

QUESTIONS JESUS ASKED

INTRODUCTION:

We often focus on Jesus as a teacher, and certainly He was a great one. We think of the Sermon on the Mount and all His amazing parables. We could spend a lifetime studying just those. What we fail to appreciate is the other ways in which Jesus taught.

For instance, Jesus taught by example. We are Disciples of Jesus who are to pay attention, not only to what Jesus said, but what He did as well. We should try to emulate Jesus, to use Him as a model for our lives. What would Jesus do?

Another way Jesus taught was by asking questions. By some counts he asked over three hundred questions which have been recorded in the gospels. The questions He asked were to get people to think, to challenge their assumptions, and to get them to reevaluate their lives. Jesus' questions are often revealing and frequently challenging.

One of the most surprising ways Jesus used questions was in response to the questions of others. It is surprising to note that Jesus hardly ever gave straight answers to the questions of others. More typically, He answered a question with a question. Why? Because we often ask the wrong questions, focusing on the wrong concerns. Jesus is trying to get us to look at things differently, from more of a spiritual perspective.

In this study we will be looking at just a few of the questions Jesus asked. We will try to look at some of the questions He asked which are often overlooked. Hopefully we will allow them to challenge our preconceptions and alter our focus. May the questions of our Lord, get us to encounter Jesus in a different way.

LESSON ONE

"WHAT DO YOU WANT?"

JOHN 1:35-39

INTRODUCTION:

John the Baptist was the first prophet that Israel had heard in over 150 years. His message was challenging and dramatic: "repent for the kingdom of God is at hand." His words were directed not toward the Gentiles, but to his fellow Jews. John's message was so powerful that many people wondered if he might be the messiah. John had the difficult job of preparing the way for one who was much greater. It was his task to point others to Christ, to see his ministry diminish, while Jesus' ministry grew.

PART ONE: WHAT DID WE READ?

- 1) What relationship did the two men have with John?
- 2) How did John refer to Jesus?
- 3) What did John's followers do?
- 4) What question did Jesus ask of the two men?
- 5) Did the two men answer Jesus?
- 6) What invitation did Jesus offer to them?

PART TWO: WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

- 1) Do you think John was trying to push his disciples toward Jesus?
- 2) What did it mean for John to call Jesus "the Lamb of God"?
- 3) Why did the two men leave John to follow Jesus? Was that the right thing for them to do?
- 4) Jesus asked a deep question of the two men. Do you think they understood the question? Why or why not?
- 5) Jesus invited the two men to "come and see." They did so. Why is that significant?

PART THREE: HOW DOES IT APPLY TO US?

- 1) How easy is it for you to let go of someone who has a relationship with you so that they can pursue other alternatives?
- 2) How likely are you to abandon something that is good for something that is even better?
- 3) Do you think the question "what do you want?" was directed only to those first two followers, or is it directed to all who would seek to follow Jesus? What do you want?
- 4) Do you think that the question the two disciples asked makes sense? Why or why not? Was it the question they should have asked?
- 5) Do you think Jesus' invitation to "come and ...see" is still valid today? Is it an invitation to you?

PRAYER:

Dear God, let us be gripped by the message you are giving us, the questions you ask us and the way of life you open up for us, and please breathe your Spirit into us now to lead us into more and more truth, in the name of Jesus, Amen.

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LESSON TWO

TO WHAT SHALL I COMPARE THE KINGDOM OF GOD?

MARK 4:30-34

INTRODUCTION:

Jesus taught in parables. There are many different definitions for a parable, but the easiest one is probably best. A parable is a simile or comparison. The word "parable" literally means to lay alongside. The idea is that we lay one thing next to another so that we can compare the two of them. Jesus spoke in parables, primarily to tell us about the nature of the Kingdom of God, a reality too difficult for us to understand without the benefit of parables.

PART ONE: WHAT DID WE READ?

- 1) What did Jesus say He would use parables to describe?
- 2) What did Jesus say was the smallest seed?
- 3) When a mustard plant is full grown, what can find shade in its branches?
- 4) Did Jesus only speak in parables to explain the Kingdom of God?
- 5) Did the disciples immediately understand the parables of Jesus?

PART TWO: WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

- 1) Why do you think that Jesus spoke in parables?
- 2) In what way is the Kingdom of God like a mustard seed?
- 3) Do you find parables to be a helpful way to communicate? Why or why not?
- 4) Does it bother you to know that there are seeds smaller than a mustard seed? Why or why not?
- 5) The disciples had Jesus to explain the parables to them. Who do we have to explain?

PART THREE: HOW DOES IT APPLY TO US?

- 1) Do you ever wonder what the Kingdom of God will be like? Why or why not?
- 2) Other than the mustard seed analogy, what way would you use to describe this aspect of the

Kingdom of God?

3) Do you think we can substitute another method of understanding for the parables?

4) Does Jesus still explain the parables to His disciples today? If so, how?

5) Do you think the continued meditation on His parables was the hope and intent of Jesus?

