

Discipleship

Part 10: Asking God Questions

PETER DEWITT
AGATHOS CHURCH
MAY 16TH, 2016

Full Text (for reading on your own)

God Gets to Know You through the Questions that You Ask

When you go to an interview for a new job, they ask you questions. And at the end of the interview, usually you are given the opportunity to ask a few questions of your own. This happens for two reasons. First, it is relationally appropriate to allow a person who has answered 20 or 30 questions themselves to ask a question or two of their own. Secondly, the questions that people ask tell you a lot about them. Their questions make their motivation more clear. Some people's questions are all about "when will you know, what are the responsibilities, etc." Those people are looking for a job. Others ask very specific questions about the career field or organizational culture. Those people want a "better job." The second group is not looking for a job - they are looking for career fulfillment. The questions people ask tell you a lot about them.

And that's why I'm taking about asking God questions; God gets to know you through the questions that you ask.

Good Students Ask Questions

I've been education for about 10 years now as a teacher or otherwise, and one of the things that I have learned over time is that good students ask questions. Categorically, good students ask questions. Now, this is very different from what some students think. Many students feel like if they ask questions it means that they have a problem. But that's just not right. It's not the students who are asking questions that have a problem. It's the students who are NOT asking questions that have a problem. I've learned that when a student asks no questions, that's a sign to me that there's a problem. When students ask questions, it is a good thing - it means they are engaging as a student in a student teacher relationship. If there are no questions, there's a breakdown in that student teacher relationship.

"What do You Want to Know About?"

Almost 7 years ago, I was lying in bed awake one night and I heard the Lord very clearly say "what do you want to know about?" I thought "wow, that's an awesome invitation!" So, I spent the next two years or so trying to figure out what I wanted God to teach me about. I was trying to find "just the thing" to ask God to teach me about. I didn't realize that it was an open invitation. "What

do you want to know about” - meaning, “start somewhere; it’s all available. I want to be your personal instructor. What do you want to know about.”

I’m convinced that even person in this room has questions on their heart to ask God. Not “I guess I could think of something and make up a question if you asked me to” ... I am talking about questions that your heart is already “pregnant with.” We all have questions that are wanting to come out to God the Father. There may not be 100 questions or even 10, but I know there is at least one question that you want to ask God today. Maybe it’s a question about a new career, a new house, a spouse? Maybe it’s a more simple question: what sort of bike to get your young boy or what training wheels would work best? It could be a question about the timing of something. It could be a question about strategy in your business or work place. Both you and I have questions on your heart to ask God - guaranteed. You may be more or less aware of what those questions are, but the Lord today is saying “what do you want to know about?”

Ask and You Shall Receive (an Answer)

Matthew 7:7-8 says “*ask and it will be given to you ... for whoever asks receives.*” The context for those verses is mostly about physical needs - the necessities of life - being met. But, there is a principle and a promise embedded in that scripture “ask (a question) and it (an answer) will be given to you ... for whoever asks (a question) receives (an answer).” It could be an answer to prayer - such as clothes to wear if you need those, or it could be an answer to a question that you have. That’s the principle. Ask ... and God will answer.

James 1:5-6a says the same thing: “*If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him. But let him ask in faith, with no doubting.*” Who are we supposed to ask when we lack wisdom? God! See, we need to go to God with our questions! You’ve got to go to God with your questions! You cannot stuff a question. This is why sex education from parents is so important. Kids will find answers. The question is “who from?” And the questions that you have on your heart today ... you will find answers to those questions. The real issue is “who are you going to find the answers from?” When you stuff things that are in your heart that you want to ask God, you end up going to other places to find the answers. So if any of you lacks wisdom, let yourself ask God!

James 1 also tells us to ask God questions “*in faith, with no doubting.*” We are supposed to ask God questions knowing - convinced of the fact - that He wants to answer our questions! Asking God questions is so exciting!!!

Perhaps you have been in a college class before where the professor “wrote the book” that the class is based on. Some students roll their eyes at that - thinking that the potential pride of the professor will make for a stuffy class ... but it is a pretty great opportunity to get to “talk with the author.” Now, consider this ... the Bible was written by God and we can talk with the author every time that we read it! You get to ask the author all the questions that you can think of! Asking God questions is so exciting!!!

Who Wants a Front Row Experience with God?

Now speaking of a college class, imagine a typical college class at a four year university. While tuition fees definitely vary, let's think about how much one college class costs. If a university cost \$30,000 / year to attend all included, and you took 10 classes per year, then each class costs about \$3,000. Now, let's imagine this class meets twice a week for 90 minutes over the course of a 15 week semester. That is 30 class meetings for \$3,000 ... or, in other words, \$100 per 90 minute class period. Now, imagine 120 students are in that class at \$100 per class period. At this point, many of you are probably thinking "that is a terrible deal!" And most of the time it may be. But why?

Having been a lot of college classes, I can say that many students get to class a bit late, try to leave class a bit early if possible, and sit in the back to avoid being noticed. Some take notes, some don't. The story is different per student, but most students sit in the back aside from a smattering of a few students that sit up front in the first two rows. The students in the front are the ones that are raising their hands during class. I'm not saying everyone in the back is dis-engaged, but typically the hands that raise consistently class to class are from the students who are sitting in the front. They get to class early to talk with the professor ahead of time and they raise their hand during class.

