the mistake of the gift granted, but the feeling within you of pride that you feel you are better than others. We should never forget that this gift is not from ourselves, but given to us by God. Therefore, instead of accepting and enjoying your own praise, and the praise of others, give praise and thanks to God for granting you this gift.

99- During periods of fasting, must we neglect the body?

No. We do not neglect the body, but we control the body.

100- Is it a sin to neglect the intellectual aspect in one's personality?

It is not a sin, but will mean that your personality will grow in certain aspects, and have a lesser degree of growth in, for example, the intellectual aspect. It is important for you to care for all of the components of the personality (**spirit, mind, psyche, body and social relations**), without being neglectful in any, and in so doing, your personality will be integrated.

101- What happens when the emotional/psychological aspect of one's personality dominates all other aspects of the personality?

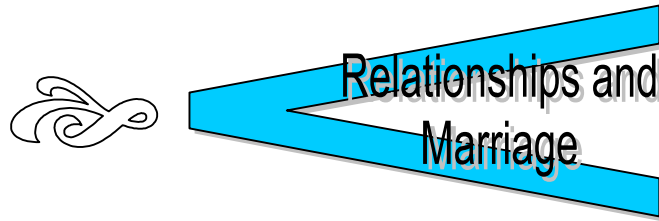
It is important to nourish and have balance between all aspects of the personality, by having a spiritual father, who can advise you concerning practicing some spiritual exercises, such as Bible readings, and attending spiritual meetings, and so on. It is also important to maintain a spiritual routine, and abide in a spiritual atmosphere.

102- Is there any relationship between schizophrenia and being possessed?

Not at all. schizophrenia is a psychological disorder whereby there is a schism between the mind and the emotions, whereas, being possessed relates to spiritual disorders.

103- If I have a dream about killing someone I really hate, is that the same as committing murder?

Dreams make inner feelings more explicit, and what you cannot fulfil during the day in actions, is fulfilled in dreams at night. Therefore this dream about killing someone shows that there is something incorrect in your heart towards that person. So instead of "**killing**" him in your heart, serve him and win him as a friend by asking the Lord to help in the situation, and try to come into contact with them; speak to them, and communicate with them so that the two of you may be reconciled.



104- Is there anything wrong with dating?

Dating is acceptable during the engagement process, but outside of this process, dating may lead to sexual practices. Do not deceive yourselves by the culture around you, for it is a culture that has resulted in broken families, broken marriages, and many distraught children who have lost their parents through the malpractice of family life.

105- Why are pre marital relationships unacceptable? Won't they assist in helping to choose future partners?

The definition of “**pre-marital**” differs. Pre-marital sex differs from pre-marital group friendships, in a pure Christian atmosphere. Have as many male and female friends inside the church in a holy, pure way, and through this type of relationship, and through prayer and the guidance of the Holy Spirit, and the guidance of your confession father, you will correctly select your partner.

However, in society, people commit many sins through having premarital sexual relations. **To follow in this path leads to many grave sins:**

- 1- You are going to change your partner many times, because after a while you will feel monotonous with the same partner, and statistics show that in the USA, the average teenager changes their partner twelve times. Hence, it becomes impossible to choose the correct partner.
- 2- You will consider marriage to be a body to body relationship, and this is not marriage at all but adultery. Marriage is person to person relationship, and it encompasses the whole being of the person; intellectually, emotionally, spiritually, physically, and psychologically. In considering marriage to be body to body relationship, you will enter marriage through the wrong door of senses and lust. For sure, sex is not everything in marriage, it is only one component.
- 3- By committing premarital sex frequently and changing partners often, you will become addicted to sex. People who are sex addicts commit adultery before as well as after marriage, because they can't keep holy. And you see many people now in society with sexual disorders, and the divorce rate is increasing all the time. These problems result from them being sex addicts during their teenage years.
- 4- And the final thing is that sex addiction leads to drug addiction, and this is a scientific fact, for too much sex creates tension in the nervous system, and so this addiction can result in the need to take drugs. And the result of drug addiction is crime.

My dear friends, pre-marital sex is not the correct way to choose your partner in life. If you want the right way of choosing your partner, come to the church and have good, holy relationships with those inside of the church, and participate in church activities. Through group relationships, and prayer, and spiritual guidance, you will be able to select your future partner in a correct way.