PRAYER:

Loving Father, the world is being destroyed by seeds of violence and greed. Sometimes communities are asking for justice, but Your kingdom of justice and love grows slowly. Give us the seeds of faith and patience to wait for the unfolding of Your kingdom. Have mercy on us. Heal the wounds of the community. We ask this in the name of Jesus, Your son. Amen.

LESSON THREE

WHERE IS YOUR FAITH?

LUKE 8:22-25

INTRODUCTION:

We all go through difficult times that challenge us and challenge our faith. In this story, Jesus delivers His disciples from a terrifying storm but questions their faith. How would Jesus evaluate our faith today? Would He find our faith to be strong or wanting?

PART ONE: WHAT DID WE READ?

- 1) Where were Jesus and His disciples travelling when they encountered the storm?
- 2) Where was Jesus when the storm hit and what was He doing?
- 3) When did the disciples wake Jesus?
- 4) What did Jesus do to calm the storm?
- 5) What question did the disciples raise in response to Jesus' actions?

PART TWO: WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

- 1) This story is about a physical storm. Is that all it is about?
- 2) The danger was real. Were the disciples right to be afraid? Why or why not?
- 3) Why do you think that Jesus questioned the disciples' faith?
- 4) Did Jesus ever do another miracle like the calming of the storm?
- 5) Did the disciples ask the right question in response to Jesus' miracle?

PART THREE: HOW DOES IT APPLY TO US?

- 1) Jesus was in the same boat as the disciples. Do you feel that Jesus is in the same boat as you?
- 2) Jesus fell asleep in the boat. Do you ever feel that Jesus is asleep on the job? Do you think that is what the disciples felt?
- 3) In the storms of your life, do you feel that Jesus can rescue you? do you think that He will?

4) Do you feel your faith strengthening or weakening in times of trouble?

5) Who do you say that Jesus is?

PRAYER:

Dear God, we are so eager to be in control of our lives that we miss the fact that so much of life, so much of what matters, is beyond our control or influence. Help us, therefore, to entrust ourselves to your wild, uncontrollable, but oh so good mercy and grace. In Jesus' name, Amen.

David Lose May 17, 2013

LESSON FOUR

DO YOU WANT TO GET WELL?

JOHN 5:1-15

INTRODUCTION:

We all resist change, even when the change is good. We get used to the status quo, even when it is not good. Jesus raises the important question that many of us must face. Do we really want to get well? if so, why aren't we doing more to make it happen?

PART ONE: WHAT DID WE READ?

- 1) What was the name of the pool where this miracle took place?
- 2) How long had the man been an invalid?
- 3) Why did the invalid say that he had not been healed?
- 4) What did Jesus' command the invalid to do?
- 5) Why did people object to Jesus' command?
- 6) Did the invalid know who had healed him?

PART TWO: WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

- 1) The invalid had been ill for a long time. is that significant? Why?
- 2) Is it important that the invalid had no one to help him?
- 3) What is important about the question Jesus asked of the invalid?
- 4) Jesus did not help the man get into the pool, instead He gave him a command. What does that tell us?
- 5) The man who was healed did not know who Jesus was. What does that tell us about Jesus' healing work?
- 6) Jesus encounters the healed man later and tells him to stop sinning. What do you make of that?

PART THREE: HOW DOES IT APPLY TO US?

- 1) Have you ever prayed for something to happen for so long that prayer became a habit, and you really

did not expect anything to happen?

2) Is there any area of your life about which Jesus could ask you, "Do you want to get well?"

3) Jesus told the invalid to pick up his mat and walk. Have you ever received a command from Jesus that required you to step forward in faith?

4) Jesus healed the invalid even though the invalid did not really know who Jesus was. What does that tell you about how Jesus can work in your life and in the lives of others?

5) Do you think that sin could have played any role in this man's illness?

PRAYER:

Father, we are such spiritually dull people sometimes. We receive bountiful blessings from you and yet respond so ungratefully. It's not just the healed man in our story, but it's us! Forgive us. Change our hearts. Put in us faith and gratitude, we pray. And thank you for your grace that covers all our sins. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.

LESSON FIVE

DO YOU STILL NOT UNDERSTAND?

MARK 8:14-21

INTRODUCTION:

The feeding of the five thousand is the only miracle to appear in all four gospels. The feeding of the four thousand appears only in Mark and Matthew. At this point in His ministry, Jesus has spent a significant amount of time with His disciples, yet they still are struggling to understand Him and his ministry. Similarly, we today often struggle to grow in our faith. Jesus challenges all disciples, ancient and modern, to grow spiritually and to make the gospel their own.

PART ONE: WHAT DID WE READ?

- 1) How many loaves of bread had the disciples brought with them?
- 2) What of the Pharisees did Jesus warn the disciples to avoid?
- 3) When the disciples worry about having only one loaf, Jesus points them to remember which two miracles?
- 4) How many basketfuls of leftovers were there from the feeding of the four thousand?
- 5) What question does Jesus have for the disciples?

