

## Who Would Serve A God Who Enjoys Tormenting Folks In Hell?

**Category:** Hell and Torment

### **Example A)**

"I sympathize afresh with the mighty Voltaire who, when badgered on his deathbed and urged to renounce the devil, murmured that this was not the time to be making enemies."

Christopher Hitchens

### **Example B)**

"Before I present some of my reasons for rejecting your faith... I want to acknowledge that there are a few things you and I agree about... The Bible is either the word of God, or it isn't. Either Jesus offers humanity the one true path to salvation (John 14:6), or he does not. We do agree that to be a real Christian is to believe that all other faiths are in error and profoundly so. If Christianity is correct, and I persist in my unbelief, I should expect to suffer the torments of Hell. Worse still, I have persuaded others, many close to me, to persist in a state of unbelief. They, too, will languish in 'everlasting fire' (Matthew 25:41). If the claims of Christianity are true, I will have realized the worst outcome of a human life."

Sam Harris

### **Example C)**

"Consider: Every devout Muslim has the same reasons for being a Muslim that you now have for being a Christian."

Sam Harris

**Example D)**

“On virtually every page, the Qur’an declares that it is the perfect word of the creator of the universe. Muslims believe this as fully as you believe the Bible’s account of itself... He (Muhammad) also assured his followers that Jesus was not divine (Qur’an 5.71-75, 19:30-38) and that anyone who believed otherwise would spend eternity in Hell.”

Sam Harris

**Example E) YouTube - Al Jazeera Interview**

“It seems to me that telling children such as they really, really believe that people who sin are going to go to Hell and roast forever – forever, so your skin grows again when it peels off with, with burning. It seems to me to be intuitively entirely reasonable that that is a worse form of child abuse that will give more nightmares, that will give more genuine distress afterwards than child abuse by a priest;” ( something he has stated over and over).

Richard Dawkins

**Example F)**

“Who will say with confidence that sexual abuse is more permanently damaging to children than threatening them with the eternal and unquenchable fires of Hell?”

Richard Dawkins

**Example G)**

“To terrify children with the image of Hell, to consider women to be an inferior creation – is that good for the world?”

Christopher Hitchens

**Example H)**

"There's no Hell mentioned in the Old Testament. The punishment of the dead is not specified there. It's only with gentle Jesus, meek and mild, that the idea of eternal torture for minor transgressions is introduced."

Christopher Hitchens

**Example I)**

"... Heaven for climate, and Hell for society."

Mark Twain

**Example J)**

"There is one very serious defect to my mind in Christ's moral character, and that is he believed in Hell. I do not myself feel that any person who is profoundly humane can believe in everlasting punishment."

Bertrand Russell

**Example K)**

"The first time the deity came down to Earth, he brought life and death; when he came the second time, he brought Hell."

Mark Twain, Letters from Earth

**Example L)**

"In time, the deity perceived that death was a mistake; a mistake, in that it was insufficient; insufficient, for the reason that while it was an admirable agent for the inflicting of misery upon the survivor, it allowed the dead person himself to escape from all further persecution in the refuge of the grave. This was not satisfactory. A way must be conceived to pursue the dead beyond the tomb.

The deity pondered this matter for 4,000 years unsuccessfully, but as soon as he came down to Earth and became a Christian his mind cleared and he knew what to do. He invented Hell, and proclaimed it."

Mark Twain, Letters from Earth

## Food for Thought

Typically, this is framed as a loud declaration. If anyone declares it softly and thoughtfully, email me. I treasure rarities.

*"I can't understand people like you. I know this, I could never serve a god who enjoys tormenting people in Hell!"*

That is closer to what you're likely to endure. What would you say in return? Remember, no one response is right, let alone perfect. Take a moment to consider what was said. Sometimes it's best to say,

***"I sense this is near to your heart in some way, can you repeat it a bit slower for me, so I can consider my reply? Oh, and a bit more softly would also help me."***

Often the speaker will comply, as long as you lower your voice and slow your speech when you speak.

You are often speaking to someone whose 35-year-old son died last year. Perhaps the speaker's friend, an unbeliever, suffered terribly with cancer and died with the speaker nearby. Remember, focus on the speaker, not on you. You seek a conversation and, hopefully, a discussion. You don't have a script you've memorized, you are listening and gauging and replying.

It might be a good time for me to state, with all humility, that it may help you to review the section called, A Discussion about Discussions. Your frame of mind and facial expressions may be of more importance than you can imagine. My simple guidelines, tips about discussions, I do believe and state humbly, may be a help to you, and I'm confident they will do no man or woman harm.

I might begin my response like this:

***"What makes you think that God would enjoy tormenting anyone in Hell?"***

Whatever the reply, I am likely turning to a version of this:

***“Let me ask you, since I’m quite certain God does not take a perverse delight in tormenting anyone in Hell, isn’t your real question, Why is there a Hell at all ?”***

Why did I ask this? I do believe in questions as the path to discussion. I worked in the “perverse delight” for a reason that should become clear later in the discussion.

Normally, the speaker will stumble over this type of question. The average person is like you and me, he or she is not used to a real discussion. Real discussions require in the moment thinking and in the moment consideration of what another has said. This is fertile ground for persuasion or an incremental move away from one’s position, both are what you and I seek.

I am truly interested in any discussion of Hell. Since you are unlikely to be experienced at discussions on Hell, let me suggest a framework.

