

Discipleship

Being Known by God (part 4)

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Full Text (for reading on your own)

Being Known by God

Our relationship with God is a two-way street. We know God but He also knows us. And while it is a two-way street, the foundation of that two relationship is knowing God. You do not want to be the foundation of your walk with God. He's the Rock, not us!

Realizing that God actually wants to know us is a tremendous invitation into a deeper relationship with Him... but BE CAREFUL that you do not become the focus or the epicenter of your relationship with God. We want to be God-referenced people, God-referenced thinkers, not man-centered thinkers.

This difference in world-view or reference-frame does not just affect our relationship with God, it also affects our political system and process. Some people have a righteousness-based worldview, meaning "what is right in God's eye is how we are going to operate" while others have a people-based worldview "whatever is right by the people is what we are going to do." Proverbs 2:9 (ESV) says "*Then you will understand righteousness and justice and equity, every good path;*" Notice the order of those three "good paths." The way of God is to lead with righteousness and end with true equity. The way of man is to lead with equity and to end with unrighteousness. When you start with what is right before God, it produces true justice; you can't have a just judge who is unrighteous. Righteousness allows for justice and justice allows for true equity. If Solomon was being equitable between the two women who were arguing about the baby, he should have cut it in half and they could have each received half of a dead baby. In his wisdom he offered that option - but to find the righteousness. And he then gave the whole, living baby to its true mother. Righteousness produces justice and justice produces equity. When the church doesn't lead with righteousness, then people will start the social justice movement, but it is righteousness that exalts a nation! "Seek first the kingdom and His *righteousness* and all these things will be added to you." It's righteousness first! The world tries to lead with equity. Socialism is an equity based concept . . . and look at the result; it produces unrighteousness. If you lead with righteousness, you lead to true equity, but if you start with equity you lead to unrighteousness. So pay attention to what people are saying in the political sphere because there is a way that seems right to a man but in the end is death.

Being known by God is wonderful! But, we don't want to lead with human-centered thinking. We have to base our relationship with God first on knowing Him, but He also wants to know us! In

John 10:27 Jesus says *“My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me.”* Jesus gave a definition to being a follower of Christ - to hear His voice (you know Him) and He knows you! It's a big deal to be known by God! In Mt. 7 Jesus foretold that in “that day” He would have to tell some that had done miracles in His Name to depart from Him because “I never knew you.” It is possible that someone could operate in Kingdom principles but not have a relationship with God. If that verse scares you as a believer, than that verse probably isn't for you! If that verse bothers you it's because you do have a relationship with God and want to know Him more. But there are some people that are just trying to do all the principles but they don't want the person. God wants to know us and have a relationship with us! When we hear God's words, we know Him; when He hears our words, He knows us.

How to be Known by God

Being known by God is not a relational auto-pilot experience. Is He omniscient? Yes! Omnipresent? Yes! David made this clear in Psalm 139: everywhere we will ever be, God is there already! But Adam and Eve managed to hide from God apparently! In Genesis 3:9 God asked them “Where are you?” In Jer. 23:24 God says that He fills all of Heaven and earth! So Adam and Eve were not hiding very well from Him actually. God was were they were, but yet He asked them “where are you?” Does God know everything? Yes. But as it relates to our personal relationship with Him, God, Our Father, as omniscient as He is, generally chooses to make Himself dependent upon our invitation to be known by Him. Is God omniscient? Yes! How does that relate to our relationship with Him? We ask Him to know us! Is God our powerful? Absolutely! How does that relate to us when we are sick? We ask Him for that healing to manifest in our life! We have to step up to our role and authority! God gave the authority to Adam and Eve, they gave it to satan, Jesus got it back and now our Lord has given us that authority with the commission to pray “Thy Kingdom come and Thy will be done on earth as it is in Heaven!” As it relates to seeing His power and Will expressed on this earth, we pray. As it relates to our relationship with Him, it's not an auto-pilot experience either. We have to invite Him in!

James 4:8 says the same thing “Draw near to God and He will draw near to you.” Look who's initiating there though - you! The veil between the Holy of Holies and YOU has been torn once and for all. It used to be one day out of year for one man out of one nation, for one nation out of the whole earth that someone could come into the presence of God. On the Day of Atonement the High Priest of Israel could go into the presence of God. Now for you, me, and every believer we have access any day of the year, any time, any place in the whole world. Whenever we want. And we don't have to go to the temple in Jerusalem because we are the temple now. We have a complete all access pass. He's made the once and for all first step. The veil was torn. The opportunity to step into His presence is completely available to us at all times, but it is a pro-active process. We bear responsibility for our intimacy with God.

