

JESUS ASKS • Exploring Life's Important Questions

Introduction:

A thoughtful question can help you get to know someone and help you get to know yourself. Jesus was the master of thought-provoking questions. He is quoted in the gospels asking over 300 questions. These questions cause us to reflect on the purpose of life, our understanding of personal identity, what we really need and desire, and the substance of our faith. Join us for this series as we explore life's most important questions.

WEEK 1: • What Can I Do for You?

Matthew 20:32

The question “what can I do for you” sheds light on the character of God and his relationship with us. He is available to address our needs and offer us grace and transformation. His question is direct and gets right to the core concerns of our lives. He is available and waits for us to call out to him. Reflect on this question as if He were to pose it to us today, use this reflection as a tool for prayer and self-examination.

1. Read Matthew 20:29-34. Spend a few minutes in silent reflection, asking Jesus what you need from Him today.
2. Notice the desperation in the cries of the two men. When have you experienced similar desperation in your own life? Is there anything currently happening in your life that causes you to feel an urgency to seek something from Jesus?
3. Does pursuing Jesus require desperation or a deficiency in our lives?
4. What might be some reasons behind the crowd’s response to these two men?
5. What does Jesus’ response reveal about His approach to serving people?
6. Sometimes, it can feel humiliating or devaluing to be a person that people pity. How did Jesus express pity in a way that honored and empowered these two individuals?
7. How can we cultivate a heart of compassion and attentiveness like Jesus in our daily interactions with others?
8. Pray together, asking God to open your eyes to see the needs around you and to respond with compassion.

WEEK 2: What Are You Talking About?

Luke 24:17

When we think about life's big questions, we often focus on the deep, existential stuff—and rightly so. But it is fascinating how Jesus was concerned about people's everyday feelings and emotions. In Luke 24:17, we see Jesus in action, chatting with two grieving friends who are clearly downhearted. Even though they don't recognize him, Jesus walks alongside them, ready to comfort and uplift them. This story reminds us of the timeless truth that Jesus cares about how we feel, he wants us to express our emotions to him, and his presence brings peace.

1. Reflect on a recent personal conversation with a close friend or loved one. If Jesus were to ask, "what are you talking about" how would you respond?
2. Read Luke 24:13-35. What emotions did the disciples experience?
3. Why did Jesus choose to conceal his identity, at least initially?
4. Focus on verses 19-24. Despite the disciples' summary of the recent events, what crucial understating did they lack? How did Jesus help them grasp a fuller perspective?
5. What significance do you find in Jesus sharing a meal with them?
6. Imagine Jesus suddenly entering your life, engaging with you on your current pressing concerns. What would you want to discuss with Him? How might he reshape your perspective?
7. Put it into practice: After Jesus listened to the disciples, He guided them back to Scripture. This week, "walk with Jesus" by sharing your life questions with him verbally. After expressing your thoughts, search Scripture for verses that provide perspective. Utilizing a Bible app for word searches can be helpful.

WEEK 3: Why Do You Worry?

Luke 12:26

If even the smallest things are beyond your control, why are you anxious about the rest? (Luke 12:26)

Jesus addresses the crowd, emphasizing that anxious worry accomplishes little. He points out that even the smallest matters—such as adding an inch to your height or extending your life by a moment—are beyond human control. If we cannot influence these minor details, how much less can we manage the myriad contingencies that shape our future? So, when anxiety threatens to overwhelm us, let's remember Jesus' words and entrust our lives to the One who holds the universe together.

1. What provokes worry in your life? Do you notice any trends (i.e. most of your worries revolve around money, the future, the ability to meet goals, etc.)?
2. Based on Luke 12:26, a desire to control our life is intimately entwined with our feelings of anxiety. Can you trace the root of your anxieties mentioned in the first question to a desire to control your life?
3. Consider this quote about anxiety by Pastor Erwin McManus (from his book *Way of the Warrior*): "Anxiety is rooted in your imagined future... anxiety is how your soul processes fear... anxiety imagines your worst and most painful future." What rings true for you from this quote regarding your own anxieties?
4. Read the following verses addressing our anxiety, and for each verse, discuss the antithesis for our anxiety and what Biblically we should do with our anxiety?
 - a. Philippians 4:6-7
 - b. Matthew 6: 25-34
5. Can you imagine genuinely living according to the above verses? Do you really believe it is possible? What hinders you from fully embracing a life where anxiety is subdued by prayer and thanksgiving, and complete trust in God's care for you?
6. What is at least one anxiety that you can passionately pray over this coming week, give that anxiety to God in prayer, thanking Him, and affirming that He is both trustworthy and a God who takes care of you without fail? Share with the group ways you can "take thoughts captive" (2 Corinthians 10:5) that lead you back to anxious feelings and press fully into the truths seen in today's verses.