Now, if you were a student in that college class that sat up front and raised your hand on average just once per class period, you would receive 30 personalized answers from your professor who is an expert in their field. For the front-row student, perhaps \$3,000 was not such a bad deal because they ended up with 30 personalized, specific answers from an expert in the field. And why did they get this personalized instruction? Because they raised their hand! The students in the back would have probably done better with a \$120 textbook - it would have been written better than their notes were!

Our experience as a student is determined by our initiative. If you sit in the back of the class, you cannot expect to have a front row experience with God! If you sit in the back in the "school of God," you will not have a front row experience. It's time for you to move up to the front row! Ask Him questions. Be engaged!

No Questions? No Student.

When I was prepping this message, I asked the Lord "God, what's the main thing about this message? What's the main thing that you want to get across?" As soon as I asked that question I heard Him say "If you are not asking questions, you are not a student." Now, this is a series on discipleship. Disciples are students. "If you are not asking questions, you are not a student." I'm not making a comment on salvation, I'm saying that if you are not asking questions, you are not playing the role of disciple. But today is an invitation. God is saying "what do you want to know about?" It can be about your business, family, or career path. It can be about wisdom for certain situations. "What do you want to know about?" It's all available to you. You don't have to do what I did and wait 2 years to try and figure out the one topic God is going to teach you about! It's all available to you!

You will always know what you are studying based not the questions that you are asking. For instance, imagine that college class we talked about before was a biology class. Why are the students in the back not raising their hands? Because they are not studying biology! They may say over their phone call back home “mom, no, no, no, I AM STUDYING biology!” “You better be, we’re paying a lot of money for that class!” “OK, OK, I AM STUDYING biology!” What “studying” to that student really means is that they stay up until 3am the night before the test and try to cram everything so that they can do the monkey gymnastics that are necessary so that they can get a certain letter grade on the test so that they can go to law school. They are not studying biology. They are not a disciple of biology. They are not a student of biology by any stretch of the imagination. If they were, they would sit in the front of class, raise their hand to ask specific questions, they’d go spend time with the professor in office hours, and they would find extra books outside of class that were related to the content they were learning in class!

You will know what you are really studying by the questions that you are asking. And not everyone needs to be a biologist, praise God! But, as disciples of Christ, are you asking questions about His Word and His ways? What questions are on your heart about His Word and His ways - and how that’s supposed to impact your life? If you don’t have questions about that right now, today’s the day to start having questions for God! You have questions, they’re just stuffed. You’ve not yet found that outlet that you can have to get answers to your questions from God ... and if you’ve not found that outlet, I guarantee that you are going somewhere else for the answers. You don’t want the world’s answers! You want God’s answers! If anyone lacks wisdom let him ask God! So, God’s inviting you today: “what do you want to know about?”

It’s Safe to Ask Your Questions

When I taught, I always set culture in the classroom as quickly and as clearly as possible. During the first couple days and weeks with a new set of students, I would correct things that would detract from learning. For instance, if a student had one headphone earbud in during class, I would kindly ask them to take that out ... because one earbud in means that only half their ears and half their brain would be able to engage in class. I would also, for similar reasons, address dress code and even body posture. So, during the first 5 minutes of note taking in our class, I would address body posture because your body posture tells your brain how to perceive the situation that you’re in! First your brain tells your body posture what to do, but then your body posture tells your brain what it already was thinking! If you are slouching it means “this only requires half of me!” If you are sitting up straight, you will immediately feel more alert - guaranteed! So I made my students sit up straight. Why? Because I knew they want to do well in class and that would help them be more alert and achieve their goals in class!

Here’s one other thing that I almost always had the opportunity to address in class. A student would raise their hand and ask what some people would call a “stupid question.” Perhaps I had just said what they asked 10 minutes ago and they had totally missed it. So they raise their hand, ask the

question, and another student in class make a little quip of a comment about it that causes other students to laugh at the student who asked the question. What I would do is I would let the students stop laughing. I would be quiet at the front of the class and they would look up. I would say to the joker "I wanted to let you know that I didn't find that funny." A weight would come on the room in that moment that was so heavy that you would have thought kids were going to fall out of their chairs - because I was so calm, so nice, but so direct. I would then tell the joking student that I was going to address his comment publicly since he made it publicly, but he did not need to feel bad. "You didn't know, but know you'll know that never again will someone make fun of another student in this class for asking a question. This is a studious environment and the way that you learn is by asking questions." I would again clarify that I was not angry with the joke at all and that he did not need to feel bad ... but I needed to address this as a class so that it never happens again.

We'd never have that problem again. But do you know what else happened in that moment? A studious culture came on that class in an instant! What they really just saw was "wow, that was a stupid question and the teacher stood up for them!" Now everyone is invited to be a student! Everyone is invited to ask questions - even if others might think your question is obvious!

Questions for Jesus!

So, inline with the previous prototypical story from my classroom, lets look at some of the questions that the disciples and others asked Jesus! Remember that Jesus is the perfect representation of the Father. He said, "if you've seen Me, you've seen the Father." So let us be encouraged by looking at some of the questions that people were asking Jesus - you know questions that people were asking God Himself while He was here on earth.

Matthew 19:16 says "*Teacher, what good thing must I do to get eternal life?*" This is a great doctrinal question!