Moses went on dates with God. Special time, special place, no interruptions. Moses would talk with God face-to-face as a man talks with a friend! Moses saw God in the old covenant! One time an angel visited Bob Jones (a prophet who has since passed away) and told him “the Lord Jesus is going to come to visit you, get your questions ready.” Some time later the Lord Jesus came to visit Bob, shook his hand and said “what questions do you have?” He met with Jesus! Moses, in the old covenant, spoke to God as with a friend. How could that possibly be unavailable for us in the new covenant?!? We need to raise our expectation and take the limits off of God! That sort of intimacy with God is totally available to us! We have to be careful that we do not get lulled into a complacency - riding on the coattails of someone else’s intimacy with the Lord. He wants you to have a special thing with Him - to make your own history with Him!

Let God Ask you Questions

If you were single and on a blind date, what would you do to get to know the person as you had dinner together? Or, let’s say that you have been married for 45 years and went out to a nice dinner with your lovely spouse - what would you do if you really wanted to use that time to further and deepen your relationship after all of these years? Or perhaps you were an employer who had a new position within your organization that you had posted for and you had 5 or 6 people scheduled for interviews over the next few days; how would you get to know the interviewees? In all of these cases you would ASK QUESTIONS of course! Allowing God to ask us questions is a great way for Him to get to know us.

Let’s look at what sort of questions God asks. A great place to see that is by looking at the questions Jesus asked people because Jesus said “if you’ve seen Me, you’ve seen the Father.” When I started to search through the gospels for examples of questions the Lord asked people and thought to look online. Sure enough, I found a list of 135 questions Jesus asked! No remember that these are questions that Jesus (God) asked people! Here are some of them. I think you may be surprised that if you allow the questions to exist out of context how broadly applicable some of these are to your life right now:

Why are you anxious about clothes? (Matt 6:28)

Why are you terrified? (Matt 8:26)

Why do you harbor evil thoughts? (Matt 9:4)

Do you believe I can do this? (Matt 9:28)

What did you go out to the desert to see? (Matt 11:8)

Why did you doubt? (Matt 14:31)

How many loaves do you have? (Matt 15:34)

What do you want me to do for you? (Matt 20:32)

Why were you looking for me? (Luke 2:49)

What are you thinking in your hearts? (Luke 5:22)

Why do you call me 'Lord, Lord' and not do what I command? (Luke 6:46)

Where is your faith? (Luke 8:25)

What are you discussing as you walk along? (Luke 24:17)

What are you looking for? (John 1:38)

Do you want to be well? (John 5:6)

Where shall we buy bread, that these may eat? (Jn. 6:5)

Do you believe this? (John 11:26)

Do you realize what I have done for you? (John 13:12)

Will you lay down your life for my sake? (Jn. 13:38)

Have I been with you for so long and still you do not know me? (John 14:9)

Whom are you looking for? (John 18:4)

What a fun study to look at the questions that Jesus asked people! Now, we are going to group some of these questions into 4 different effects that God's questions have in our life. But before we do that, it is worth noting that some teaching from scripture sets boundaries to certain topics in the Word. That type of teaching is wonderfully helpful. It creates a fence around you, it establishes the limits of a broad place for you to walk and work within safely. It keeps you out of the ditches. This type of teaching defines a concept in the Kingdom; it puts boundaries to it. (e.g., Grace means that I am good with God because of the blood of Jesus . . . but because of Grace I do not want to just go and trample all over the blood of Jesus by going around sinning . . . you put a definition to the different aspects of grace.) There is another type of Bible teaching which is more of an invitation than it is a delineation. It is not putting boundaries on topics; it is actually just highlighting different aspects of territory you are welcome to explore with the Lord. "You see that oak tree over there? Pretty cool, huh! You see that stream back there? Gorgeous, isn't it!?! You see that mountain range over there? It's available!" This is the sort of teaching where you are not putting boundaries on things as much as you are inviting people into new territory.

When a teacher delineates topics in the Word, you do that by listing specific items and teaching on them. When a teacher invites believers into certain things in the Word, you do that by listing specific items and teaching on them! Same thing! So you have to realize the difference between the two and this will actually help you a lot when you listen to Bible teachers.

So, let us look at the questions that our Lord asked people (the sorts of questions He could surely ask us) and study what sort of effect those questions had. But let's not consider this list of 4 effects of God's questions to be exhaustive (or in other words a "delineation teaching") but instead see them as an "invitation teaching." OK? Here we go!

