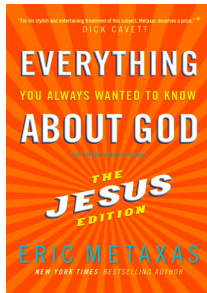


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Contact: Ben Laurro, Pure Publicity
818.753.4056 or Ben@purepublicity.com

A FUNNY WAY TO LOOK AT THE IDENTITY OF JESUS

New York Times bestselling author tackles the big questions about the most controversial man that ever lived



New York, NY – People seem to have deep, probing theological questions about Jesus - one of the most controversial figures of all time. Did He exist? Was He a Jew or a Christian? Did He really rise from the dead? Why does He seem like such a smart-aleck? And what does Pink Floyd have to do with His plan to save the world?

These are a few of the questions raised by **Eric Metaxas**, author of *Everything You Always Wanted to Know About God (But Were Afraid to Ask): The Jesus Edition*, the third book in his series of conversations about the existence, nature and identity of God.

In a humorous, question-and-answer format, Metaxas covers questions that include: How do we know the disciples didn't just make up Jesus? Was His last name "Christ" (middle initial "H.")? Doesn't the New Testament contradict the Old? With such outrageous claims, was Jesus just crazy? How can a sinless guy be sarcastic? Can He really expect us to "love our enemies?" Can it be proven that He rose from the dead? What if He is truly God?

As Metaxas explains, "Jesus had a piercing wit. There are things that He said that are just drop dead brilliant. Serious Christians are always portrayed as bluenoses and it's total nonsense. The second you're in the presence of God you see yourself for what you are, which is broken, in need of help, imperfect, morally imperfect. As soon as you see those things you've got to laugh, and cry." Metaxas tackles the teachings, death and resurrection of Jesus including:

- **Jesus - Lunatic, Liar or Lord:** "To actually accept Jesus as Lord means realizing He is who He claims to be, and it means trusting Him. A lot of folks just aren't ready to do that, because they're afraid it will affect them adversely somehow."
- **The "Jewishness" of Christianity:** "Being a non-Jew doesn't make someone a Christian. It makes them a Gentile. So a Jew can't be a Gentile, and a Gentile can't be a Jew. But both Jews and Gentiles can be Christians!"
- **A Rebel with a Cause:** "Jesus frustrated people. He challenged them to think. He challenged the Pharisees' authority by not playing by their rules... He was a rebel, but not in the way they—or we—could understand."
- **The Whole Truth:** "Jesus communicated with a balance between truth and love and grace. He cared about being understood. He tried to communicate, telling stories and answering questions. There was something beautiful and compelling about Him."
- **Sin and Forgiveness:** "Jesus doesn't want to condemn us. He loves us. He condemns the mistakes we've made because they hurt us and others. Unless we see there's something that needs forgiving, we won't seek His forgiveness. We don't want to face our sins but rather come up with excuses that say that we don't need God."
- **What is a Christian:** "People confuse having a relationship with God with being religious. There are plenty of so-called religious people who have no relationship with God. In God's eyes we are supposed to love Him and know Him and serve Him."

~more~

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Metaxas reminds readers that Jesus was an “evangelical freak of His day,” and though people tried to silence Him, the world was changed—leading the way for other history changers. “Rosa Parks, Jackie Robinson, Martin Luther King Jr. were Jesus freaks. They were fundamentally motivated by their savior and Lord, Jesus Christ. That has gone out of the culture and the history of the period. We never discuss that. They didn’t consider themselves leftists. They considered themselves Christians.”

A self-described “patently insane” task, Metaxas attempts to answer the most common questions posed to him as a writer and commentator. Metaxas draws from his unlikely background—writer for *VeggieTales*, colleague of Chuck Colson, *New York Times* bestselling author of *Amazing Grace: William Wilberforce and the Heroic Campaign to End Slavery*—to create this hilarious, entertaining work of popular apologetics.

“Everyone wants to know about the meaning of life and who God is and why there’s so much evil and suffering in the world,” says Metaxas, “and no, I don’t have glib answers, because, frankly these questions are too deep for glib answers, but that doesn’t mean we shouldn’t wade in and try to wrestle with them.” In a humorous way, of course.