WEEK 4: What is Good?

Matthew 19:17

"Why do you ask me about what is good?" Jesus replied. "There is only One who is good. If you want to enter life, keep the commandments." - Matthew 19:17 (NIV)


In a world of competing ideas and ideology it can be tempting to find security in individualism. Individualism promises that every person can find their own truth, can choose their own path, and pursue what works for them. However, this individualism can leave us isolated and lonely. In a unified Christian community, believers provide support, encouragement, accountability, and perspective to one another.

1. Describe someone you consider a "good person." What good behaviors do they exhibit?
2. How do you perceive God's goodness in your daily life? In what ways can you acknowledge and reflect God's goodness in your interactions with others?
3. Are there specific commandments that you find challenging to keep? Why?
4. How does your relationship with God influence your desire to keep His commandments? In what ways can you deepen your relationship with God to ensure that your obedience is rooted in love?
5. How do you respond when you fall short of keeping God's commandments?
6. What steps can you take to rely more on God's grace and the Holy Spirit's power in your daily walk?

WEEK 5: Who Do You Say That I Am?

Matthew 16:15

Jesus asked His disciples this pivotal question, prompting Peter's confession that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God. Our understanding of Jesus' identity shapes our faith and relationship with Him.

1. Read Matthew 16:13-20. Below is a list of how various religious traditions might understand the significance of Jesus. Compare these teachings to Peter's confession. How is Peter's understanding of Jesus similar/different from the teachings of the various world religions?
 - **Hinduism:** Jesus was a holy and enlightened man, teacher, spiritual guru, and perhaps divine/god (one of many gods and goddesses).
 - **Islam:** Jesus was born of a virgin, a prophet, teacher, miracle-worker, but did not die on the cross (God raised Jesus to heaven and substituted a person in his place) or resurrect from the dead. He is in heaven and will return to assist with the world's judgment. Many Muslims believe that Judas took Jesus' place on the cross (Allah disguised Judas so he would look like Jesus).
 - **Sikhism:** Jesus was a holy man, teacher, and performed miracles. But he could not be God because he was born and died (God cannot be born and cannot die).
 - **Buddhism:** Jesus was an Arhat (Theravada) or Bodhisattva (Mahayana), an enlightened man, teacher, spiritual guru, and a good/ethical person. In general, Buddhists don't believe in the idea of a Creator-God, but Mahayana Buddhists believe in all kinds of spiritual beings.
 - **Confucius, Taoism, and Chinese Popular Religion:** Jesus was a good/ethical person, teacher, a spiritual guru, and could have performed miracles.
 - **Ancestral Worship:** There's an ongoing debate about this "group" of people worshiping or revering their ancestors. Leaving that for a moment, there exists a fear of the afterlife and belief in fate, luck, and/or good/bad fortune.
2. How would you describe the significance of Jesus?
3. Using the descriptions of the various religions above, how would you share about Jesus with someone from each of these religious traditions?
4. Familiarize yourself with this chart and read John 1:1-14 and 1 Timothy 2:1-7. How might a single faceted view of Jesus hinder someone's faith journey? In sharing about Jesus with others, what characteristics or attributes that might be helpful to share?

THE FOUR FACES OF JESUS	
GOOD	Jesus was a moral and ethical person.
GREAT	Jesus performed amazing miracles.
GURU	Jesus was a spiritual teacher.
GOD	Jesus is the only divine-human mediator.
5. Think about the quote "Focus on Devotion to Christ- not conversion to Christianity" (Ken Jung- Global Church Partnerships). Do you agree or disagree with this quote? How might this quote influence the way you have spiritual conversations with your neighbors?
6. Application: Have a spiritual conversation with your neighbor, classmate, colleague, or friend who is a follower of a different religious tradition. Be humble and ask them to share their beliefs. Listen (don't debate). Develop your relationship/friendship.

WEEK 6: How Will You Believe? (PART 1)

John 5:47

At a pivotal point in Jesus' interaction with the Jewish leaders he asks, "*If you do not believe Moses' writings, how will you believe me?*" (John 5:47) In this simple question Jesus challenges the leaders to a more complete understanding of Scripture. Demonstrating their resistance to His message is resistance to all that God revealed throughout history.