God's Questions Cause us to Reflect / Self-Assess

One of the effects of our Lord's questions in our life is that they cause us to reflect or self-assess. Here's an example: "*Why did you doubt?*" Let's say you just finished a meeting that you had gone into with faith, but the meeting ended up not going as planned and you sort of set your faith aside somewhere along the way and here you are at the end of the meeting, taking a bathroom break and you hear the Lord ask you "Why did you doubt?" That sort of a question causes us to reflect or self-assess.

Here's another Example or "*Do you realize what I have done for you?*" A question like that helps us check ourselves ... are you being consciously aware of His goodness towards you right now? Or this example "*Why do you harbor evil thoughts?*" Often, we read that question in scripture and we think it is rhetorical in nature. We think "well, I shouldn't harbor evil thoughts so the fact that He asked me means I should just stop!" Well you should stop, but He's actually asking a question . . . "why do you harbor evil thoughts?" There's probably a reason and it would be good to get to that reason! Stop in the meantime and then figure out the reason! "*Why do you harbor evil thoughts?*"

Let me give you an example of this self assessment process. When I was young, I was a baseball player and my parents were so kind as to pay for me to have formal pitching lessons (with a former New York Mets pitcher no less)! My pitching coach was a very good teacher. I don't remember the specific day, but I can remember the lesson . . . one day as I pitching in his workout facility, the ball went high and right towards where a right-handed batter's head would be! My coach asked me - "do you know why that ball went wild, high and right towards a right-handed batter's head?" Of course my answer was "not really." So what did he do? He got up on the mound and demoed a few different throws for me until I was able to recognize that in terms of the timing of his pitching motion that if his arm lagged behind his body the ball also sailed up and to the right towards a right-handed batter's head! So, through that demo and the instruction around it he taught me that my arm was too slow behind the movement of my body! I needed to either speed up my arm or slow down my body in order to correct that throwing inaccuracy. Now, I would like to say otherwise, but there is a good chance he had to demo that lesson for me again perhaps. But eventually I am sure I said "I get it! I get it!" Then the next time I threw high and tight he would have simply said "Peter, speed up your arm" or "your arm is behind" or "slow down your body." He would just remind me at that point.

So, I was in a new place (being a pitcher). I was trying to learn a new thing (how to pitch accurately). And so he gave me a new teaching to fix this issue I was having. And after I got the new teaching, he started to give me reminders. Isn't this what a good teacher does?!? Now, he didn't need to give me a 5 minute teaching / demo, he just needed to remind me. Eventually, at some point I am sure I threw it high and tight again and before he could say anything I said "I know, I know, my arm was behind!" He didn't have to say anything now. As a teacher, at that point, you realize "I don't have to say to them anymore because they just beat me to it!" I had become self-governed in that area! And this is exactly what happens with the Lord.

God asks us questions. He gets to know us through asking us questions. The questions have good effect in our life and one of those effects is His questions cause us to self-assess or reflect on our actions, our heart stance, our words, etc. and it can actually produce a dramatic change in us. If you have new territories in your life you are going to need new teaching from the Lord - and He will often start that process by asking you a question!

I'll give you an example. Young believers often need to learn to not take offense at things. If you got saved as an adult, you have a history of having learned to be angry with people when they do you wrong, and now you are born again and you have a heart to want to do right. So you want to be honoring to the Lord, but that person over there just totally did you wrong so you get offended! And the Lord asks you "why do you harbor evil thoughts in your heart?" As a young believer your response is probably "I don't know!" (i.e., let me be mad!) Later that night you are praying and the Lord says "what were those evil thoughts about?" "I don't know!" you respond and you go to bed." The next morning you wake up and He says "Peter" and you say "I know, let's talk about those evil thoughts." And do you know what the Lord may do right then is play the pertinent sequence of your previous day back to you in order to demonstrate what had occurred. We are then able to (with God's coaching) realize that what had happened is that one person had said one thing that offended you and that you took the bait and picked up the demonic spirit of offense and then you found more offense to take offense at and then you got angry and sour and bitter and resentful. That's what was going on! And you think "oh that's why the ball almost hit the batter in the head!"

Now just like my pitching coach, it may take a few demonstrations until you totally get it and think "OK God has definitely taught me about that now and I get it. I totally get it." And eventually after those demos, the Lord transitions to just reminding you! Now someone offends you, you are bent out of shape internally for 3 minutes but don't say anything externally Praise God and you hear the Lord say "Peter, offense ..." And you think "Oh yeah!" And He had taught you before that the way that you get around that is that you forgive them, love them, pray for them. So right then you change your heart and instead of being offended and falling for that you see yourself through it, pray for them, love them, etc. because you listened to God's reminder.