Eric Metaxas is the *New York Times* bestselling author of *Amazing Grace: William Wilberforce and the Heroic Campaign to End Slavery*. His writing was first published in *Atlantic Monthly*, and has appeared in the *New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, *Regeneration Quarterly*, *Christianity Today*, *National Review Online*, *Beliefnet* and *First Things*. Metaxas’s *The Birthday ABC* was chosen as a 1995 “Pick of the List” by the American Bookseller’s Association, and Amazon.com honored his *Squanto and the Miracle of Thanksgiving* with their “Number One Bestseller” Award for Thanksgiving 1999. He has been featured numerous times on CNN, The Fox News Channel and other television networks, and has been a guest on NPR. He is the founder and host of *Socrates in the City: Conversations on the Examined Life*, a monthly event of entertaining and thought-provoking discussions that features such speakers as Sir John Polkinghorne, Dr. Armand Nicholi, Os Guinness, Lauren F. Winner and Peter Kreeft. Metaxas serves on the vestry of Calvary/St. George’s Episcopal Church, and lives in Manhattan, New York, with his wife and daughter.

About *Everything You Always Wanted to Know About God (But Were Afraid to Ask): The Jesus Edition*: Published by Gospel Light Publications/Regal Books. February 1, 2010. Hardcover, 224 pages. \$19.99. ISBN: 9780830746156.

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Suggested Interview Questions

For Eric Metaxas, author of *Everything You Always Wanted to Know About God (But Were Afraid to Ask): The Jesus Edition*.

1. Isn't it a little ambitious to claim to know "everything" about God?
2. Since when is talking about God an occasion for humor?
3. What is the main point of this book?
4. Are people afraid to ask questions about God?
5. Why format your book as a question-and-answer dialogue?
6. What are some of the main questions people ask you about God?
7. Is this book aimed at people who are Christians or at people who are not?
8. Isn't it impossible to prove the existence of Jesus?
9. Likewise, isn't it impossible to prove his divinity?
10. Was Jesus a Christian or a Jew?
11. You refer to the Pink Floyd song "Wish You Were Here." What does that have to do with God?
12. You ask the question, "Is Neptune a Christian planet?" Well, is it?
13. Does God have a sense of humor?
14. Give an example of Jesus the Not-Always-Nice-Guy.
15. Why should we love our enemies, as Jesus commanded?
16. Your book seems to take its title from a Woody Allen film. What would Woody think of your book?
17. Why take the risk to add humor to such a serious topic and not lose the point of your message?

~more~

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PRAISE FOR *Everything You Always Wanted to Know About God (But Were Afraid to Ask)...*

“For his stylish and entertaining treatment of this subject, Metaxas deserves a prize.” —**DICK CAVETT**

“I am absolutely smitten with this book! Easy (in the sense of moving right along) and fun to read, but packed with good stuff to chew on. I wanted to put every question and answer on file cards, so I could whip out the appropriate response when asked. And all with a wonderful sense of humor. Thank you, Eric, Thank you for writing this book! Every question in it I have asked, have heard asked, or want to ask! And the answers are so good humored and easy to read that you almost forget how profound they are.” —**ANN B. DAVIS, Alice of “The Brady Bunch”**

“The difficulty is not to gush. Eric has written a wise, funny, and disarming book, one which will, I’m sure, be handed around dorms, churches, and anywhere smart, curious people (both believers and unbelievers) can get their hands on it. We have had a tugging match with our own 21-year-old college student to see who gets to read it first in our house. We plan use it at Redeemer everywhere we can.” — **TIM KELLER, pastor of Redeemer Presbyterian Church, NYC; New York Times Bestselling author of *The Reason for God*.**

“Quick, witty, engaging, and often profound are words I use to describe my old friend and one-time colleague Eric Metaxas. This little book, *Everything You Always Wanted to Know About God (But were Afraid to Ask)* is vintage Metaxas. Good and profitable reading. — **CHUCK COLSON, Founder of Prison Fellowship Ministries**

“An excellent primer on the most important questions of life, engagingly presented in question-and answer format. A timely and useful book for a searching, spiritually hungry America.” — **GEORGE GALLUP, JR., Founding Chairman of the George H. Gallup International Institute**

Who is Eric Metaxas?



In a decidedly eclectic career, Eric Metaxas has written for *VeggieTales*, Chuck Colson, and the *New York Times*, three things not ordinarily in the same sentence. *The Hartford Courant* has declared figuring him out “like trying to stick a pushpin in a cyclone.” Nevertheless, let us try.

Eric Metaxas was born in New York City in 1963 and grew up in Danbury, Connecticut, attending the public schools there, and graduated from Yale University. He delivered satirical address as part of the Yale commencement tradition, in the process upstaging Dick Cavett, the next speaker. They would not speak for nearly two decades.

