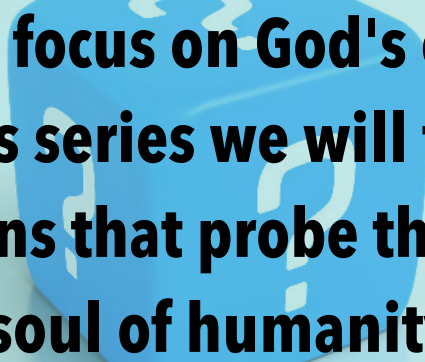


Q+A

Questions God Asks





**We often focus on God's commands
but in this series we will take a look
at questions that probe the heart and
soul of humanity.**

WHY DO YOU CALL ME LORD?

SHANNON COON

LUKE 6:46-49

Can you think of a time in your life when you have gotten really defensive about something? Can you think of a time when you asked someone a "Why?" question and you put them on the defensive?





Together, read Luke 6:46-49.

- After Jesus asks why we do not do the things he commands (in verse 46), he launches into a great illustration of two builders (verses 47-49). Both of these builders had homes to build, but they went about it differently. Because of this, one builder had a home that withstood a flood, and the other one had a home that was completely destroyed by the flood. In Jesus' illustration, who do the builders represent? What do the homes represent? And what does the foundation represent? What could the flood be compared to in our real lives?
- The first part of the question could be asked by itself: "Why do you call me, Lord, Lord?" It will be hard for us to really call Jesus "Lord" if we don't trust that our God loves us and wants the best for us and wants us to become the people He created us to be. What are some biblical examples of how God has shown his love for us?



LIVING OUT REAL LIFE

This question is a good opportunity for us to examine our relationship with Jesus. If Jesus is truly "Lord" of our life, obedience is important to us. Jesus is asking us in this question, "Why aren't you obeying me?" This is a hard question to look at. Following is an exercise you could use to help you assess the role of obedience and apprenticeship in your own life.

St. Ignatius of Loyola (1491-1556) developed a series of exercises for growing in closeness to Christ. One part of the exercises is called the Prayer of Examen. It can be extracted out of the exercises and practiced alone. In fact, St. Ignatius called it the most important part (even just 15 minutes!) of a person's day. Originally designed to pray twice daily, it is very beneficial if done just once a day (usually in the evening), to look back over the last 24 hours. Or, it can be prayed every 2-3 days, looking back over the last 48-72 hours. It really can be done in 10-15 minutes minimum time.

There are five basic movements to the prayer. The first is to look back over the day/s and identify where God was present and where God's blessings can be found, and then to give praise and thanks for these gifts. The second step is to invite the Spirit to help you get honest with yourself, not to hide in denial, self-righteousness, or a victim mentality. The third step is (relying on the Spirit to aid you) to identify the parts of the past day/s that didn't go so well - acts, words, thoughts that either hurt us or hurt others. This includes painful or negative emotions and thoughts, and sinful thoughts, words, actions. The fourth step is to ask God for forgiveness where sin was present, and/or to ask God for guidance on how to handle certain situations better. Sometimes this step also includes asking God for healing from hurts which may have been inflicted upon us by others. The final step of the Examen is to pray about the next day/s. Ask God to help you envision how you might think or act differently going forward, how you might better align yourself with God's will.

Let's apply these steps to the very specific Scripture for the message on June 11/12. Take 15 minutes to yourself in a quiet place, preferably in the evening but it could also be first thing in the morning, looking back over the last 24 hours.



LIVING OUT REAL LIFE

1) Take about 60 seconds of silence, just breathing deeply. Try to feel God looking upon you with a loving and compassionate gaze. When you are ready, ask God to help you identify the moments, people, places, feelings that you had over the last 24 hours in which you felt God's presence, or that you can recognize as God's blessings upon you. (This includes big things like the gift of a good friend, to the little things like ripe vegetables in your garden.) Take time to thank God for all these blessings and to praise God for how God works and interacts with you in your life. This is the time to recognize how the Lord of your life wants to bless you and shows his protection, care and love for you. "Lord, Lord!"

2) Ask for help from the Spirit so that the Spirit can lead you through a time of honest soul-searching. Ask God to help you steer clear of denial or self-righteousness and self-pity or self-loathing.

3) Looking back over the past day (perhaps hour by hour), think about the ways in which you "...did not do what I tell you...". In reliving your past day (with the Spirit guiding you through it), how did you depart from following Jesus? Identify concrete times when you did not turn the other cheek, when you did not consider "the least of these," when you did not pray for your enemies, etc. This comes in the ways we think about people and situations, as well as the words we use toward and about others, and certainly in the actions we take (or fail to take) which are most often self-centered. They are the times when we have not let Jesus be "Lord, Lord," but we've become our own "lords." Do not be afraid of the failures and mistakes, no matter how big or small.



LIVING OUT REAL LIFE

4) Admit to God any sins you have committed, ways in which you have fallen short, ways in which you may have hurt others. Ask for God's forgiveness where necessary, as well as the strength to change and to live into doing more and more of what Jesus tells us to do.

5) Let God's forgiveness, mercy and grace to fall upon you and ask God to help you envision the next day/s ahead. How might you better follow Jesus going forward? Do you need to apologize to anyone? If there is a troubling or difficult situation, ask God how to handle the situation. Ask God to help you in the moments when you may be tempted to fail in the same way again. Close your prayer in a way that is meaningful to you, perhaps by reciting the Lord's Prayer, the Serenity Prayer, the Prayer of St. Francis, or by reading a Psalm.