You first were in a new territory; you were a new believer trying to do right before God and He gives you a new teaching and models it for you. Now that it has been modeled and you get it, you get reminders and eventually the reminders turn into self-governance. Now you notice yourself getting sour in your heart towards someone and 10 seconds into sourness you say to yourself "we ain't going there; I know what this is all about; I forgive them in the Name of Jesus!" and the Lord says "Amen, you're self governing!" And this all started with a question where He asked us to self-assess. Let the Lord ask you questions that cause you to reflect!

Some of you may think "if you are self-governing, then why do you need God?" For the next territory, Amen! We're not supposed to be babes in Christ forever. Offense should be a teaching we get and implement pretty early in our walk with God! If you have a problem with offense right now, just get that fixed - invite Him into it. We should not perpetually struggle with offense! We ought

to move on from offense so that we can learn a good curveball! You can't fine-tune your pitching if you are still constantly hitting people in the head with the ball! We don't want to remain babes in Christ. So long as God has to do all the thinking for you, you are not operating in the mind of Christ. He wants us to operate in the mind of Christ! God doesn't want to have to be the only person who knows what to do! He wants to teach you how to know what to do. Because I had those pitching lessons I not teach my sons the same lessons - that's powerful! So when we really are able to self-govern about offense, not only can we move on to the next territory with God, but we can also help train and teach and equip others! God's questions can cause us to self-assess to great effect.

God's Questions Challenge Us

Another function of God's questions is that they will challenge us. For example "*where is your faith?*" That's a challenge question. Or this one (Luke 6:46) "*Why do you call me 'Lord, Lord' and do not do what I say?*" Those are the sort of questions that you really don't want to answer right after someone asks them! "*Why do you call me 'Lord, Lord' and do not do what I say?*" It's not really meant to be a conversation! The previous questions were self-assessment starters, whereas these challenge questions are meant to draw a line in the sand. It's meant to take what may be seeming like a "gray situation" or "tough to say" or "there are a lot of factors at play here" and turn it into "*Why do you call me 'Lord, Lord' and do not do what I say?*" You quickly see yourself straddling the fence and realize that God Himself is telling you to get yourself onto one side of the fence or the other. Elijah told to the people of Israel a similar message on the mountain with the prophets of Baal (1 Ki 18:21) "*How long will you falter between two opinions? If the Lord is God, follow Him; but if Baal, follow him.*" Are you going to serve God or not? All in or all out. Not lukewarm.

Excuse another baseball example. When I was 11 I did the thing I was afraid of: I went and tried out for the competitive, travel baseball team. I gave it my everything in try-outs and really played my best. But my best wasn't good enough yet, and I got cut. On the ride home with my dad in our red, Saturn sedan I sobbed. When we arrived in the driveway he turned off the car, looked at me and said "well, do you want to have a catch?" That was a challenge question. Through my tears, I surely said "no" being that I had just been cut from the travel baseball team. His response? "Do you want to make the team next year because it seems like you need to practice more?" It's easy for a young lad in that situation to hope for some shade of gray - to hope they can sulk for the next few months and then somehow get a different result next year at tryouts. There was no shade of gray actually. I had a decision to make. Either I was going to decide that I was not going to be a baseball player at that level (by not up-ing my commitment to practicing) or I was going to practice more to be able to make the team next year.

As my father did, The Lord will challenge us with questions that cause us to parse out a situation and realize it is either A or B, but it cannot be C, D, or any other letter. "*How long will you falter*

between two opinions?” “Where is your faith?” “Why do you call me ‘Lord, Lord’ and do not do what I say?” The Lord will personally ask me these sorts of questions often! As a young believer I was very afraid of sinning - I didn’t want to mess up. (Now the grace of God has freed me from that petrifying fear, but there is definitely still a Holy reverence that I want to have - I don’t want to mess up!) So, as a young believer, I prayed for a month or two like this “Lord, you’ve got to promise me that you will always give me a red light in my heart if I’m about to do something that’s not right!” I think I was literally twisting God’s arm on this one! And here, many years later, in preparing this teaching, I’ve realized He’s been doing that all of these years! Here’s how:

Sometimes if I am having a sour attitude about something - perhaps I had a long day at work or there is some issue, whatever.... And in that moment, I will feel Holy Spirit sort of slip a word into the midst of my sourness. He will poke and prod my heart almost as if to just put it out there “are you going to be a jerk or are going to be pleasant?” In those moments I need to decide. Half way, letting it stew under the surface all night, making those around me uncomfortable is not an option. It’s like “be a jerk” or “be pleasant.” “Do you really want to be a jerk?” That actually really helps me. It draws a line in the sand. I think “do I really want to be a jerk right now? No. I don’t want to be a jerk. OK, well I am going to need to figure out a way to be pleasant then!” Big boy talk. Big girl talk. I like that. Personally I sometimes just need someone to tell me to “kick it into gear” to pull me up by the bootstraps. Having a coach that pushes on you is a good thing!