1. Share how one of your obstacles/doubts kept/keeps you from fully trusting God.
2. Read John 5:45-47. What is Jesus' argument against the Jewish leaders? Read John 5:1-18 to understand the context of Jesus' argument.
3. Read John 5:31-35. How does the testimony of John the Baptist relate to believing in Jesus? What role does external witness play in our faith?
4. Read 5:38-40. What is the issue of how these leaders approached Scripture? Do we approach Scripture similarly?
5. Read 5:41-44. How does the concept of "seeking glory for one another" hinder belief in Jesus? What are some modern-day examples of this?
6. Read 5:36-38. What is the significance of the Father's testimony about the Son? How does this relate to our own witness about Jesus?
7. How does Jesus' challenge in John 5:47 apply to us today? What obstacles might prevent us from fully believing in Jesus daily?

WEEK 7: • How Will You Believe? (PART 2)

John 20:29

- 1.** Understanding Doubt and Belief: How does Thomas' journey from doubt to belief in John 20:24-29 relate to common struggles people face in believing in Jesus today?
- 2.** Touching Jesus' Wounds: What does Jesus' invitation to Thomas to touch His wounds teach us about how people can come to believe in Him?
- 3.** Personal Belief Journey: Reflecting on your own life, what experiences or events have influenced your belief in Jesus? How do these compare to Thomas' experience?
- 4.** Navigating Doubt: How can doubt be a constructive part of the journey toward believing in Jesus, as seen in Thomas' story in John 20:29?
- 5.** Community Support: How does Thomas' interaction with the disciples illustrate the importance of community in nurturing faith?
- 6.** Applying Faith: Considering Jesus' words in John 20:29 ("Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed"), what practical steps can you take to deepen your faith in Jesus, especially when faced with doubts or challenges?

WEEK 8: Do You Love Me?

John 21:15

With stomachs full of freshly cooked breakfast, Jesus poses the deep and emotional question “do you love me?” In this powerful conversation, Jesus invites Peter to express love as an embrace of sacrificial actions. We can use this same question “do you love me” to examine our own lives and explore our own personal connection between the love of God and our commitment to sacrificial action.

1. Imagine if a loved one looked you in the eyes and asked, “Do you love me?” What are some of the circumstances that would motivate this question? What do you think motivated Jesus’ question?
2. The first two times Jesus asks, “do you love me?” He uses the Greek word agape (deep love shown in action, benevolence and goodwill). The last time He uses phileo (deep love based in familial or relational bonds). Each time Peter responds with phileo. What might be significant about their different usages of the word love?
3. What was Jesus asking when he said “feed/tend my sheep/lambs”?
4. Reflecting on Peter’s denial of Jesus in John 18:15-27. How might this conversation have restorative, or healing for Peter? What about any of the other disciples who might have been listening?
5. Jesus’ prediction of Peter death in John 21:18-19 seems ominous. Why was it important Peter understood the ultimate sacrifice required of his love?
6. What does this teach us about the connection between love, action, sacrifice, and responsibility?
7. If Jesus was to have this same conversation with you, instead of requesting that you “feed his sheep,” what might he ask of you? What might love require of you this week in your interactions with others?

WEEK 9: Do You Realize What I Have Done for You?

John 21:15

In the Upper Room, hours before His betrayal, Jesus conducts the humble act of washing his disciples' feet. While doing this, he poses a simple rhetorical question "Do you realize what I have done for you?" Through this question, Jesus invites the disciples to grasp the depth of his sacrificial love. Today, this question echoes through time. Do we realize what Jesus has done for us? His sacrifice on the cross—the ultimate act of love—offers forgiveness, redemption, and eternal life. It calls us to respond with gratitude, humility, and transformed hearts.

1. Share with your Life Group instances when you've humbled yourself in sacrificial service. Was it received with gratitude or indifference? How did it make you feel?
2. Read John 13:1-11. What strikes you about Jesus' words and actions?
3. What symbolism do you find in the washing of the disciples' feet? Why did Jesus choose to humble himself in service? (Hint: John 13:8)
4. Read John 13:12. Why do you think He asks this rhetorical question? Could there be a deeper meaning that was alluded to?
5. In the following verses, John 13:13-15, what is Jesus' call to action for his followers?
6. During your personal quiet time, reflect on this question from Jesus "Do you realize what I have done for you?" What does it mean to you personally? If you feel led, reaffirm your faith and love to Him.