Mark 9:11 says "*Why then do the teachers of the law say that Elijah must come first?*" This was a question issued to Jesus in order to better understand scripture. Ask God questions about His Word when you are reading it. There are still parables that I read where I know what it's saying but I don't KNOW what it's saying! If you happen to see a section of scripture where you "still don't know that that means" stop right there. Pray and ask the Lord to show you what that means! Sometimes it will seem like I can study it more right then, but other times I know that the Lord has heard my prayer so I move on. I don't need to hold the Lord hostage until I get it. I may not be ready to hear it yet, but then 3 or 4 years later it comes alive to me. Ask Him questions about scripture!

Mark 9:28 says "*Why couldn't we drive it (a demon) out?*" Similarly, in Mark 11:21 the disciples ask Him "*How did the fig tree wither so quickly?*" These are examples of the disciples asking Jesus for understanding. Proverbs 2:1-7 tell us to cry out for understanding and we will get it from Him!

Here's a very practical question that was asked of God (Mt. 26:17): "*Where do you want us to go for You to eat the Passover?*" Perhaps you are going out to eat this upcoming weekend with your family. You might not know where to go. You can ask the Lord "where would be a good spot to go to eat?" Now that you've asked God's input as you talk it through with your family, a creative idea might come to you and you find that it is one of the best meals you've had recently, or you ran into an old friend there, or you met someone you were able to share Christ with - or all of the above! Ask God practical questions!

Luke 22:49 "*Shall we smite with the sword?*" They didn't know! That was of course not a very profound question. It was probably more about their own will. That's OK!

Here's another one (Acts 1:6) "*Lord, is it at this time You are restoring the Kingdom to Israel?*" This is a question about timing and about the leading of the Lord. "God is it at this time that we should buy a new house?" "God, is it at this time that career transition should happen?" "God is it at this time we should have another child?"

John 9:2 says "*Who sinned? This man, or his parents, that he was born blind?*" This was a question that showed misunderstanding. Jesus said "that's not what it's about ... it's about showing the glory of God." The question showed misunderstanding. This would be like a student in my class asking "which animals do photosynthesis." That's a question that shows misunderstanding. Fair enough. A bad teacher yells at them or makes fun of them. If you are a good teacher, you address that genuine question with "animals don't do photosynthesis, they do cellular respiration, let me remind you about that." Then you ask them what organisms do photosynthesis and they remember that plants do that. The question showed misunderstanding, so you re-teach! We're way too afraid to ask God questions guys! He already knows you don't get it.

Luke 10:40 is about Mary and Martha. Martha is making sandwiches and telling Jesus what to do: "*Lord, do you not care that my sister has left me to serve alone? Tell her to help me.*" Martha's first question was not a question; it was a statement! As is evidenced by her next phrase: "tell her to help me." This was a bad question - rhetorical and bossy.

Here's John 14:5 "*Lord, we do not know where you are going, how do we know the way?*" This would be like a student raising their hand at the start of a new project "Mr. DeWitt, I don't understand the directions at all; I don't even know where to get started." They say that there are four stages knowledge: (1) You don't know what you don't know; (2) You know what you don't know; (3) You know what you know; (4) You don't remember what you know! That fourth stage is not senility, by the way; it's maturity! When you learning something new you have the words for it because someone just communicated it to you or the Lord communicated it to you. But then you get to the point where you forget the words; the truth has just gotten so incorporated into you that you have to do a "truth extraction process" to bring it out of your heart and put it back into words. If you ask someone who has been successful in business for 30 years for the most important piece of wisdom they've learned about a topic (perhaps "marketing" for example) they will have to think about it for a

second in order to find words for what they know on the inside of them. But, that's stage 4 wisdom! Oftentimes, in our day to day life, we don't even know the questions that we need to ask! We are all the way back at stage one! So, say something like Thomas said in Jn. 14:5: "*Lord, we do not know where you are going, how do we know the way?*" Ask the Lord "God I don't even know where to start!" That will give you a place to start!

Luke 8:9 says "*Why do you speak to the people in parables?*" This is asking Jesus about His ways. "Why do you do it like this, Lord?" It's a really great question!

Matthew 18:1 says "*Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?*" I love that the disciples wanted to win! AND MY FAVORITE . . . Luke 9:54. I will give it to you in the King James version for full effect "*Lord, wilt thou that we command fire to come down from heaven, and consume them, even as Elias did?*" You know how Jesus responded to this! This question was ridiculous! But, we still benefit from this question in two ways! The first way is that we realize from Jesus' own answer that He came to save, not to destroy. Jesus set them straight and said "you don't know where you're coming from here . . . I came to save not to destroy!" John 3:17 says "*For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved.*" Jesus didn't come to destroy. He didn't come to condemn broken down buildings. He came to save them! Jesus corrected them accordingly. The other thing this question provides us is some confidence that we will not ask Jesus the most stupid question He's heard! But who knows I could break the record for that yet! It's fun!!! Ask Him questions! You have a relationship with Him. He's your Dad!

You can Ask God Questions Directly

Some students are afraid to ask their teacher questions directly so they send a messenger. Other times whole groups of students will come to provide moral support for just one of their friends to ask a question. After answering the first question for the group I've learned to ask the others if they have a question as well or if they are just their for moral support. That dynamic always makes me smile. But funny as that is, we often do the same with God - not confident to ask Him a question for ourselves. In the New Covenant, you can go straight to God to ask Him questions for yourself!

Let's look at Revelation 1:4-6: "*John, **to the seven churches** which are in Asia: Grace to you and peace from Him who is and who was and who is to come, and from the seven Spirits who are before His throne, and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler over the kings of the earth. To Him who loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood, and **has made us kings and priests to His God and Father**, to Him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.*" Who was John writing to? Churches. Who's in the churches? Believers! And what has Jesus made us? Kings and priests! That's good to know about ourselves!