Other times I may be pacing about some issue or fret and I hear or sense “how’s that going?” Let me just make this clear . . . sometimes I hear very specific phrases from the Lord - strings of words I could dictate back to you exactly or right down. Sometimes though, He just prods my heart. Even if it is just a poke or prod I know what He’s saying in that moment. I know right was He prompts me that He’s asking me “do you want to keep going like this?” God’s questions to you 1) can be from His Word, and 2) they don’t have to be literal, word-for-word phrases that He speaks to you and you can dictate back to someone else. That is fine and even great when they are, but sometimes it is just an impression. The Holy Spirit will push on an issue in your heart and you know exactly what He’s talking to you about. It’s like a spouse giving you eyes across the room; it says plenty!

When God challenges us, it helps us recognize that there is an important choice ahead of us! You have to be decisive in life. You have to make decisions. We need to realize sometimes that we have a definitive decision in front of us and we need to chose! And that’s often what the Lord is getting at when He challenges us with *“Where is your faith?”* You can respond “I don’t have any today!” That’s fine. But make a decision. Are you going to have faith for this or not. *“Why do you call me ‘Lord, Lord’ and do not do what I say?”* Challenge!

God’s Questions Test Us!

The third thing God’s questions do is they test us! Now I know that some of you may be remembering school and therefore thinking “this is terrible! Peter is trying to let God ask me

questions but he is telling me that God tests us with questions!” Well the Lord really does test us with questions! As we’ll see Jn. 6 actually shows that very clearly. God tests you with questions.

Here is an example. *“What are you discussing as you walk along?”* Do you realize that’s a 2-part question? The first answer is going to be “we were talking about who is the greatest ...” Then there’s that second question that follows up the first one “well, what did you guys say? What did you decide about who’s the greatest? I can’t want to hear. Tell me about it!” If you’re a disciple right then you’re thinking “we’re not going to pass this test I don’t think!” God will test us; He will assess us with questions!

Here’s another example. This question was to Phillip. Jesus asked *“Where shall we buy bread, that these may eat?”* These questions that test us or assess us help us see blind spots in our thinking. Look at Jn. 6:5-9 *“Where shall we buy bread, that these may eat?” **But this He said to test him, for He Himself knew what He would do.***” Jesus was testing Philip! Now David had actually invited the Lord to test him in Ps. 139 *“**Search** me, O God, and know my heart; **Try** me, and **know** my anxious thoughts”* “Try me” actually equals “test me.” David invited God to test him. Jesus is testing Philip. *“Where shall we buy bread, that these may eat?” **But this He said to test him, for He Himself knew what He would do.***” *“Two hundred denarii worth of bread is not sufficient for them, that every one of them may have a little.”* Philip says “even a year’s wages would not be enough to get even a little bread for everyone.” Philip did not pass this test! Jesus knew what He was going to do and He wanted to see if Philip had faith. Philip failed this test for now. *“One of His disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter’s brother, said to Him, “There is a lad here who has five barley loaves and two small fish, but what are they among so many?”* Andrew almost operated in faith . . . until he said “but what are they among so many?”

Sometimes we resist God’s questions because we don’t like the quality of the answers we have to give! You have personally probably had good teacher and bad teachers, but listen, God is the perfect teacher! Let God ask you questions even if you don’t have a good answer. Here’s why: God’s tests are always for your increase! God designs tests for you to have victory in them. If he asks you a question that tests you it is for you to get it right! BUT His tests will actually test us, so we actually have to increase in order to pass the test. God is not in the business of giving you test after test that you can get 100% on without needing to change or grow in some way. If you are scoring a 100% on each test, it is time for you to move on to the next class! While His tests can be a challenge, He means for them to cause you to increase!

The enemy, on the other hand, gives you temptations; he never gives you tests. Temptations are designed to cause you to stumble. The temptations from the enemy are designed for your destruction - to cause you to be torn down. The tests from God are to cause you to be built up! James 1 says *“count it all joy by brethren when you face trials of many kinds, knowing that the **testing** of your faith develops perseverance ...”* The testing develops a GOOD thing! But later in that same chapter, James says “don’t let anyone say ‘I am being tempted by God’ ... for God Himself tempts no one.” The difference is clear. A test is good. A temptation is bad!