It is also important to bear in mind that the teen years are considered the stage of “**general heterosexuality**”, whereby teenagers look towards the opposite sex generally. Therefore it is

impossible to choose a partner during this time. But the 20's are considered the stage of "selective heterosexuality", and it is during this period that one is able to concentrate on choosing their partner.

Abide inside the church, have as many girlfriends and boyfriends in a group atmosphere, and grow in a way that is not only physically, intellectually and spiritually, but also psychologically, in order to choose the correct partner when you are in the stage of selective heterosexuality.

Please abide by these three mottos : group relationships, holy relationships, limited relationships ("**limited**" meaning **being aware of your boundaries and not crossing them**).

106- How can we choose our partner in life?

f Pray a lot. f Think a lot. f Feel a bit.

f Ask for spiritual guidance. We are asking you to "**feel a bit**" because the sound of the emotions can be very loud, and they can dominate the spirit and the mind. For example, because of emotions, one may enter into a relationship with a non-Christian person because they are intelligent, good-looking, and so on, but they do not think about the future of living with and raising a family with a non-Christian partner. Therefore if we rely on our emotions, it may cause our thinking to stop and our spiritual life to be minimum.

107- What is the preferred age difference between married couples?

The younger the couple, the narrower the gap, and the older the couple, the wider the gap in age. We do recommend that the age difference should be a minimum of one year and maximum of 15.

108- What is your opinion concerning someone from Australia wanting to marry a person from Egypt?

As His Holiness said, it is not preferable, as cultural differences may result in problems. It is better to choose your partner from amongst your society, so that there will be similar mentality and culture, and a better opportunity of getting to know each other. Most importantly, however, you must pray - not in order to choose, for if you choose by yourself you will be confused. The Lord knows who your partner will be, and so, you pray in order to discover - discover what the Lord wills for you. Pray so that the Lord may enlighten your vision and your footsteps.

109- How long should an engagement period be?

Between seven months to one year. It is preferable not to extend the engagement for longer than a year, for when the engagement period is prolonged, problems may start to occur.

110- What is the best way to know one's partner during the engagement process?

The best way to know your partner is through prayer only, because in this way, you are inviting God into your relationship and your situation. Do not rely on the emotions because they change all the time, do not rely on your intellect, for your mind is limited and you may be deceived, and do not rely on the physical, for you may commit sin. Prayer is the priority and the most important aspect. Pray and ask for spiritual guidance, for the spiritual aspect is the decisive one. Pray, and God will enlighten your mind.

111- How can I know my partner or fiancé without having pre-marital sex?

Pre-marital sexual relationships are wrong and harmful, because you are not going to know your partner but your failure. You are going to enter marriage from the door of lust and not love. In the Bible, there are three Greek words for love: EROS, which is the sensual love; it is lust rather than love. It is turning the holy, sexual love into something materialistic - sex has become body to body instead of person to person. And if you are dealing with sex in such a way, you will be living in lust and you will be lost. This is because once you marry, you will feel monotonous toward your partner, and you will feel annoyed and frustrated, searching outside for another, and leaving your spouse within a few years. The result is that your marriage will be broken, unsuccessful, will not be eternal, and will not give you happiness. As a Christian, and practically, if you enter marriage through the door of lust, you will leave from the door of lust also. The second kind of love is PHILIA, the love you have towards your family and friends. It is the human love that is giving and taking. The third kind of love is AGAPE - this is the most pure, spiritual love, baptised by the Holy Spirit, and this is the kind of love we should aspire to, in order to have successful marriages.

A journalist once asked His Holiness Pope Shenouda, “**What is the difference between love and lust?**” He replied, “**Love is always giving, lust is always taking**”. The people living in lust are not happy, they are suffering because they are committed to pleasures rather than happiness. Their children turn out stressed, rebellious, lonely, in despair, and longing for family life and love.

Therefore, we are not pressuring you when we say keep yourself holy and pure, and to have spiritual strength and struggle, but you should accept with love and freedom, and according to your own conviction. You must be freely convinced that this kind of living is wrong, and that purity is right. If you don't put limitations in your life, you will end up destroying your life. If you commit yourself to lust, your conscience will be troubled, and you will feel you are not able to confess or take Holy Communion, and you can't enjoy Christian life and love. Please keep yourself pure so that your marriage will have fruitful results.

