



God Questions

What God asks us

INTRODUCTION

It can be easy and comforting to look to God and the Bible for answers. But there's nothing like a really good question. Certainly, we have questions of God; things we don't understand or want to know more about. But have you ever thought about the questions that God asks us in the Bible? Questions that God asked people then and are important questions for us now? Questions that show the things God thinks are most important for us to be talking about? Questions whose answers draw us into a deeper relationship with God? It's no secret that a solid question has far greater power to transform than a simple, straightforward answer. This seven part series looks at some of the questions God asks us in the Bible. The hope is that looking at them together will invite us to gaze deeply into our own hearts, will reveal the heart of God, will challenge us, and will ultimately get inside our lives to transform us from the inside out!

Where are you?

Where is your brother?

What is that in your hand?

What are you looking for?

Who do you say that I am?

Do you want to be made well?

Do you understand what I have done for you?



God Questions

“Where are you?”

Opening Prayer

God of inexhaustible love and mystery, we thank you that you are bigger and more wonderful than we can ever imagine. We often come to you for answers to the complexities of life. Help us to be more attentive to the questions you ask us in your word. May they be yet another means of grace that you use to help grow our faith and transform our lives, in Christ's name. Amen.

Opening Question: When was a time you were intently looking for someone?

Scripture: Genesis 3:6-9; Psalm 23:6

The woman saw that the tree was beautiful with delicious food and that the tree would provide wisdom, so she took some of its fruit and ate it, and also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it. Then they both saw clearly and knew that they were naked. So they sewed fig leaves together and made garments for themselves. During that day's cool evening breeze, they heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden; and the man and his wife hid themselves from the Lord God in the middle of the garden's trees. The Lord God called to the man and said to him, “Where are you?”

Yes, goodness and faithful love will pursue me all the days of my life,
and I will live in the Lord's house as long as I live.

Discussion

1. What is the problem with the woman and man taking and eating the fruit? What is their response?
2. Do you think hiding is a natural human response to sin and brokenness?
3. What does it mean that God was in the habit of walking in the garden?
4. What do you make of the question God asks? Does God not know where they are?
5. What does this question reveal about God, God's heart, and God's nature?
6. How does this question relate to the idea that God pursues us and seeks us like Psalm 23 says?
7. How would you answer God's question right now?

Big Idea

“Where are you?” reveals a God who looks for each and every one of us until we are found. God deeply desires an intimate relationship with us. And God always starts the conversation first by asking us where we are. Human beings don't ask God the question, “Where are you?” first. God asks us where we are first. God initiates the relationship out of God's searching heart of love. Our answer might be about coming out of hiding and learning to be intimate with God with everything in our life knowing that God will never, ever stop searching for us!



God Questions

“Where is your brother?”

Opening Prayer

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Opening Question: To what or to whom do you feel your greatest sense of responsibility?

Scripture: Genesis 4:1-9

The man Adam knew his wife Eve intimately. She became pregnant and gave birth to Cain, and said, “I have given life to a man with the Lord’s help.” She gave birth a second time to Cain’s brother Abel. Abel cared for the flocks, and Cain farmed the fertile land. Some time later, Cain presented an offering to the Lord from the land’s crops while Abel presented his flock’s oldest offspring with their fat. The Lord looked favorably on Abel and his sacrifice but didn’t look favorably on Cain and his sacrifice. Cain became very angry and looked resentful. The Lord said to Cain, “Why are you angry, and why do you look so resentful? If you do the right thing, won’t you be accepted? But if you don’t do the right thing, sin will be waiting at the door ready to strike! It will entice you, but you must rule over it.” Cain said to his brother Abel, “Let’s go out to the field.” When they were in the field, Cain attacked his brother Abel and killed him.

The Lord said to Cain, “Where is your brother Abel?”

Cain said, “I don’t know. Am I my brother’s guardian?”

Discussion

1. What happens to Cain’s relationship with his brother? What causes this?
2. What is God’s warning to Cain? What does Cain end up doing?
3. Why do you think God asks Cain this question?
4. What does this question reveal about God and about what God expects of us?
5. From God’s perspective, what do you think the answer is to Cain’s question? What does that mean for us as human beings?
6. Can you think of other places in the Bible where God speaks about caring for others?
7. How would you describe our responsibility for one another as God’s image bearers?

Big Idea

God created us in God’s image to care for and nurture everything God made. We are all people created in the image of God and part of the human family. As image bearers we are relational and as relational we are all connected. We are responsible for caring for one another. God cares that we care for others. We cannot simply exist for ourselves nor can we mistreat others. Our lives are bound up together even as they are bound up with the life of God and our love for God is connected to our love for people.