Metaxas’ humor writing was first published in the *Atlantic Monthly*, and has appeared in *The New York Times*. Woody Allen has called these pieces “quite funny.” Eric’s book and movie reviews, essays, and poetry have appeared in *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, *Regeneration Quarterly*, *Christianity Today*, *National Review Online*, *Beliefnet*, and *First Things*. He has been awarded fellowships to Yaddo and the MacDowell Colony for his short stories. The cult-classic *Don’t You Believe It!* — his book-length parody of the Ripley’s “Believe It Or Not!” books — led novelist Mark Helprin to dub Metaxas “the true heir to the *Far Side*’s Gary Larson.”

From 1988-1992, Metaxas was editorial director and head writer for Rabbit Ears Productions, writing over 20 children’s videos and books narrated by actors such as Mel Gibson, Meg Ryan, Robin Williams, Sir John Gielgud, Danny Glover, Sigourney Weaver, John Candy, Michael Caine, Michael Keaton, Geena Davis, Jodie Foster, Emma Thompson, and Raul Julia. Metaxas’ children’s books include *The Birthday ABC*, *Uncle Mugsy & the Terrible Twins of Christmas*, *Squanto and the Miracle of Thanksgiving* and *It’s Time to Sleep, My Love*, illustrated by Nancy Tillman, has been hailed as a “*Goodnight Moon* for the 21st century.” Sally Taylor, the daughter of James Taylor and Carly Simon, wrote a lullaby song to Eric’s words, and sings it on the book’s audio CD.

Metaxas was for two years a writer and editor for Chuck Colson’s *Breakpoint*, a nationally syndicated daily radio program with over 400 stations and a weekly audience of five million. He then worked as a writer for *VeggieTales*, where he also provided various voices for several of their projects.

Metaxas has been frequently featured as a cultural commentator on *CNN* and the *Fox News Channel*; and has discussed his own books on *C-Span’s Book TV* and *Hannity & Colmes*. He has been featured on many radio programs, including NPR’s *Morning Edition* and *Talk of the Nation*, *Hugh Hewitt*, *the Bob Grant Show*, *Janet Parshall’s America*, *Monica Crowley*, and *The Alan Colmes Show*.

He is the founder and host of *Socrates in the City: Conversations on the Examined Life*, a monthly event of “entertaining and thought-provoking discussions on ‘life, God, and other small topics” that features such speakers as Dr. Francis Collins, Sir John Polkinghorne, Baroness Caroline Cox, Dana Gioia, Os Guinness and Peter Kreeft, and which was mentioned in a front-page story in the *New York Times*. *The New Canaan Society*, of which Eric is a founding and current member, was also mentioned in the article.

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Eric has debated at the Oxford Union, the world's oldest debating society, and speaks widely on a variety of topics. His no-holds-barred introductions of such figures as U. S. Senator Joseph Lieberman, former Attorney General John Ashcroft, and Rick Warren have made him much sought after as an emcee and moderator. He has moderated debates with Bishop Spong and President Obama's former pastor, the Rev. Jeremiah Wright; and has spoken at the White House, on Capitol Hill, at West Point, Yale, Cornell, Princeton, and many other venues, and was this past year the featured speaker at the Louisiana Governor's Prayer Breakfast in Baton Rouge. In 2007 he was made an Honorary Fellow of the prestigious British-American Project, the only person ever to have been afforded this privilege.

Eric's acclaimed biography, *Amazing Grace: William Wilberforce and the Heroic Campaign to End Slavery* was published by HarperSanFrancisco, and is the "official companion book" to the feature film, also titled *Amazing Grace*. The book was #23 on the *New York Times* Bestseller list. Eric attends Calvary/St. George's Episcopal Church, and lives in Manhattan, New York, with his wife and daughter. His long-awaited biography of Dietrich Bonhoeffer, titled *BONHOEFFER*, will be published by Thomas Nelson in April 2010.

STANDOUT QUOTES FROM *EVERYTHING YOU WANTED TO KNOW*:

Arranged in a light, witty, Q&A format, *Everything* leads the reader through the most frequently asked questions about Jesus. Each chapter covers a controversial topic—historical proofs, the Old Testament world, Jewish ideas about the Messiah, surprising facts about Jesus, the nature of evil, and what it means to be a Christian.

Ch. 1: Not Just a Figment of Someone's Imagination—*Historical Proof for Jesus*

Pg. 8

Q: Okay, let's just get super basic: How do we know that Jesus really existed?