112- Is it important to be sexually compatible before marriage?

In society they consider that knowing your partner is only through sex, but this is a very dangerous consideration, because for sure you can be compatible with many from the opposite sex, not just one. Also this gives the idea that society thinks marriage = sexual relationships only. As Christians, we know that this is wrong, because marriage is love, and sex should be a medium for love, and even in the absence of sex, love is still growing, as is unity and happiness. We see this in old age when sexual desires weaken, yet the marriage is still stable, unified and lovely. Therefore, this sex-oriented concept of marriage, present in society is very harmful, because if you enter marriage through the door of sexual compatibility, you will also leave this marriage from the same door, because they will feel compatible with their partner for a year or so, and then they will start to feel monotonous; thereby searching for another sexually compatible person, outside of marriage. This compatibility is selfish - never giving but always taking. This selfishness can be seen today in the examples of married couples disliking to have children - they are greedy, only living for themselves, and the result will be the disintegration and collapse of the new civilisation, because of the malpractice of sex.



113- Is there anything wrong with mixed marriages?

It is preferable to have both partners belonging to the same culture and denomination, because if it is mixed, there may be some differences in opinion, for example, you want to hold fast your Coptic traditions; he doesn't understand the need for it, you want to fast; he doesn't believe in fasting, you want to baptise your children Orthodox; he wants to baptise them in his own church. Therefore it is best to be the same so there can be equality in belief and traditions, and no confusion for the children.

114- What is the purpose of getting married?

In our church, marriage differs from any other kind of marriage, be it civil or otherwise, because we believe it to be a holy sacrament. Marriage, in our church, has five important goals:

- 1- Love - in a Christian marriage you are going to experience “**agape**” love which is the holy, spiritual love baptised by the Holy Spirit. It is a sacrificial love which unites the two partners through the Holy Spirit.
- 2- Co-operation - in marriage the couples must co-operate with each other in all aspects of life. When you share joy with your partner, your joy will be multiplied, and when you share sorrow with your partner, your suffering will be divided.
- 3- Salvation - marriage enables the partners to satisfy their sexual instincts and instincts for parenthood in a holy, pure way, and for this reason marriage helps them in the salvation process.
- 4- Children - children are the fruit of marriage and are essential for the continuation of the human race.
- 5- Increasing the Number of Saints - when these children are brought up in the fear and love of God, they will be saints, not only in the church on earth, but also in the kingdom of heaven.

115- In the Bible, what is the meaning of the married couple being referred to as, “the two will become one” (Matt.19:5)?

In Christianity, marriage results in the couple becoming one in many aspects : physically, through the union of their bodies, spiritually, mentally, and psychologically. And it is this oneness which the Lord refers to.

116- What is your opinion about sex?

Sex is the most spiritual thing in life, and the holiest of holies in human nature. But in society today, it has become distorted, corrupted, substantialised and humiliated. Originally when God created Adam and Eve, He developed a triangular relationship : God, man, and woman. In this relationship, love passes from God to man, man to God, God to woman, woman to God, man to woman, woman to man. This is the holiest relationship, and the one which represents Christian love and marriage. If, however, man/woman separate themselves from God, there will be no spiritual union, only ego and selfishness. The result, in this case, will be that the four components present in humans, (**body, mind, psyche, spirit**) will be disturbed because there is no discipline: the body will be crying, the psyche is sorrowful, the soul is agonising, and the mind is trying to philosophise the sin. In such a situation, much sexual deviations will occur, but without happiness, because sex is no longer unifying, but dividing, and this sin will always be present because there is no grace inside such people.

Sex, as God planned it, was to be the medium for love, happiness and unity. But sadly society has corrupted this by emphasising that lust is love. According to the Bible, there are

three Greek words for love: EROS, which is the lusty, sensual love; PHILIA, which is the human love without desire or spirituality, as occurs between people generally; and AGAPE; which is the Christian, spiritual love, unifying and unselfish. Today, however, non-Christians are living in Eros, thinking that this will lead to marriage, but what it results in is a broken marriage. Therefore, as Christians, we refuse this erotic love because it is body to body, instead of person to person. What you are seeing around you is not sex as God meant it to be, but uncleanness. And you always notice how they are never happy or satisfied; but always thirsty and greedy for more. For this reason, sex today divides the people because it is not spiritual, but deviated and negative. This is why Christians never enter into sexual relationships outside of marriage.