So, God will test you! But it is to cause you to be built up - it's to cause you to increase! We should not be afraid of tests. We should not be afraid of challenges. Every area of your life or my life where we have developed some capacity, that capacity has come through the gateway of challenge! Don't run from the test; run to the teacher! Don't run from the test. Let Him challenge you, let Him stretch you. Let Him ask "*Where do you think we will get bread for all of these folks?*" And be fine with not getting it right because the fact that He asked you the question means that He has designed it for you to get it right! But you will probably have to grow to get there!

His tests are for your promotion. What good teacher is there that gives you a test for any other reason than your promotion? A 2nd grade teacher gives tests so that they can show that you've done well enough in 2nd grade that you can be promoted to 3rd grade. Good teachers give you tests for your promotion. "No way! Tests are things that hold me back!" Wrong. The tests were what grew you!

Invite God to Ask you Questions!

If you are struggling with something, you can pray "Lord ask me questions!" This is what you would do with friend. This is what a counselor does. "How was your week?" "Bad." "OK. What did you do this week?" "Well I did this and this and this and this..." "How did that go?" "It was OK." "Which part didn't go well then?" "This part." "Oh, I see. What happened?" Good counselors ask questions! The Holy Spirit is a wonderful Counselor! He asks questions - let Him ask you questions! Talk it out with Him! Let Him ask you questions!

God's Questions Invite us to Draw on Him in Faith

God's questions invite us to draw on Him in faith. Here's an example: "*do you want to be well?*" Do you see what that question was for? That person was probably thinking "well of course - I've always wanted to be well." Jesus was coming up to that person and saying "you have an opportunity right now. I can make you well. Do you want to be well?" It was a chance for them to say "I want to be well" and to express their faith in that moment so that grace could be released to them. "*Do you want to be well?*" That's an invitation for faith. That question was meant to incite someone's faith. Here's another example: "*Whom are you looking for?*" As in, "do you really want to find me?" Or, how about this one: "*Do you believe I can do this?*" When the Lord asks you that question it causes you to think twice and then really affirm "yea, I do believe that You can do this - do it Lord!"

When the Lord asks you questions like this, He is trying to help you have a slight change in focus! "*Do you want to be well?*" Do you know what goes through someone's mind who has been sick for 25 years when the Lord asks them "do you want to be well?" The last 25 years is what goes through their mind. If you ask someone "do you want to prosper in your business?" Do you know

what goes through their mind? All the times they haven't prospered! And the Lord, with these questions, is trying to draw you out, trying to get you to change your focus!

Watch this (Jn. 18:4-8) The troops have come (with Judas) and their torches and weapons to arrest Jesus in the dark where the people could not see it being done. Jesus has been sweating blood, That's where we pick up the story. *Jesus therefore, knowing all things that would come upon Him, went forward and said to them, "Whom are you seeking?"* Do you see that question again? I would propose to you that Jesus was actually giving them an opportunity for faith! *They answered Him, "Jesus of Nazareth."* In other words, in response to Jesus' question about who they were looking for they said "Jesus that bloke from that town Nazareth over there." *Jesus said to them, "I am."* Note that most translations say that Jesus said "I am He." "He" is not in the Greek there in this section of scripture. Jesus just told them "I am" meaning "I am God!" John now adds *And Judas, who betrayed Him, also stood with them. Now when He said to them, "I am," they drew back and fell to the ground.* Consider that these are troops with weapons and torches. They are ready to work tougher to seize this one man. Despite their preparations and armaments when Jesus spoke the truer-than-true words that declared His deity "I am" they sprawled back falling to the ground under the power of God! I am assuming that at some point they got up and then *He asked them again, "Whom are you seeking?"* Do you see this? It is another invitation for faith! Jesus knew what was going to happen to Him but He appears to be giving these individual men the opportunity to believe! They say they are looking for the guy from Nazareth. Jesus responds "I'm God!" They fall down, get back up and He asks them again who they are looking for, but they persist in their unbelief *And they said, "Jesus of Nazareth."*

Sometimes we are invited to faith in God but we fail to seize the opportunity because we only think in worldly terms (Jesus of Nazareth) not "I am!" In that moment, Jesus was asking a question that was giving an opportunity for a perspective shift. They missed it. But the same thing happens when He says to the paralytic "do you want to be well." I know that they have probably 20 years of history of not being well that comes to mind when they are asked that question but Jesus is saying "will you change your perspective and focus and see me as 'I am' not just 'Jesus of Nazareth'?" Not to just look at what is "worldly available" to your business but look at who is Heavenly available to your business in all spheres of life. God's wanting to invite us to faith and sometimes He will ask us questions.