***“Say unto them, as I live, saith the LORD God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and lives. Turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will you die, O House of Israel?”***

***Ezekiel 33:11***

I recommend you memorize:

***“I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked...”***

***King James Version***

I used the King James translation purposely. The last part of the verse is awkward to both our ears and tongues. With the King James version, *I am purposely driving you to paraphrase the latter part of the verse*. Maybe something like:

***“God goes on to implore the Israelites to turn from their evil ways. As you can see, the real issue is the evil they’re doing. Hell, in a way, is like an eternal prison where criminals are punished, don’t you think?”***

Wherever the discussion goes from here, I've laid the foundation I want to lay.

Now I'm trying to work a few of these questions into the discussion:

1. Why is there a Hell at all?
2. Do God's holiness and justice demand He be just?
3. Is everyone who refuses to turn from his evil ways treated fairly? I mean is everyone punished only for what he or she has done?
4. What is Hell like?
5. Does the punishment ever end?
6. Why isn't everyone in Hell? I mean we are all sinners, right?
- 7. Maybe the question I should ask is, why is even one man in Heaven?**

I will give you a general observation about Hell, in reply to the points I've raised.  
Because God is just, evildoers must be punished, it is their just reward.

A doctrine you may be unaware of is very useful in such a discussion, and it is useful in other ways as well.

I might ask:

***"You know, I was shocked the first time I read a sermon by Jonathan Edwards, wherein he explained that all people in Hell are not punished equally. Ever thought about that?"***

(He or she hasn't, and likely you haven't either)

***"Hitler will be punished in a manner that befits his crimes. Adolph will suffer more than your neighbor who simply lived and died, doing normal things, sinning in private by the barreland and in public by the spoonful; clearly with no regard for Christ or his own soul."***

Varying degrees of punishment in Hell is a useful doctrine for another reason. Suppose a complete stranger, with whom you've been conversing at the pub while dining, confides in you that he's a salesman attending a convention who

intends to commit adultery with a co-worker while at the convention. I have run across this more than once.

I say:

***“My friend, let me reason with you a minute – maybe two minutes. May I see a photo of your family? I want you to consider the promises you made to the woman in that photo, and I want to see the faces of the kids who will grow up wondering how you could trade them for some co-worker. And, if you’re intent on catching whatever venereal disease your co-worker has, why don’t you just go to the clinic and ask them to inject you with some kind of venereal disease? Do you think that co-worker’s only fooling around with you?”***

***Look, I’m a Christian trying to help you out of fantasyland. Also, the Bible teaches that you will be racking up wrath for the Day of Wrath. When God judges you and sentences you, if I have my way, you will go to Hell with one less crime on your rap sheet. I believe you’d thank me in Hell if I talk you out of this. A wise man once said, The sinner in Hell would give the world and all to have one less sin on his record.”***

This is my paraphrase, but it is close and I’ve educated him about Romans 2:5:

***“But in accordance with your hardness and your impenitent heart you are treasuring up for yourself wrath in the Day of Wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God.”***

I’ve had this conversation two or three times, and the Lord has blessed it each time.

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***“What if God, wanting to show His wrath and to make His power known, endured with much long suffering the vessels of wrath prepared for destruction, and that He might make known the riches of His glory on the vessels of mercy, which He had prepared beforehand for glory...”***

***Romans 9: 22 & 23***

Justice is owed — mercy is not owed.

All glory be to God who gives mercy to people who deserve only justice.

Look back at the Atheist quotes I've given you. In light of the truth about justice, can you see how pathetic these haughty men are? Their sarcasm and childish prattling grieves me, for them. Sam Harris will hear his own words endlessly in Hell, if God doesn't recreate him.

Do not fear this conversation; look forward to it.

Please glance back at items 1-7. What is the theme of All 7 questions? All 7 questions are attempts to discuss one item really. That item is justice, and justice is merely the tuxedo version of fairness. We all want fairness for ourselves, and we all have scars from unfairness. Think about your life. Has someone betrayed you (of course)? Have you ever been deceived, or cheated, or stolen from? If your betrayer, or your deceiver, or the one who stole from you gets away with it without punishment, it stings. You complain that it isn't fair, what you mean is justice didn't prevail.

As a Christian, I am sympathetic. Unfairness and injustice abound in this world. Graveyards are filled with folks for whom justice proved avoidable. As a Christian, I also understand that God will mete out justice for every single human being for every single thought, word, and deed. How can I be so certain of this?

God is just, eternally and inherently so.

Thus, Hell needs to be a place where pure justice reigns, necessarily and logically. Hell is a place where no one suffers a bit more or a bit less than they should. Hell is a place where punishment is doled out, and the amount of suffering meted out perfectly reflects the crimes committed.

**Every human being should be in Hell.** It is Heaven that should have nary a human being. Why? Justice.

But, Bill, what about Christ followers, you ask? Yes, truly born-again followers of Jesus Christ will fill Heaven. In all their cases, their crimes against the perfect Law of God have received their just accounting. The beloved Savior paid for each individual's individual sins on the cross, as He alone could do. May all glory be continuously given to Him.

When speaking to someone about Hell, embrace it. Ask about fairness, justice, and punishment in both society and eternally. When and if a discussion becomes confusing, remind yourself that your theme is justice because Hell is all about justice. You will regain your footing, I promise.