PART TWO: WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

- 1) What does the phrase "yeast of the Pharisees" mean?
- 2) Why do you think the disciples were so worried about not having enough bread?
- 3) What do you think the disciples should have understood from seeing Jesus perform the feeding of the four and five thousand?
- 4) Is there any significance to the amounts of leftovers?
- 5) What tone do you think Jesus used when He asked the question, "Do you still not understand?"

PART THREE: HOW DOES IT APPLY TO US?

- 1) How anxious are you about having enough?

- 2) What "yeast" do ask for to allay your fears?
- 3) What prevents you from trusting in Jesus?
- 4) What "leftovers" do you have that should give you the confidence you need to face tomorrow?
- 5) What is it that you still fail to understand?

PRAYER:

Today may we let go of our agenda of the blessings we think we need and simply and thankfully receive the many blessings that God will gift us with today! Most of them may be small blessings, yet what precious gifts! And may we remember to thank God for the blessings we receive! Amen.

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LESSON SIX

COULD YOU NOT KEEP WATCH WITH ME?

MATTHEW 26:36-46

INTRODUCTION:

After the Last Supper, Jesus retired with the disciples to the Garden of Gethsemane. There He entered into a time of prayer in preparation to the trial He would undergo on the cross. He asked the disciples to keep watch with Him. Presumably, He wanted them to pray for Him. Yet the disciples were unable to keep watch. Their prayers were weak, distracted, and sleepy. In Jesus' hour of need, the disciples failed Him. Would we fare any better?

PART ONE: WHAT DID WE READ?

- 1) Where does this story take place?
- 2) How many times did Jesus find the disciples sleeping?
- 3) What did Jesus pray for?
- 4) What metaphor did Jesus use to refer to His suffering on the cross?
- 5) According to verse 45, whose hands were Jesus betrayed into?

PART TWO: WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

- 1) What does the word Gethsemane mean? Is there any significance you see in that name?
- 2) Why do you suppose that Jesus wanted to have the disciples keep watch with Him?
- 3) What does "the cup" mean? Why would Jesus use that metaphor?
- 4) What significance is there to the fact that the disciples were found sleeping three times in a row?
- 5) How do you think Jesus felt about the failure of the disciples?

PART THREE: HOW DOES IT APPLY TO US?

- 1) Have you been asked to pray for someone, agreed to do so, and then failed? Why?
- 2) Jesus prayed for deliverance. What prayers for deliverance have you offered up to God?

3) The Father refused to grant Jesus' deliverance. What does that tell you?

4) Have you ever had to drink from the cup of suffering for the sake of the Lord? When?

5) When have other believers failed you?

PRAYER:

Lord God Almighty, we offer ourselves to You today because You alone can make sense of what lies before us. We can never fully understand the many things that are happening around us, and we can never fully appreciate the implications of all we say and do. You, however, are capable of knitting everything together in the integrated patchwork of Your perfect plan. Guide us, we pray, and may we trust You, because You know best.

AMEN

LESSON SEVEN

WHY ARE YOU WEEPING?

JOHN 20:1-18

INTRODUCTION:

Mary Magdalene is listed in all four gospels as one of the very first witnesses to Jesus' resurrection. When Mary found the body of Jesus missing, we don't know what thoughts were running through her mind, but we do know that she went to tell the disciples about what had happened. After Peter and John left, Mary was alone at the tomb. She encountered two angels and then the risen Lord. She was asked several times, "Why are you weeping?". Rather than answer, she asked to know where Jesus was. In the midst of her tears, Jesus appeared to her. She was the first witness to the resurrection.

PART ONE: WHAT DID WE READ?

- 1) When did Mary visit the tomb?
- 2) Which disciple reached the tomb first? Peter or John?
- 3) What did John find in the tomb?
- 4) When Mary first saw Jesus, how did she respond?
- 5) What instructions did Jesus give to Mary?

PART TWO: WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

- 1) What caused Mary to run and find the disciples?
- 2) Why did Peter and John race to the tomb? What did they find there and what did it mean?
- 3) When Peter and John left, why do you suppose that Mary stayed?
- 4) Why didn't Mary recognize Jesus?
- 5) Why was Mary crying? Do you think she stopped crying when she saw Jesus?
- 6) What do you make of Jesus' instructions to Mary?

HOW DOES IT APPLY TO US?

- 1) Mary went to the tomb to mourn and honor Jesus. In a time of grief, she found the stone rolled away. Have you ever received a shock in a time of grief? How did you handle it?
- 2) When you face difficult news, do you run to face it like Peter and John, or do you hold back and try to avoid it? Why?
- 3) What makes you cry?
- 4) Have you ever encountered the Lord, but only known it was Him in hindsight?
- 5) Should Mary have been crying at the tomb? Should we be crying at the tombs of our loved ones?
- 6) What do you hold onto in times of grief?

PRAYER:

Father, thank you for the hard times. I confess that I don't like them when they are happening but looking back, I see where you have used those tough times to bring blessing, hope, and triumph from my heartache, sadness, and defeat. Thank you for not only raising Jesus from the dead but also for raising my heart to a place of hope and joy that earthbound sorrow and pain cannot erase. In Jesus' name, and because of Jesus' victory, I pray with joy. Amen.

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