All of God's Questions Invite us to be a Student

Some questions will cause you to self-assess or reflect. Other questions will challenge you and draw a line in the sand saying "which side are you going to stand on; make a decision." Other questions will test us and reveal a blind spot in our thinking. We realize that we need to change how we think about something, but the Lord will increase you so that you can pass that test and move on to the next one and your capacity will grow. And finally, there are some questions that invite us to "more." They cause us to refocus, to recalibrate. They say "there is something better; there is

something more. He's not just Jesus of Nazareth - He's "I am!" And you have to answer His questions in order to engage in that transformative process.

Great teachers ask transformative questions. God could give you all the answers, but so long as you have to go to Him for all the answers, so long as He's the only one in your relationship that's doing Godly thinking, you are not operating in the mind of Christ! God asks us questions because He wants to develop our ability to house that wisdom! When God asks you questions, it causes you to own the answer. Instead of just giving you the answer, His questions invite you to search out the answer with Him. Remember, I will never forget why a pitch sails high and tight on a right-handed batter. I own that answer because my pitching coach asked me the question "do you know why that happened?" That question made me a student prepared for his answer - which I still hold on to and have not lost because I had to work to find and understand the answer with his help!

The Holy Spirit will do exactly this. It may be a poke or a prod, an audible voice, a phrase in your heart, a question Jesus actually asked, or even just a set of scripture that you read and ask yourself "do I really believe that?"

God's questions invite us to be a student. And then our questions invite Him to be a teacher. And that's where I'll pick this teaching up next time - about asking questions of God. His questions invite us to be a student - our questions invite Him to be a teacher! Discipleship!

Text Summary (for reading as a group)

Our relationship with God is a two-way street, but *you* do not want to be the foundation of your walk with God. He's the Rock, not us! BE CAREFUL that you do not become the focus or the epicenter of your relationship with God. We want to be God-referenced people, God-referenced thinkers, not man-centered thinkers. Proverbs 2:9 (ESV) says "*Then you will understand righteousness and justice and equity, every good path;*" Notice the order of those three "good paths." The way of God is to lead with righteousness and end with true equity. The way of man is to lead with equity and to end with unrighteousness. You can't have a just judge who is unrighteous. Righteousness allows for justice and justice allows for true equity. It's righteousness first! The world tries to lead with equity, but if you start with equity you lead to unrighteousness.

Being known by God is wonderful, but it is not a relational auto-pilot experience. As it relates to our personal relationship with Him, God, Our Father, as omniscient as He is, generally chooses to make Himself dependent upon our invitation to be known by Him. We have to invite Him in! It used to be one day out of year for one man out of one nation, for one nation out of the whole earth that someone could come into the presence of God. In the New Covenant, every believer has access to the Holy of Holies any day of the year, any time, any place in the whole world. The opportunity to step into His presence is completely available to us at all times, but it is a pro-active process. We bear responsibility for our intimacy with God. Moses went on dates with God. Special time, special place, no interruptions. Moses would talk with God face-to-face as a man talks with a friend! Moses saw God in the old covenant! How could that possibly be unavailable for us in the new covenant?!? That sort of intimacy with God is totally available to us! We have to be careful that we do not get lulled into a complacency - riding on the coattails of someone else's intimacy with the Lord. He wants you to have a special thing with Him - to make your own history with Him!

If you were single and on a blind date, what would you do to get to know the person as you had dinner together? You would ASK QUESTIONS of course! Allowing God to ask us questions is a great way for Him to get to know us. Let's look at what sort of questions God asks. A great place to see that is by looking at the questions Jesus asked people because Jesus said "if you've seen Me, you've seen the Father." Now, some teaching from scripture sets boundaries or delineates certain topics in the Word, another type of teaching more so is about inviting people into new territory. Both are good, but let's not consider this list of 4 effects of God's questions to be exhaustive (or in other words a "delineation teaching") but instead see them as an "invitation teaching." OK? Here we go!

One of the effects of our Lord's questions in our life is that they cause us to reflect or self-assess. Here's an example: "*Why did you doubt?*" That sort of a question causes us to reflect or self-assess. When we are learning something new, we need new teaching to fix the issues we are encountering in the new experience or territory. And after we really grasp the teaching, we can started to just get reminders. Now, he didn't need to give me a 5 minute teaching / demo, we just needed reminded. Eventually, at some point, we self correct and our teacher doesn't have to say anything now. As a

teacher, at that point, you realize “I don’t have to say to them anymore because they just beat me to it!” We have become self-governed in that area! And this is exactly what happens with the Lord. God asks us questions. He gets to know us through asking us questions. The questions have good effect in our life and one of those effects is His questions cause us to self-assess or reflect on our actions, our heart stance, our words, etc. and it can actually produce a dramatic change in us. If you have new territories in your life you are going to need new teaching from the Lord - and He will often start that process by asking you a question! We may think “if you are self-governing, then why do you need God?” For the next territory, Amen! We’re not supposed to be babes in Christ forever. Offense should be a teaching we get and implement pretty early in our walk with God! We should not perpetually struggle with offense! So long as God has to do all the thinking for you, you are not operating in the mind of Christ. When we really are able to self-govern about offense, not only can we move on to the next territory with God, but we can also help train and teach and equip others! God’s questions can cause us to self-assess to great effect.