A: Well, His mother sure thought He existed.

Q: Now cut that out... How do we *know* Jesus was a real person? It's all so incredibly long ago. I mean, how do we know the disciples didn't just make Him up?

A: ...The simple answer is that we have firsthand witnesses. And we have gazillions of documents that attest to His actual existence.

Q: Gazillions is not a real number.

A: I know that! I simply meant many documents. But there are literally *thousands*.

Q: *Thousands*?

A: Yes... Like books that were written by the Jewish historian Josephus, for example.

Q: Who was Josephus?

A: Glad you asked. Josephus was a non-Christian historian who lived in Rome in the first century. He wrote several books. In one of them, *Antiquities of the Jews*, written around AD 94, he refers to Jesus.

Q: An actual ancient historian refers to Jesus?...

Ch. 4: Lunatic, Liar or Lord?—*Jesus Proved Who He Is*

Pg. 39

Q: I thought He was supposed to be the *quintessential* nice guy, patting kids on the head and carrying lambs on His shoulders and the whole nine yards.

A: That's a false image we've picked up—largely helped along by the Church itself, which has sometimes presented Jesus that way. Often with blonde hair and blue eyes and a faraway "spiritual" look... it's all nonsense.

Q: How is it nonsense?

A: Look at the facts: Jesus was sometimes sarcastic and impatient with His followers. He walked into the Temple in Jerusalem and then exploded with anger and started wrecking stuff—turned

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over tables and the whole nine yards. Let me repeat... this was in the Temple! A “nice” guy doesn’t go into a house of worship and start a riot, does he?...

Ch. 7: The First Christian Was a Jew?—*The Jewishness of Christianity*

Pg. 63

Q: I’ve never understood the idea that Jesus was a Jew. I mean, isn’t that idea just confusing?

A: ...He *was* a Jew—and not just a Jew, but also a rabbi! He wore a beard and spoke in Hebrew—or at least in Aramaic... and He lived in Israel.

Q: Say what?

A: Christianity is Jewish! It’s true.

Q: Right. So Christianity is really Jewish?

A: Extremely Jewish. By the way, did I ever tell you the story about when Dick Cavett and I went to see Mickey Rooney perform?

Q: What do you mean, “by the way”? Does this have anything to do with my question?

A: Of course it does. *So did I?*

Q: No. And it sounds like you’re making it up anyway.

A: What I’m about to tell you is 100% factual. Maybe more...

Ch. 9: The Lost Years of Jesus, the Not-Always-Nice Guy—*Jesus’ Youth and Sarcasm*

Pg. 76

A: Do you think sarcasm is always bad? Because it’s not. Jesus was sarcastic sometimes.

Q: Jesus was sarcastic? I find that hard to believe. Do you have some specific examples?

A: ...He uttered the sarcastic line: “I have shown you many great miracles from the Father. For which of these do you stone me?”

Q: Oh, snap!...

Ch. 18. What Do I Have to Fear But...—*the Second Coming*

Pg. 183

Q: I don’t exactly get that. How do we align our will with the will of God?

A: It means we trust in Him with every part of our being.

Q: But how does somebody actually *do* that?

A: Look, imagine a man says to you he can drive a wheelbarrow over a tightrope. He’s going to roll the wheelbarrow over the tightrope, which goes across an abyss. And he asks you if you believe he can do it, if he can get to the other side.

Q: Okay, I’m with you so far.

A: So you say to this guy, “Of course I believe you can do it. No problem!” But then he says, “Glad you think I can do it! Now get into the wheelbarrow.”

Q: Er... that’s another story.

A: Exactly. And that’s exactly what I’m talking about. To say “I believe you can do it” takes nothing. It costs you nothing. But to say “I totally trust you, even with my life,” well, that’s something else...

Ch. 19: Is Neptune a Christian Planet?—*What Being a Christian Means*

Pg. 190

Q: A friend of mine became a Christian, and now he says he only listens to Christian music. So if I became a Christian, would that mean I’d only be able to listen to Christian music?

A: What do you mean by “Christian music”?

Q: I’m not sure, but my friend says that if it’s not Christian music, he won’t listen to it.

A: I think your friend is a bit confused. Does he only eat Christian food?

Q: What do you mean?

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A: Exactly. What does the word “Christian” in front of something mean? What makes something “Christian”? ...I mean, did God create pine trees?

Q: Of course.

A: And Jesus is God...

Q: I think I see where you are going with this...

A: Therefore pine trees are Christian!...

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