Just to make sure, let's also look at Revelation 5:9b-10: "*For You (Jesus) were slain, and have redeemed us to God by Your blood out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation, and **have made us kings and priests to our God**; and we shall reign on the earth.*" There it is again!

Now consider this: in the Old Covenant, what did priests do? They made atonement. They ministered to God. They did sacrifices to God for people. So, in the most basic sense, priests in the Old Covenant ministered before God on other people's behalf. Who's the priest now? You!

So consider this simple question: who needs to minister before God on your behalf? One answer is "nobody!" The second correct answer is "Jesus!" who is the Great High Priest who is constantly ministering before God on your behalf. Jesus had made the way so that now you can be before God all the time - and no one needs to come before God on your behalf. This is why there is a doctrine in Christianity that is very true ... "the priesthood of all believers." You don't need someone else to go ask the teacher for you!

In light of being a priest, let's look at First John 2:27: *"But the anointing which you have received from Him abides in you, and you do not need that anyone teach you; but as the same anointing teaches you concerning all things, and is true, and is not a lie, and just as it has taught you, you will abide in Him."* We have the Holy Spirit, Eternal Life, in us as believers! We don't need anyone to teach us because the Holy Spirit will teach us concerning ALL things - not just one topic or a few topics - but concerning ALL things!

If you feel like you NEED someone else to teach you about the things of God then you are not realizing that you are a priest to God yourself. You don't NEEEEEED anyone to teach you. There were people teaching heresies and John was saying "get a plumb line with God yourself. You've got the Holy Spirit on the inside of you. Stop being deceived! Hear from God yourself. You don't need that anyone should teach you." If you have a mindset that feels like you need to get everything that you get about the Lord from someone else that is not inline with the reality of the priesthood of all believers! You don't need to always go to the priest to ask what God's saying. You can hear! This is the New Covenant - not the Old Covenant! If you find yourself thinking "if I could just get a word about this from someone" ask yourself the question "am I going before the Lord about this?" And be confident before the Lord because Jesus is the High Priest that is ministering before Him for you! He's made a way, you can come straight before God!

Here's the other side of that ... there are some people in the body of Christ that can ONLY hear from God. They're so spiritual! They can only hear from God! That's not good!!! They think "if I hear it from God, I will go with it." Apparently 19 scriptures clearly and sweetly given to them from a seasoned pastor was not enough to work off of - God's very own Word! So there is a ditch you can get into on the side of "only" hearing from God. Foolishness!

You do not need to go to someone else instead of being able to go to God and get anything that you need - concerning all things! Jesus said (in Jn. 16:13) that when the Holy Spirit comes He would lead us into all truth! He is the perfect teacher and He's on the inside of you! It used to be that you had to go to the temple where the priest was and that's where God's presence was. Not any more! You're the temple - the Holy Spirit's on the inside of you! And you are now called to minister before God on behalf of others so that when others come to see you they get God!

Be Specific with Your Questions

God wants to be the instructor in every area of your life! Every area. Concerning all things! Therefore, don't ask Him theoretical generalities. Be specific! Phrase your questions to God in such a way that you can do something with His answers. Phrase your question to God so that when He answers, His answer will be actionable for you.

For instance, one question you could ask God is "God, what's wrong with my spouse?" There's a few things we could address about that question, but one immediate issue is that it is not very specific. If you instead say "Lord, would you show me how can I pray for my spouse in this season?" When He answers that question, you will know what to do - you will have an action item. You could start praying a helpful prayer right then! Or "Lord, what could I do to specifically help my spouse with that project?" Actionable answer! Be specific with what you ask God!

God is not like a genie in a bottle that you only get 3 requests of. You have plenty of questions you can ask Him. You don't need to ask just one question that answers all the questions. You can ask as many questions as you need to ask and He will show you!

By the way, while it is a whole other teaching, here are some ways God speaks to you: (1) through His Word. This is the most sure way to hear from God. Ask God questions and then be in His Word. Then things will quicken to you. Things will come to you and you will know "ah, that's it!"; (2) Get good teaching. Find good teachers. Ask people that you trust in Christ for recommendations of gifted teachers. Some even specialize in certain topics - relational dynamics, or finances, or healing, prophecy, etc. This will afford you very solid Biblical teaching that's laced with wisdom and experience on certain topics and that will help the Holy Spirit in providing answers to you on the questions that you have. Remember we don't need that anyone should teach us, but it would be really silly to not have anyone teach you. You don't need to re-invent the wheel either! (3) Sometimes you may hear the Lord very clearly. (4) You may have an impression that is very clear that grows in peace over time and checks out with the Word of God.

Start with One Question

Bob Jones was a very senior prophet in the international Body of Christ who recently passed away. I recall from one message of his that I listened to that he told a story about being asked to prepare questions for God. If I recall the story correctly, an angel came to visit him and said "Jesus is going to come meet with you; get your questions ready." For about 18 months Bob racked his brain thinking "what do I want to ask Jesus?" All of a sudden, one day, about 18 months later, Jesus Himself walked into Bob's room, shook his hand and said "friend, great to see you." They sat down and talked for 15 minutes and Jesus opened the conversation by asking Bob "what questions do you have?" Bob didn't have any because he had done what I had done - thinking so hard about just the right questions. The paralysis of analysis! Since Bob didn't have any questions, Jesus graciously led the conversation. Here's the point: start somewhere! Start asking Him questions about something.