God Questions

“What is in your hand?”

Opening Prayer

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Opening Question: What is one thing that you are good at that people might not know about?

Scripture: Exodus 4:1-5

Then Moses replied, “But what if they don't believe me or pay attention to me? They might say to me, ‘The Lord didn't appear to you!’”

The Lord said to him, “What's that in your hand?”

Moses replied, “A shepherd's rod.”

The Lord said, “Throw it down on the ground.” So Moses threw it on the ground, and it turned into a snake. Moses jumped back from it. Then the Lord said to Moses, “Reach out and grab the snake by the tail.” So Moses reached out and grabbed it, and it turned back into a rod in his hand. “Do this so that they will believe that the Lord, the God of their ancestors, Abraham's God, Isaac's God, and Jacob's God has in fact appeared to you.”

Discussion

1. Moses has encountered God in a burning bush and God has told him to free God's people from slavery in Egypt. How do you think Moses is processing this?
2. What do you see behind Moses' response to God in v. 1? Have you ever felt that way?
3. What is God's strategy for dealing with Moses' feelings of inadequacy and sense of scarcity?
4. What does God's question reveal about how God chooses to use human beings to help accomplish God's purposes?
5. What does the question suggest about what we should be paying attention to when we feel like God might be calling us to do something?
6. What resources and abilities does Moses already have that God can use? What about you?

Big Idea

God has things God wants us to do. And we should never doubt what God can do with what we already have and what we bring to the table. God believes in us enough to ask us “What is that in your hand?” hoping that we'll see our abilities, experiences and sufficiency...the resources that we already have to bring hope and healing and beauty to a broken, hurting world.



God Questions

“What are you looking for?”

Opening Prayer

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Opening Question: What is the strangest craving you have ever had?

Scripture: John 1:35-39

The next day John was standing again with two of his disciples. When he saw Jesus walking along he said, “Look! The Lamb of God!” The two disciples heard what he said, and they followed Jesus.

When Jesus turned and saw them following, he asked, “What are you looking for?”

They said, “Rabbi (which is translated Teacher), where are you staying?”

He replied, “Come and see.” So they went and saw where he was staying, and they remained with him that day. It was about four o’clock in the afternoon.

Discussion

1. What do you think the disciples who started following Jesus heard in the phrase “Look! The Lamb of God?”
2. Jesus’ question is somewhat surprising. What other questions could he have asked?
3. Why do you think Jesus asks them this particular question?
4. What about the human condition and existence does this question illuminate?
5. What does this question tell us about the person and nature of Jesus?
6. What is the relationship between following Jesus and our desires and priorities?
7. How would you answer this question from Jesus right now?

Big Idea

We like to think we’re rational, thinking beings whose thinking ability and decisions inform our desires, but it actually is the other way around. Our desires, our longings are not the result of our conscious, rational choices, they are the drivers of those choices. So significantly, Jesus’ very first question in the gospel of John connects with this search in all of us for life, meaning, purpose, happiness, “that undefined more” that we can’t seem to put a finger on. Jesus is ready to be the answer in the comprehensiveness of his love...whatever it might be. Jesus has come to quench every thirst and satisfy every hunger we could ever have in our hearts and souls.



God Questions

“Who do you say that I am?”

Opening Prayer

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Opening Question: Who would other people say that you are?

Scripture: Mark 8:27-31

Jesus and his disciples went into the villages near Caesarea Philippi. On the way he asked his disciples, “Who do people say that I am?”

They told him, “Some say John the Baptist, others Elijah, and still others one of the prophets.”

He asked them, “And what about you? Who do you say that I am?”

Peter answered, “You are the Christ.” Jesus ordered them not to tell anyone about him.

Then Jesus began to teach his disciples: “The Human One[a] must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, chief priests, and the legal experts, and be killed, and then, after three days, rise from the dead.”

Discussion

1. Why do you think Jesus asks the disciples who people say that he is?
2. What is the difference between the “people” the first time he asks the question and the “you” (disciples) the second time he asks the question?
3. Why is Peter’s answer so important and what does it mean?
4. How does our answer to this question shape our relationship with Jesus and our own growth as his follower?
5. How does this question relate to our sense of loyalty and identity?
6. What are the ways that our lives communicate an answer to this question?
7. How would you answer this question today? Who do you say Jesus is?

Big Idea

Our answer to this question doesn’t just say something about Jesus’ identity, but about ours too. Who we confess Jesus to be shapes our lives. In the midst of all the things that seek to exalt themselves and rule our hearts and lives, or all the ways we chase after wholeness, Jesus asks, who do you say that I am? In the midst of all the ways we relate with other people in the world, or all the suffering, hardship, pain, violence and injustice of our world... Jesus asks, who do you say that I am? That question, and our answer, is everything!



