

Lesson Eight: Questions

Unlock with Questions: 10:05-10:15, 6:33-6:45 (shorter)

1. Are you good at formulating and asking questions?
 2. Are you shy about answering people's questions, or are you more forthcoming?
 3. Describe how you answer questions. Are you slow? thoughtful? rapid-fire? circumspect? in the moment?
 4. ***What makes a good question?*** What characteristics do good questions have in common?
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Unlock New Thoughts: 10:15-10:45, 6:45-7:15

Rummaging through the entire gospel of John, you can find a unique summation of Jesus' ministry hidden within the questions He asks.

Consider what Jesus is doing with His questions: very often He is revealing something about His identity or humanity or purpose; He is engaging someone to take them deeper into faith; or He is using the question to confront wrong, especially among the religious leaders. Jesus uses questions to clarify, to challenge, and to unveil.

His questions also help us locate our own hearts and minds. We have to ponder our own lives in order to answer Him; we have to figure out what we think, what we believe, and make choices in order to respond.

I also think good questions like Jesus' lead to more questions, and provide room for discussion and exploration. Some questions take us deeper into ourselves; some take us deeper into a topic; some take us out of ourselves completely.

Questions can be used like diagnostic tools. Just as a doctor diagnoses a case through asking questions and examining the patient, so Jesus' questions diagnose us and examine our hearts.

In other words, Jesus' questions are invitations. They aim at the heart. Most of Jesus' questions are relational in nature, some more intimately than others. John gives us a unique perspective on Jesus' relationship with the disciples by

recording *actual conversations*, not just events, so we happily eavesdrop on *what* Jesus asked and *how* people responded.

The majority of Jesus' questions in this gospel are about belief and faith. Several times a question includes, "Do you believe this?" or "How can you believe if you"

Jesus' questions are often open-ended, requiring thought and commitment on the part of the listener. Many of His questions begin with "why." It's interesting: when Jesus asks a **yes or no question**, the answer almost always requires faith.

"There are questions, lots of questions. And it is good to live in the question. A pat answer is closed, it is finished; that's it. It goes nowhere and leaves little room for hope. A question, the mystery, opens the space for us. It is full of possibility. It gives hope of life and even more abundant life. Our faith, solid as it might be, is full of questions. And therefore full of life and hope." (*Living in the Question* by M. Basil Pennington)

His questions often help us determine where we stand, what we think. His questions search us and direct us to look within. Some created confrontation; most created consternation; all were invitations.

Jesus' ministry began this way (John 1:37-42):

...They followed Jesus. **38** Jesus turned and saw them following and said to them, "What are you seeking?" And they said to him, "Rabbi" (which means Teacher), "where are you staying?" **39** He said to them, "Come and you will see." So they came and saw where he was staying, and they stayed with him that day, for it was about the tenth hour. **40** One of the two who heard John speak and followed Jesus was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother. **41** He first found his own brother Simon and said to him, "We have found the Messiah" (which means Christ). **42** He brought him to Jesus. Jesus looked at him and said, "You are Simon the son of John. You shall be called Cephas" (which means Peter).

His interaction with His new disciples began with an invitational question, "What are you seeking?" To answer, they had to locate what they wanted: to be with Jesus, to listen, to learn, to find out if He was The One, the Messiah. They wanted to spend time with Him; so where was He going? His answer is a classic Christian answer to many questions about Jesus:

"Come and see."

And thus begins their relationship and a slow, simmering response to their question: “Where are You going?” Jesus didn’t come right out and say, “Oh, around Galilee, through Samaria, and to the cross. You coming?” He just invited them along so they could stay in the question and discover the answer WITH Him.

Another scenario in which Jesus masterfully used a question is in John 6:1-13:

Some time after this, Jesus crossed to the far shore of the Sea of Galilee (that is, the Sea of Tiberias), **2** and a great crowd of people followed him because they saw the signs he had performed by healing the sick. **3** Then Jesus went up on a mountainside and sat down with his disciples. **4** The Jewish Passover Festival was near.

5 When Jesus looked up and saw a great crowd coming toward him, he said to Philip, “Where shall we buy bread for these people to eat?” **6** He asked this only to test him, for he already had in mind what he was going to do.

7 Philip answered him, “It would take more than half a year’s wages to buy enough bread for each one to have a bite!”

8 Another of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter’s brother, spoke up, **9** “Here is a boy with five small barley loaves and two small fish, but how far will they go among so many?”

10 Jesus said, “Have the people sit down.” There was plenty of grass in that place, and they sat down (about five thousand men were there). **11** Jesus then took the loaves, gave thanks, and distributed to those who were seated as much as they wanted. He did the same with the fish.

12 When they had all had enough to eat, he said to his disciples, “Gather the pieces that are left over. Let nothing be wasted.” **13** So they gathered them and filled twelve baskets with the pieces of the five barley loaves left over by those who had eaten.

Jesus used the question to help the disciples see they could not fix the problem, that they were not enough, that they could not satisfactorily deal with the issue of feeding everyone. Jesus intentionally brought them to a dead end. Has He done that with you?

Then, as they were realizing their own inadequacy, Jesus answered the situation with glorious provision and invited them to be part of the answer. **This is grace.** He still does the same today: He allows us to get to an end of ourselves, then intervenes with grace and provision while we participate.

Another situation:
John 8:1-11

1 ... Jesus went to the Mount of Olives.

2 At dawn he appeared again in the temple courts, where all the people gathered around him, and he sat down to teach them. **3** The teachers of the law and the Pharisees brought in a woman caught in adultery. They made her stand before the group **4** and said to Jesus, "Teacher, this woman was caught in the act of adultery. **5** In the Law Moses commanded us to stone such women. Now what do you say?" **6** They were using this question as a trap, in order to have a basis for accusing him.