I've learned to do this. I think of it as jump starting my relationship with God. It is like the EKG paddles. If I am feeling dull towards the Lord in my heart, I ask God to show me what's going on. I prime the pump. I start asking Him about small things about my day knowing that if there are bigger things He will lead me to those.

The Right Motivation in Asking God Questions

Now, let's build our confidence a bit more about asking God questions. Confidence can be increased through knowledge and experience. When you know more about a thing it gives you confidence to step into it. So let's get some more knowledge about asking God questions because it will help you have more confidence to be inquisitive with God.

How do you ask God questions? There is one main thing that allows you to ask God questions correctly: it's about motivation. There's a proper motivation to ask God questions with and there is an improper motivation to ask God questions with. If you have the proper motivation, there is no question that you can ask Him that's wrong to ask - that's why I'm saying this will give you confidence before the Lord in asking Him questions. On the other hand, if you don't have this motivation correct, there are many questions that at face value seem to be great questions to ask God that are inappropriate to ask Him.

The motivation for asking questions of God has to be this: to be changed by His answer. Ask God a question with the expectation of being changed by His answer. Remember how the pharisees asked Jesus "by what authority do you do this (miracles, etc.);" It seems like that was a reasonable question at least at face value. Jesus saw differently. "Let me ask you a question" He says. "If you answer this question, then I will answer your question ... John the Baptist, his baptism - was it from man or God?" Jesus knew that if they would not admit that John was from God, they were not going to admit that Jesus was. If Jesus had answered their original question He would have had to lie to say His authority wasn't from God so He would have said that His authority was from God. But they were not going to believe that Jesus was from God so they were going to use that to condemn Him. It was a lawyer argument. Jesus perceived that. Were they wanting to be changed by His answer? No! They were wanting to use His answer to condemn Him to death. Nothing about wanting to be personally changed by His answer!

Perhaps Jesus asked them his question in response to give them a chance to shift their motivation or to confirm that His sense of their motivation was accurate? So the Pharisees confer with one another. "If we say John's baptism was from man, the people are going to beat us up because they think it's from God ... but if we say that it's from God then He'll say why didn't you go get baptized? Why'd didn't you honor it as being from God?" So they answer "we don't know." Yah right! Were they wanting to be changed by His answer? Absolutely not! Terrible question! That was a bad question to ask God - because of the motivation with which they asked it. And God didn't even give them an answer because of it! He gave them a coaching opportunity for their heart and they didn't turn to it so He said "neither will I tell you..."

The Question in the Garden

Jesus is the perfect example of having this heart stance in the Garden of Gethsemane. Jesus asked God a profound question in the Garden of Gethsemane that could have changed whether our sins were covered and taken care of. Jesus said *“Father, **if it is Your will**, take this cup away from Me; nevertheless not My will, but Yours, be done.”* (Luke 22:42) This was a question. “If.” Jesus was asking God to take the cup from Him but He was asking God the Father what His will was. “If Your will is different than mine, your will be done God.” Jesus asked that question of God about what would be His atoning work on the cross! One of His life’s great purposes was on the line in that question, but we know that He did not sin in asking it. Because Jesus rose from the dead, we know that how He asked this question was not sinful or else He would not have risen from the dead!

Jesus asked this very difficult and grace question, but what was His motivation? To be changed by God’s answer! He was relationally connected with the Father. He was saying “God if there’s any other way, please! But if not, change Me.” What’s the next thing that happens, angels came to strengthen Him! I think Jesus knew that was His answer.

Nicodemus and John 3:16

This is also why Nicodemus’ questions were answered so clearly in John chapter 3. Remember, Nicodemus thought that from Jesus’ initial comments to him (Jn. 3:3) that he might need to go back into his mother’s womb physically. Do you remember Jesus’ response? “Nicodemus, are you kidding Me, you’re the teacher of the people of Israel!?” Jesus called him dense effectively! It would be like saying something to a president: “are you serious, you’re in charge of the foreign policy of this nation!?” Notice something though: Nicodemus did not get offended and walk away. Why?

I actually believe that the Lord Jesus was testing Nicodemus’ heart in His response to him. But Nicodemus hung around. Nicodemus stayed because he wanted to be changed by the answer. He was dense, but he wanted to be changed. So then we get Jn. 3:16-17 out of Nicodemus’ conversation with Jesus. The whole world has been blessed through those verses that were answers to questions that were asked by a heart that truly wanted to be changed.

Proverbs 1:23 says *“Turn at my rebuke; surely I will pour out my spirit on you; I will make my words known to you.”* If you are willing to turn at the Lord’s words, He will make His words known to you. When we want to be changed by His answer, we’ll hear. Pastor Brad taught me about James 1 awhile ago. It says don’t be “double-minded” when you ask God for wisdom. You’ve got to be good with Him answering either way. Sometimes we do the “obedience hold out method.” We say to God “if Your answer about this purchase is “yes”, tell me. If it’s “no” don’t tell me.” Yet we ask God “God, what do you want me to do with this?” All the while God’s thinking “well I know what you want to do with this, but I don’t know if you’re ready to know what I want to do with it!” That’s why James is saying “don’t be double minded!” If you’re double minded don’t believe that you are going to receive any wisdom from God. He’s going to give wisdom to all - generously and without reproach -

IF you believe ... if you want to actually hear God's words! But He's not going to cast pearls to swine.