Another function of God’s questions is that they will challenge us. For example “*where is your faith?*” That’s a challenge question. Or this one (Luke 6:46) “*Why do you call me ‘Lord, Lord’ and do not do what I say?*” Those are the sort of questions that you really don’t want to answer right after someone asks them! “*Why do you call me ‘Lord, Lord’ and do not do what I say?*” It’s not really meant to be a conversation! You quickly see yourself straddling the fence and realize that God Himself is telling you to get yourself onto one side of the fence or the other. Elijah told to the people of Israel a similar message on the mountain with the prophets of Baal (1 Ki 18:21) “*How long will you falter between two opinions? If the Lord is God, follow Him; but if Baal, follow him.*” Are you going to serve God or not? All in or all our. Not lukewarm. This is big boy talk. Big girl talk. That can be helpful! Sometimes we just need someone to draw the line, tell us to “kick it into gear” and pull us up by the bootstraps. Having a coach that pushes on you is a good thing! When God challenges us, it helps us recognize that there is an important choice ahead of us! You have to be decisive in life. We need to realize sometimes that we have a definitive decision in front of us and we need to chose! And that’s often what the Lord is getting at when He challenges us with “*Where is your faith?*” You can respond “I don’t have any today!” That’s fine. But make a decision. Are you going to have faith for this or not. “*Why do you call me ‘Lord, Lord’ and do not do what I say?*” Challenge!

The third thing God’s questions do is they test us! Jesus asked Philip “*Where shall we buy bread, that these may eat?*” These questions that test us or assess us help us see blind spots in our thinking. David invited God to test him. Jesus is testing Philip and Philip did not pass this test! Jesus knew what He was going to do and He wanted to see if Philip had faith. Philip failed this test for now. Sometimes we resist God’s questions because we don’t like the quality of the answers we have to give! Let God ask you questions even if you don’t have a good answer. Here’s why: God’s tests are always for your increase! God designs tests for you to have victory in them. If he asks you a question that tests you it is for you to get it right! BUT His tests will actually test us, so we actually have to increase in order to pass the test. God is not in the business of giving you test after test that you can get 100% on without needing to change or grow in some way. If you are scoring a 100% on each

test, it is time for you to move on to the next class! The enemy, on the other hand, gives you temptations; he never gives you tests. Temptations are designed to cause you to stumble. The difference is clear. A test is good. A temptation is bad! God will test you! But it is to cause you to be built up - it's to cause you to increase! We should not be afraid of tests. Every area of your life or my life where we have developed some capacity, that capacity has come through the gateway of challenge! Don't run from the test; run to the teacher! His tests are for your promotion. Good teachers give you tests for your promotion. "No way!" you say "Tests are things that hold me back!" Wrong. The tests were what grew you!

The Holy Spirit is a wonderful Counselor! He asks questions - let Him ask you questions! Talk it out with Him! Let Him ask you questions! God's questions can invite us to draw on Him in faith. Here's an example: "*do you want to be well?*" Do you see what that question was for? Jesus was coming up to that person and saying "you have an opportunity right now. I can make you well. Do you want to be well?" It was a chance for them to say "I want to be well" and to express their faith in that moment so that grace could be released to them. That's an invitation for faith. When the Lord asks you questions like this, He is trying to help you have a slight change in focus! Sometimes we are invited to faith in God but we fail to seize the opportunity because we only think in worldly terms (Jesus of Nazareth) not "I am!"

Great teachers ask transformative questions. God could give you all the answers, but so long as He's the only one in your relationship that's doing Godly thinking, you are not operating in the mind of Christ! God asks us questions because He wants to develop our ability to house that wisdom! When God asks you questions, it causes you to own the answer. Instead of just giving you the answer, His questions invite you to search out the answer with Him. God's questions invite us to be a student. And then our questions invite Him to be a teacher. And that's where we'll pick this teaching up next time - about asking questions of God.

Points to Ponder . . .

- In what ways does being open to answering God's questions deepen our personal relationship and intimacy with Him?
- In what ways does inviting God's questions in our life position us as a student - as a disciple?
- Why do good teachers ask questions, not just give answers?
- What are some examples (either given in this message or from another section of scripture) where God's questions had a profound impact on those whom He asked?