God Questions

“Do you want to be made well?”

Opening Prayer

God of inexhaustible love and mystery, we thank you that you are bigger and more wonderful than we can ever imagine. We often come to you for answers to the complexities of life. Help us to be more attentive to the questions you ask us in your word. May they be yet another means of grace that you use to help grow our faith and transform our lives, in Christ’s name. Amen.

Opening Question: What is one of your go-to “home remedies” when you feel bad?

Scripture: Mark 8:27-31

After this there was a Jewish festival, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. In Jerusalem near the Sheep Gate in the north city wall is a pool with the Aramaic name Bethesda. It had five covered porches, and a crowd of people who were sick, blind, lame, and paralyzed sat there. A certain man was there who had been sick for thirty-eight years. When Jesus saw him lying there, knowing that he had already been there a long time, he asked him, “Do you want to get well?”

The sick man answered him, “Sir, I don’t have anyone who can put me in the water when it is stirred up. When I’m trying to get to it, someone else has gotten in ahead of me.”

Jesus said to him, “Get up! Pick up your mat and walk.” Immediately the man was well, and he picked up his mat and walked. Now that day was the Sabbath. The Jewish leaders said to the man who had been healed, “It’s the Sabbath; you aren’t allowed to carry your mat.”

Discussion

1. What are some things we might assume about this pool based on the scripture?
2. What are some of the ways we might sometimes feel like the sick man in the passage?
3. What do you make of Jesus’ question? Is it offensive? Why does he ask it?
4. How would you describe the man’s response?
5. What is significant about this happening on the Sabbath? How do you think the religious leaders would have answered this question if Jesus asked them?
6. Imagine Jesus asking you that question. What does the question help you focus on?
7. What does this question reveal about the relationship between God’s initiative and ours?

Big Idea

Do you want to be get well? Do you want to be whole? Call it insensitive. Call it pointed. Jesus asks it anyway. There are times in our lives when we are stuck or paralyzed. There are times when we might experience a kind of faith or hope atrophy. Maybe Jesus’ question is enough to break the spell. The good news is that grace for healing, wholeness and freedom comes without us deserving it. It comes sometimes when we are not seeking it. It even comes when we have given up on it. May we, like the man paralyzed in more ways than one, pick up our mat and walk into a brand-new future with Jesus!



God Questions

“Do you understand what I have done for you?”

Opening Prayer

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Opening Question: When you want someone to understand something, what’s your strategy?

Scripture: John 13:2-12

Jesus and his disciples were sharing the evening meal. The devil had already provoked Judas, Simon Iscariot’s son, to betray Jesus. Jesus knew the Father had given everything into his hands and that he had come from God and was returning to God. So he got up from the table and took off his robes. Picking up a linen towel, he tied it around his waist. Then he poured water into a washbasin and began to wash the disciples’ feet, drying them with the towel he was wearing. When Jesus came to Simon Peter, Peter said to him, “Lord, are you going to wash my feet?” Jesus replied, “You don’t understand what I’m doing now, but you will understand later.” “No!” Peter said. “You will never wash my feet!” Jesus replied, “Unless I wash you, you won’t have a place with me.” Simon Peter said, “Lord, not only my feet but also my hands and my head!” Jesus responded, “Those who have bathed need only to have their feet washed, because they are completely clean. You disciples are clean, but not every one of you.” He knew who would betray him. That’s why he said, “Not every one of you is clean.” After he washed the disciples’ feet, he put on his robes and returned to his place at the table. He said to them, “Do you know what I’ve done for you?”

Discussion

1. What do you think the cultural expectations and customs were about washing feet?
2. What is so revolutionary about the action that Jesus takes? What does it demonstrate?
3. This question is about more than just the act of washing feet. What is it pointing to?
4. What does this question invite the disciples and us to understand or live out?
5. How might we express our understanding of what Jesus “has done for us?”
6. What might Jesus be calling us to understand differently?

Big Idea

Do you understand what I’ve done for you? Maybe it’s hard to answer not because it’s inaccessible but because it’s inexhaustible. It takes all we are to understand the selfless, serving, downwardly mobile love of God. It takes our whole life following in the way of Jesus. This is Jesus issuing a call to give as he gives, love as he loves, serve as he serves. Maybe it takes being a servant...always walking around with our basin and towel. Maybe then and only then do we have some kind of answer when Jesus asks “Do you understand what I’ve done for you?”



God Questions

Wrap-Up

What is the biggest thing God is saying to you after this study and these conversations?

What are you going to do about it? What are your next steps?