Jeremiah 33:3 says *"Call to Me, and I will answer you, and show you great and mighty things, which you do not know."* So, raise your hand in class! Raise your voice! One time I was at a prophetic conference called "Voice of the Prophets" and we were in a smaller evening session with about 400 people in attendance. The ministry team was going to give prophetic words to individuals in the crowd. It was clear they were going to have time to do perhaps a dozen or so words for people - maybe twenty. So, statistically you know that you have probably no better than a 5 or 10% chance of being called. But, despite those statistics, in my heart, I was thinking "I've got to hear from God!" Because of that hunger in my heart, because I was raising the hand of my heart to God and crying out to Him internally, I was NOT surprised when they called on me! I drew that word to me. There was a demand I was putting on God and it was no coincidence that within a few minutes they had a very specific life-changing word for me! Raise your hand (and your voice)! He wants to teach you!

God does not want to just to puff up your heads without changing your life. That's why you need to be ready to be changed by His answer! It is not just meant to be knowledge increase. That's the wisdom of the world. Read more and more and more and more until you can do less and less about nothing. He wants to change our lives!

Revelation Stored up Specifically for You

Proverbs 2:7 says that God "stores up sound wisdom for the upright." One time I got a mental picture from this verse that God is having to literally store up the wisdom that He's producing in Heaven. You know on a Saturday morning when mom and dad make pancakes and they are making them faster than the kids can eat them? What do they have to do? They have to store them up in the oven on "warm!" I believe God is having to create storage facilities in Heaven for the wisdom that's available to the saints! Why's He having to store it up? Because we ain't bringing it down to earth!!!

"Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, Nor have entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for those who love Him." (1 Cor. 2:9) God has prepared special revelation, special inventions, special innovations, special insight for you - with your name on it - in Heaven. God has prepared specific things FOR YOU. They have your name on them!

Now let me ask you this question and it is going to judge something in your heart ... "what needs in this world are you God's #1 choice or #1 solution for?" Personally. What are the things that you are God's #1 choice for. If we can't think of what that thing is, what that need is, what that area of influence is ... it's because we've never thought we're God's #1 choice for anything. But do you realize that you are God's #1 choice to bring impact in certain areas of this world? He's got your name on certain revelations! A while back Reinhard Bonnke did a big mailer all the way across England. God told him "you're my third choice." God's first two choices said "no."

There are revelations, innovations, ideas, and solutions with your name on them in Heaven! You may think “aw, I don’t know about that...” Well, let me ask you this ... who does God preferentially give revelation to about the smooth running of your family? You! Who does God give revelation to about the smooth running of a nation? The president or the King! I am not saying other people will not get anything from the Lord on those matters and I am not saying leaders cannot have counsel. But do you realize that God preferentially tells the pastor how to run the church? That’s why a lot of time when there is contention in churches a lot of people need to shut their mouth. They think they got something from the Lord but they got about 2% from the Lord compared to what the leader has gotten from Him. We have to be careful that we do not assume that we know everything our leaders are basing their decisions on. There’s a scriptural principle called “submission and authority.” God gives the revelation to the person who has the mantle - who has the role and responsibility to do something with the revelation. When you get towards being in the top of a leadership of an organization, you will be amazed at how much more insight God gives you about that organization. Why? Because you’ve got to do something with it!

God wants to speak, preferentially, through the people that have that territory and responsibility! So what territory do you have? Think about it! Children, church, home, office, car, yard, friends, family, neighbors, nation. Each of us has areas of influence and God prefers to speak through you in that area of influence - as opposed to through someone else for whom that is not their area of influence. It’s God’s 2nd choice for your pastor to need come set your family straight. That’s not first choice. He wanted to tell you. It’s God’s 2nd choice for your friend to need to counsel you about your marriage. He wanted to tell you. He doesn’t want a consultant to have to come in to the school or business that you work at. You work there! You’ve got the Holy Spirit on the inside of you; He wanted to tell you! We need to realize that we are not only priests before God, but we’re also kings! Proverbs 25:2 says that *“It is the glory of God to conceal a matter, but the glory of kings is to search out a matter.”* How do you search out matters with God? By asking questions!

How to Have More Access to His Answers

Do you know that some people have more access to God’s answers than others? It’s true. Let’s look at Luke 17:20-37 to see this pattern. *“Now when He was asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom of God would come, He answered them and said, “The kingdom of God does not come with observation; nor will they say, ‘See here!’ or ‘See there!’ For indeed, the kingdom of God is within you.”*

“Then He (Jesus) said to the disciples, “The days will come when you will desire to see one of the days of the Son of Man, and you will not see it. And they will say to you, ‘Look here!’ or ‘Look there!’ Do not go after them or follow them. For as the lightning that flashes out of one part under heaven shines to the other part under heaven, so also the Son of Man will be in His day ... So He said to them, “Wherever the body is, there the eagles will be gathered together.”

The Pharisees asked Jesus a question. They were responded to with one and one half verses (1.5 verses) of answer from Jesus. So, Jesus was talking with the Pharisees, they asked Him a question

and Jesus gives them about 25 or 30 words worth of an answer (1.5 verses). Then Jesus turns His back on the Pharisees and starts talking to His disciples (who have not even asked Him a question) - and gives them 15 straight verses of information! The Pharisees asked a question and got a verse and a half response. The disciples have not asked a question and they get 15 verses! Do you see it? Ten fold! The disciples didn't even ask a question and they got 10 times more! You will meet people in the body of Christ who just get a lot more from God than everybody else - and there are reasons for that, but I am going to give you the main reason according to Jesus.