117- How can there be understanding between two partners?

Understanding comes through having a spiritual home, and by praying together. It is also important to have a spirit of love and humility and self sacrifice, when dealing with each other, and always have the Lord abiding between you.

118- How can I deal with my in-laws?

Problems usually occur when the husband, for example, is very attached to his mother, and finds the transition from his parents to his wife a difficult move. It is important for him to be mature, however, and independent - not in a way that causes him to neglect his parents, but to establish balance in his love towards his parents and his wife. Pray, and ask the Lord to bless your relations with both.

119- In marriage, is it wrong not to want children?

In the western world generally, this deficiency in giving birth to children is something very negative, that implies that the partners are not willing to give; they only want to give and take between themselves, and at times, in the occurrence of an unexpected pregnancy, the partners may abort, or divorce, or give their child up for adoption. However, within Christian marriage, child bearing is holy. The Lord said, "***Where two or three are gathered in My name, I will be in the midst of them***" (Matthew 18:20). The two can signify the parents, and the three, the child.

120- If a couple are unable to have children, does it mean their marriage is not blessed by God?

Not at all. If the Lord has not granted the blessing of child bearing to the couple, it is because He wants them to be parents for many, many spiritual children, such as the orphans.



121- What is the church's view on birth control within marriage?

The church never stands against birth control within marriage as long as the means of achieving this purpose is not killing the embryo or hurting the partners. The Church permits contraception for the purpose of planning the family, which you will support spiritually, educationally, psychologically, physically, socially and financially.

122- If someone has had sexual relations before marriage, would the words of the ceremony be different from those said for virgin couples?

If they have not been married before, and have repented from their sins, then the ceremony proceeds as usual.



5



Service

123- What are the characteristics of a good servant?

- 1- Humility - we must deal with all people in humility.
- 2- Prayer - the proper servant is one who prays before the service, during the service and after the service, as well as before visitation, during visitations and after visitations.
- 3- Individual service - he must take care of each person individually.
- 4- Full service - we must take care of the needs of those we serve; spiritually, psychologically, mentally, physically, and socially.
- 5- Generosity - it is important for the servant to be meek in his service and to always do good deeds.
- 6- Effective ministry - our ministry must be effective in order for us to win people to the Lord.

124- What is required of us as servants?

To clearly define the goal, and to determine the way and channels to achieve the goal. Our goal as servants is threefold:

- 1- To attract the outsiders to come into the church.
 - 2- To build those inside to grow and become strong in Christ.
 - 3- For those who become strong to serve those outside and bring them into the church.
- These three goals form the circle of Christian life and service, and if this circle is broken in any part, it will result in a loss for the church, and a loss of the main goal of church service.

125- What are the reasons why we fall down in our service?

There are four main diversions through which we can lose the goal in our service:

- 1- Substitution, instead of serving the spiritual life of our young people, we fill them with knowledge about the Bible, history of the church, and so on, but knowledge without grace and life (**which is Jesus Christ**), is not sufficient for their salvation. They will end up being knowledgeable about Christianity, but they will not have Christ inside of them. Christianity must be taught as life, and not just knowledge.
- 2- Social activities, your activities must be supporting your spiritual goal, and if this does not happen, your group will become like a closed circle, with Christ being on the outside. Our aim is to make these social activities around Christ, and in Christ; thus it must be spiritual activities from the kind that is “**building**”.
- 3- Moralities, it is pleasing when young people are being brought up with good morals, but if there is no spirituality, he will not have Christ inside of him. The two must be incorporated together, in order to reach the spiritual goal of salvation.

4- Divisions, whenever there are divisions in the church; blaming each other, condemning each other, speaking about each other, the goal will be lost, and the result will come to nought. Once we forget the Lord, and the salvation of our people, we start to struggle with each other, and lose sight of the goal. There is a saying that “**whenever hatred enters through the window, the Lord will leave from the door**”. Why? Because God is love.

126- What is the solution for servants who are not committed?

Once he succeeds in a certain responsibility, he will be longing for more. This situation requires patience, encouragement and guidance, because it is through these three virtues that they will grow and become committed.