But Jesus bent down and started to write on the ground with his finger. **7** When they kept on questioning him, he straightened up and said to them, "Let any one of you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone at her." **8** Again he stooped down and wrote on the ground.

9 At this, those who heard began to go away one at a time, the older ones first, until only Jesus was left, with the woman still standing there. **10** Jesus straightened up and asked her, "Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?"

11 "No one, sir," she said.

"Then neither do I condemn you," Jesus declared. "Go now and leave your life of sin."

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Jesus used questions to make us aware of truth, **to help us get free**, to help us see what He sees and feel what He feels and think what He thinks.

Sometimes Jesus' questions are an invitation into salvation (4:7), the supernatural (5:6), and the miraculous (6:5).

Jesus' questions are confrontational, especially with behavior (7:19, 10:32, 18:21 & 23, +) and belief (9:35, 10:36, 13:12, 14:10, 21:15-17, 21:22).

Jesus' questions can reveal His emotions and thoughts (6:67, 12:27, 14:9). This is another way to get to know Jesus, so pay attention.

As John records his years with Jesus,

*Jesus begins His ministry with a question,

John 1:38: _____

*begins His Passion (the process of His crucifixion) with a question,

John 18:4 and 7: _____

*and ends His ministry with a question.

John 21:22: _____

Unlock the Scriptures/Table Time (see table at end): All of Jesus' questions in the gospel of John are listed here for you. Simmer in them, look up their context, allow them to challenge you.

John 1:38 Turning around, Jesus saw them following and asked them, "What do you want?"

2:4 Dear woman, why do you involve Me?

3:10 You are Israel's teacher, and do you not understand these things?

3:12 I have spoken to you of earthly things and you do not believe; how then will you believe if I speak of heavenly things?

4:7 Will you give Me a drink?

5:6 Do you want to get well?

5:44 How can you believe if you accept praise from one another, yet make no effort to obtain the praise that comes from the only God?

5:47 But since you do not believe what [Moses] wrote, how are you going to believe what I say?

6:5 Where shall we buy bread for these people to eat?

6:61 Does this offend you?

6:67 You do not want to leave too, do you?

6:70 Have I not chosen you, the Twelve? Yet one of you is a devil!

7:19 Has not Moses given you the law? Yet not one of you keeps the law. Why are you trying to kill Me?

7:23 Why are you angry with Me for healing the whole man on the Sabbath?

8:10 Woman, where are they? has no one condemned you?

9:35 Do you believe in the Son of Man?

10:32 I have shown you many great miracles from the Father. For which of these do you stone Me?

10:36 What about the One whom the Father set apart to be His very own and sent into the world?

10:36 Why then do you accuse Me of blasphemy because I said, 'I am God's Son?'"

11:25,26 I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me will live, even though he dies; and whoever lives and believes in Me will never die. Do you believe this?

11:34 Where have you laid [Lazarus]?

11:40 Did I not tell you that if you believed, you would see the glory of God?

12:27 Now My heart is troubled, and what shall I say? 'Father, save Me from this hour'?

13:12 Do you understand what I have done for you?

14:9 Don't you know Me, even after I have been among you such a long time?

14:10 Don't you believe that I am in the Father, and that the Father is in Me?

16:5 Now I am going to Him who sent Me, yet none of you asks, 'Where are You going?'

16:19 Are you asking one another what I meant when I said, "In a little while you will see Me no more, and then after a little while you will see Me?"

18:4 and 7 Who is it you want?

18:11 Shall I not drink the cup the Father has given Me?

18:21 I said nothing in secret. Why question Me? Ask those who heard Me.

18:23 If I said something wrong, testify as to what is wrong. But if I spoke the truth, why did you strike Me?

18:34 Is that your own idea, or did others talk about Me?

20:15 Woman, why are you crying? Who is it you are looking for?

21:5 Friends, haven't you any fish?

21:15,16,17 Simon, son of John, do you love Me more than these? Do you truly love Me? Do you love Me?

21:22 If I want him to remain alive until I return, what is that to you? You must follow Me.

As you ponder these, may you find in Jesus, God the Father, and the Holy Spirit all of the answers to your questions. They are worthy, even when we cannot comprehend their answers.

Lock It In: 11:10-11:25, 7:40-7:53

Job's question and God's answers: Job's questions about his suffering are never addressed: Instead, God asks Job questions. God points only to His own mightiness and holiness expressed through His creative power.

Jesus' answer for **comparison**: "What is that to you? You must follow Me." John 21:22. See slide.

Theme picture for the devotional booklet: locks.

A good question behaves like a key to a locked room that is full of treasures to discover. Will you put in the time, create the space, and pray to enter into the vast, mysterious room of God's great heart?

Lock It Down: 11:25-11:27, 7:54-7:58

Do you see that many of Jesus' questions are relevant today, for you and for me, right now? Spend some time thinking through one of the questions you marked in the table above.

Bonus Features: More Resources; Conversation Starters at the Table or in the Car
I know it sounds obvious ... but ask good questions! :-)

Unlock the Scriptures: Fill in the chart below with missing information.

He asked	To/of whom	Reference	Think more!
		1:38	
		2:4	
		3:10	
		3:12	
		4:7	
		5:6	
		5:44	
		5:47	
		6:5	
		6:61	
		6:67	
		6:70	
		7:19	
		7:23	
		8:10	
		9:35	
		10:32	
		10:36	
		10:36	
		11:25,26	
		11:34	
		11:40	
		12:27	
		13:12	
		14:9	
		14:10	

		16:5	
		16:19	
		18:4,7	
		18:11	
		18:21	
		18:23	
		18:34	
		20:15	
		21:5	
		21:15-17	
		21:22	