Note that this exchange with Jesus, the Pharisees, and then His disciples is definitely not the first example of God's preferential speech playing out. Moses knew how God was going to set the people of God free from Egypt before the Israelites did! Isaiah and David had very detailed prophecies about Jesus' crucifixion hundreds of years ahead of time! David said "I saw the Lord always before me." He met Jesus before Peter and John did! John the Apostle, the one whom Jesus loved, the one who at the Last Supper has his ear on the heart beat of God (remember that the other apostles asked John to ask Jesus who was going to betray Him), was the one who received the Revelation of revelations. Why John? It wasn't Peter. I love Peter, he's a hero of mine, but it wasn't Peter who received Revelation!

Look at what Jesus said in Jn. 15:14-15 about this: "*You are My friends if you do whatever I command you. No longer do I call you servants, for a servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all things that I heard from My Father I have made known to you.*" A servant doesn't know what his master is doing, but Jesus has called us friends! When you are a friend of God, He tells you more! And how are you a friend of God? This is now how you get saved. You get saved by the blood of Jesus ... nothing to do with you, but you do become a deeper friend of God by obedience. You are His friend if you do whatever He commands you. If you respond to what the Holy Spirit has told you before, what the Word has told you before ... if you hold fast to that and you act on it, He will give you more.

How do we receive prophetic words for others? The Lord speaks to us! He gives us those words to share. He's giving us those insights. The Holy Spirit wants to teach us in every area of our life! And one of the ways that you can gain more access to His answers is by being a friend of God! When He tells you something, run with it! When He gives you a revelation from scripture, teach it to someone else. "What I give to you in secret, proclaim on the rooftops!" When He prompts you to go pray for someone with a broken leg, do it! And then the next time there is someone else to pray for, He will prompt your heart again. Or, you can callous your heart over and you become dull and insensitive to hearing the voice of God in your life. This is not about salvation or being loved more or less. We are all loved - Jesus displayed His love on the Cross!

But when you want to be someone who can really access His answers in a deeper and deeper way, there is a reality that when you are obedient to what He has already given you, He will give you more. Faithful with little ... given much! Start asking God questions - and ask to be changed!!!

Text Summary (for reading as a group)

God gets to know you through the questions that you ask. Good students ask questions. When students ask questions, it is a good thing - it means they are engaging as a student in a student teacher relationship. If there are no questions, there's a breakdown in that student teacher relationship. I'm convinced that every person in this room has questions on their heart to ask God. The Lord today is saying "what do you want to know about?"

Matthew 7:7-8 says "*ask and it will be given to you ... for whoever asks receives.*" There is a principle and a promise embedded in that scripture "ask (a question) and it (an answer) will be given to you ... for whoever asks (a question) receives (an answer)." James 1:5-6a says the same thing: "*If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him. But let him ask in faith, with no doubting.*" We need to go to God with our questions! The questions that you have on your heart today ... you will find answers to those questions. The real issue is "who are you going to find the answers from?" When you stuff things that are in your heart that you want to ask God, you end up going to other places to find the answers. So if any of you lacks wisdom, let yourself ask God! We are supposed to ask God questions knowing - convinced of the fact - that He wants to answer our questions! Asking God questions is so exciting!!! Our experience as a student is determined by our initiative. If you sit in the back of the class, you cannot expect to have a front row experience with God! Ask Him questions. Be engaged!

If you are not asking questions, you are not a student. Disciples are students. If you are not asking questions, you are not playing the role of disciple. But today is an invitation. God is saying "what do you want to know about?" You will always know what you are studying based not the questions that you are asking. As disciples of Christ, are you asking questions about His Word and His ways? What questions are on your heart about His Word and His ways - and how that's supposed to impact your life? If anyone lacks wisdom let him ask God! So, God's inviting you today: "what do you want to know about?" In God's view, everyone is invited to be a student! Everyone is invited to ask questions - even if others might think your question is obvious!

Let us be encouraged by looking at some of the questions that people were asking Jesus - you know ... questions that people were asking God Himself while He was here on earth. People asked Him about doctrine, understanding scripture, why certain things worked or did not work, practical questions about where or how to do something, permission to kill others (bad), timing for events, the underlying cause of visible issues, where to start with something they didn't understand at all, and many others ... you are not the first one to have questions for God!!! Ask Him questions - it's fun! You have a relationship with Him. He's your Dad!

Some students are afraid to ask their teacher questions directly so they send a messenger. We often do the same with God - not confident to ask Him a question for ourselves. In the New Covenant, you can go straight to God to ask Him questions for yourself! As believers, Jesus has made us kings and priests to our God. Now consider this: in the Old Covenant, priests ministered

before God on other people's behalf ... but who's the priest now? You! Jesus had made the way so that now you can be before God all the time - and no one needs to come before God on your behalf.