127- What can we do with servants who are very judgemental with youth they serve?

Servants must understand that they are dealing with very fragile material. Please deal with those you serve through prayer, love and effective dialogue.

128- What can a servant do when they feel spiritually and emotionally drained, and no longer feel they can serve?

The Lord gives you spiritual power when you feel weak and empty. Therefore, weakness is not an excuse to stop serving; but on the contrary, the time when you feel weak is the exact moment you are in need for God, and this is the way God will utilise you. So when you feel weak, ask God for His support, and together with the Apostle Paul we can say, “**when I am weak, I am strong.**” (2 Corinthians 12:10). As a human you are limited, so come into contact with the Unlimited and He will give you strength.

129- What is the best way of dealing with the High School age group?

Education in the western world, tends to be egocentric, that is, encouraging them to speak their mind, and therefore, the only way to deal with this age group, and young people generally, is through dialogue - not lectures and orders - and prayer, and patience, and love, and mutual understanding. It is important that you do not impose your views on them, but let them be convinced by themselves, through effective dialogue.

130- How can we gain the respect of teenagers?

Mutual trust, mutual discussion, mutual respect. They must not feel that we are imposing ourselves on them.

131- How can we keep up with the trends affecting and influencing our youth today?

- 1- We must study what they learn, listen to, and read.
- 2- We must relate a Christian attitude in a way to encourage that he must not be isolated from society, but that all his needs can be satisfied inside Christianity; thereby, not needing to look elsewhere.
- 3- We must encourage them to have “**strong flexibility**” - to go with them when it is right, and to stop when it is wrong.

132- How do we bring youth who have strayed back to church?

Through love, prayer and dialogue.

133- What attracts youth to the church?

- 1- personal touch of love in order to make them feel accepted and invited.
- 2- Prayer, in order to ask the Holy Spirit to work inside the hearts of those who are outside of the church to come in.
- 3- Preaching the gospel, through visitations, sending letters, and being friends with them.
- 4- Participation, in order for them to feel a sense of belonging and responsibility when they come to church. They must be active participants in the church.

134- How can we encourage youth to participate in the church?

- 1- Invitation.
- 2- Dialogue, which is the most effective way.
- 3- Participation.
- 4- Competition.

They also need Christian love, prayer, patience, and encouragement, but without force. You must treat them and love them as friends, not students.

135- What is the best way of dealing with difficult youth?

- 1- I must like them and they must like me, naturally, and through the grace of God.
- 2- I must feel relaxed with them, and not be in a state of panic.
- 3- I must be decisive with them when they are disruptive in prayers & Bible readings.
- 4- Patience - keep the example of Jacob in mind; don't look at his instability now, but look towards what he will be like in the future.
- 5- Love is the most impressive thing of all.

136- How do we handle youth who won't listen to us in class?

Youth do not want to listen and be lectured to, they need interaction. Try giving them topics and assignments to research so that they can prepare and give the lessons themselves. They need to talk and discuss, and we are the ones who need to listen.

137- Can we become angry with a disruptive person in class?

There is no need to get angry, but you must be decisive. You must be serious with them, but in a manner of love.

138- How can we encourage children and youth to read the Bible more?

Children and youth like to learn through practical application. Encourage them to research and study for themselves, and present their findings and thoughts.

139- How can we convince the young people that pre-marital sex is wrong?

Simply through effective dialogue which edifies. They must be convinced by themselves that pre-marital sex results in many harmful things, not the least being sex addiction. They must be convinced that these relationships are not the correct way to prepare themselves for marriage, or assist them in choosing the right partner, for such relationships are body to body relations only, whereas marriage is a person to person relationship. Entering the door of marriage through adultery will result in divorce and broken marriages. Therefore, the young people must understand that marriage is a commitment; it is not something sensual only, and that the sensual aspect is only a small component of marriage. In a Christian marriage, there is love and intellectual co-operation, and spiritual co-operation to build each other for the purpose of entering the Kingdom of Heaven. Therefore, rather than imposing our thoughts on them, they must be personal convinced that such relations are wrong.

140- How can a servant prepare himself for monastic life?

Your confession father can give you special spiritual exercises and regulations, for example, concerning fasting, prayers, readings, prostrations, and so on.