In light of being a priest, read First John 2:27: "But the anointing which you have received from Him abides in you, and **you do not need that anyone teach you**; but as the same anointing teaches you **concerning all things**, and is true, and is not a lie, and just as it has taught you, you will abide in Him." We have the Holy Spirit, Eternal Life, in us as believers! We don't need anyone to teach us because the Holy Spirit will teach us concerning ALL things - not just one topic or a few topics - but concerning ALL things! If you feel like you absolutely NEED someone else to teach you about the things of God then you are not realizing that you are a priest to God yourself. Here's the other side of that ... there are some people in the body of Christ that can ONLY hear from God. That's foolishness. AND, at the same time, Jesus said (in Jn. 16:13) that when the Holy Spirit comes He would lead us into all truth! He is the perfect teacher and He's on the inside of you! God wants to be the instructor in every area of your life! Therefore, don't ask Him theoretical generalities. Be specific! Phrase your questions to God in such a way that you can do something with His answers. God is not like a genie in a bottle that you only get 3 requests of. You have plenty of questions you can ask Him. You don't need to ask just one question that answers all the questions. You can ask as many questions as you need to ask and He will show you! God can speak to you: (1) through His Word. (2) Good teaching. (3) Hearing the Lord directly. (4) Other people (5) Impressions, dreams, etc. that grow in peace over time and check out with the Word of God.

Start asking Him questions about something. So, how do you ask God questions? There is one main thing that allows you to ask God questions correctly: it's about motivation. The motivation for asking questions of God has to be this: ***to be changed by His answer***. Ask God a question with the expectation of being changed by His answer. Remember how the pharisees asked Jesus "by what authority do you do this (miracles, etc.);" Were they wanting to be changed by His answer? Absolutely not! And God didn't even give them an answer because of it! He gave them a coaching opportunity for their heart and they didn't turn to it so He said "neither will I tell you..." Jesus is the perfect example of having the correct heart stance in the Garden of Gethsemane. Jesus said "***Father, if it is Your will, take this cup away from Me; nevertheless not My will, but Yours, be done.***" (Luke 22:42) Jesus asked this very difficult and grace question, but what was His motivation? To be changed by God's answer! He was relationally connected with the Father. He was saying "God if there's any other way, please! But if not, change Me." What's the next thing that happens, angels came to strengthen Him! I think Jesus knew that was His answer.

This is also why Nicodemus' questions were answered so clearly in John chapter 3. Remember, Nicodemus thought that from Jesus' initial comments to him (Jn. 3:3) that he might need to go back into his mother's womb physically. Jesus called him dense effectively, but Nicodemus did not get offended and walk away. Why? Nicodemus stayed because he wanted to be changed by the answer. He was dense, but he wanted to be changed. So then we get Jn. 3:16-17 out of Nicodemus' conversation with Jesus. The whole world has been blessed through those verses that were answers to questions that were asked by a heart that truly wanted to be changed. Proverbs 1:23 says "*Turn at my*

rebuke; surely I will pour out my spirit on you; I will make my words known to you.” If you are willing to turn at the Lord’s words, He will make His words known to you. Jeremiah 33:3 says “*Call to Me, and I will answer you, and show you great and mighty things, which you do not know.*” Raise your hand (and your voice)! He wants to teach you! God does not want to just to puff up your heads without changing your life.

Proverbs 2:7 says that God “stores up sound wisdom for the upright.” I believe God is having to create storage facilities in Heaven for the wisdom that’s available to the saints! Why’s He having to store it up? Because we ain’t bringing it down to earth!!! “*Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, Nor have entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for those who love Him.*” (1 Cor. 2:9) God has prepared special revelation, special inventions, special innovations, special insight for you - with your name on it - in Heaven. Consider this question... What are the things that you are God’s #1 choice for? Do you realize that you are God’s #1 choice to bring impact in certain areas of this world? He’s got your name on certain revelations! God wants to speak, preferentially, through the people that have that territory and responsibility! So what territory do you have? We need to realize that we are not only priests before God, but we’re also kings! Proverbs 25:2 says that “*It is the glory of God to conceal a matter, but the glory of kings is to search out a matter.*” How do you search out matters with God? By asking questions!

Some people have more access to God’s answers than others? When the Pharisees asked Jesus a question in Luke 17, Jesus gave them about 25 or 30 words worth of an answer (1.5 verses), then He turns to His disciples (who have not even asked Him a question) - and gave them 15 straight verses of information! The disciples didn’t even ask a question and they got 10 times more! Look at what Jesus said in Jn. 15:14-15 “*You are My friends if you do whatever I command you. No longer do I call you servants, for a servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all things that I heard from My Father I have made known to you.*” When you are a friend of God, He tells you more! And how are you a friend of God? You are His friend if you do whatever He commands you. If you respond to what the Holy Spirit has told you before, what the Word has told you before ... if you hold fast to that and you act on it, He will give you more.

The Holy Spirit wants to teach us in every area of our life! And one of the ways that you can gain more access to His answers is by being a friend of God! When He tells you something, run with it! When He gives you a revelation from scripture, teach it to someone else. “What I give to you in secret, proclaim on the rooftops!” When He prompts you to go pray for someone with a broken leg, do it! And then the next time there is someone else to pray for, He will prompt your heart again. Or, you can callous your heart over and you become dull and insensitive to hearing the voice of God in your life. This is not about salvation or being loved more or less. We are all loved - Jesus displayed His love on the Cross! But when you want to be someone who can really access His answers in a deeper and deeper way, there is a reality that when you are obedient to what He has already given you, He will give you more. Faithful with little ... given much! Engage with God, inquire in His temple. Ask Him questions!

Points to Ponder . . .

- How can be confident that God wants to answer our questions?
- What is the proper way to ask God questions?
- What scriptures encourage you to take personal initiative in asking Him questions?
- How can we increase our access to God's answers?