



Questions (God Asks) That Deserve an Answer

Introduction:

1. Today is an important day : We begin the series, *“Questions That Deserve an Answer”*
 - I have been looking forward to this for sometime because there is great need to understand our circumstances, culture and our life in light of who God is and what God has revealed about himself.
 - We call that having a “biblical world view”.
 - > The opposite of that would be INTERPRETING / UNDERSTANDING GOD – IN THE LIGHT OF MY CIRCUMSTANCES & CULTURE
 - > Most people today interpret or understand GOD in the light of their circumstances.
2. We need to be a people who UNDERSTAND CIRCUMSTANCES and CULTURE – IN THE LIGHT OF WHO GOD IS and we can only begin to do that by being students of the CREATOR.
3. This series will help us think Biblically about our culture and circumstances:
 - ✓ It helps us as we live and share the gospel of Christ with those around us
 - ✓ It also represents a great opportunity to bring friends and family and those who do not know Christ and who naturally need answers to these questions.
4. As we begin the series “Questions That Deserve an Answer”
 - When God asks a question , He is not looking for the answer, He already knows the answer.

Examples:

- 1) When He said to Adam in Genesis 3:9 “Where are you?”, do you think that God was really trying to figure out where they were? Like “come out you guys this isn’t funny”.
- 2) In Genesis 3:11 when He asked “How do you know you were naked?” – do you think that God was trying to figure out how or why they knew they were naked? No!
5. What we will discover as we work through the scriptures and study a few of God’s questions is that God asks a question to **reveal** something He wants us to learn:
 - Reveal His greatness, His glory, His character and His will for our lives.
 - Reveal our heart, our sinfulness, our dependence on Him, and the true nature of our relationship to Him (or His relationship to us)
6. Today, we’re taking a look at: **The Last Question of Jesus -- John 21:15-19 [READ]**

Input: What do you know about Peter’s life as a disciple of Christ? [Review details]

[various answers – on the mount of Transfiguration, part of the inner circle, walked on water, cut off Malcus’ ear, promised to be loyal, . . . and then denied Christ 3 times (curse and swore)]

7. Q: Can anybody in this room identify with Peter? (John MacArthur titles his chapter in Twelve Ordinary Men, “*Peter, the Apostle with the Food-shaped Mouth*”)

Good News: The encouragement and hope for all of us in this passage is that there is mercy with the Lord! He alone can restore the fallen to usefulness.

- Peter “wept bitterly” over his sin against Christ, but there was not a sense of resolution at this point in his spiritual journey.
 - He had publicly boasted of his level of dedication and commitment – then he had publicly humiliated himself in the denial of Christ.
 - Now, by the great mercy of Christ, we find Peter being publicly restored to usefulness in the kingdom of God. We see Christ the Pursuer – the RESURRECTED King of Kings!.
- How does this take place? Lets look again at the question Jesus asked:

I. The Question Asked: *Do you love me?* (vs. 15-16)

- Our text is well-known for its series of three questions and Peter’s three replies – especially, we need to note the various uses the different Greek words for ‘love’
- Jesus used the word agapa when He said, “Peter, do you love me?” (God’s kind of love—self-sacrificing kind of love) in the first two questions –
 - > Peter responded with a different word “I phileo you” (a brotherly love – not *agapa*)

Note: John wasn’t just mixing up his words, he was recording historically what Jesus said and how Peter responded!
- Jesus used the word *agapa* in the first two questions, and then changed to *phileo* in His third question to Peter!
 - > While Jesus switched the use of His words (to make a point) – Peter, at this point in his life, was honest, and admittedly had a *phileo* love for His Lord
- The whole issue of Peter’s true affection for Jesus Christ is questioned in light of his denial and in the light of his statement in Matthew 26:31-35. [review the context of that situation]
- Our Lord could have asked a number of questions that would have produced the same degree of heart-searching – but He didn’t
 - > Jesus confronted Peter with the 1st greatest commandment (that which a person’s service flows out of – his motivation, etc.)
- the question goes to the heart of Peter’s life, the deepest realities of his soul (his heart!).
 - > Could he honestly say that he loved Jesus Christ in light of what he had done?
- We need to ask the Q: *What was Christ doing with His questions? What was His purpose?*
 - > Obviously, as Peter pointed out, Jesus already knew whether or not Peter loved Him.
 - > Jesus was not seeking information that had skipped past His omniscient gaze – He asked in order to accomplish some distinct purposes.

A. To humble him

QUOTE: “And there are other things that the devil neither can nor will do; he will not give men a spirit of divine love, or Christian humility and poverty of spirit; nor could he if he would. He

cannot give those things he has not himself; these things are as contrary as possible to his nature (Jonathan Edwards on Revival, Banner of Truth, 118).

- We can only imagine the depth of humility cast upon Peter when he was questioned by Christ.
- We need to ask ourselves a few questions:
 - Is that not what we need when in pride or fear of man we have gone our own way and rebelled against the will of Christ, our King, Redeemer, Lord, and Savior?
 - Do we not need to be humbled and broken in conviction concerning our own sinfulness?

Point: Jesus' question is meant to clear away the rubbish in our lives, to get down to the rock bottom of our affections. *Do you love Jesus Christ?* -- that's a humbling question that deserves an answer!

B. To examine his motives – it searches the true intentions of our hearts

QUOTE: “It is well, especially after a foul sin, that the Christian should well probe the wound. It is right that he should examine himself; for sin gives grave cause for suspicion, and it would be wrong for a Christian to live an hour with a suspicion concerning his spiritual estate, unless he occupy that hour in examination of himself. Self-examination should more especially follow sin, though it ought to be the daily habit of every Christian, and should be practiced by him perpetually.” [Charles H. Spurgeon, New Park Street Pulpit, vol. III, 81].

- this gets at the heart and soul of our motivation – what should be our greatest motivation
- no doubt, Peter remembered Jesus answer to the question He was asked: What is the greatest commandment?

> “To love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, . . . “

- Jesus asks the question a third time:

C. To arouse, awaken, and stir Peter to see the gravity of his sin, while at the same moment resting in the greatness of Christ's mercy and power to restore us.

- When we fall into sin and come to the place of admitting our absolute wretchedness, it should serve to keep us out of the same sinful act again.
- For so long, Peter thought that he had no weaknesses, at least not in comparison with the other disciples (remember, “Even if everyone else denies you, I will not”)
- So the question was asked: Do you love me, truly love me more than all of the other disciples as you professed earlier? (Matthew 26:31-35)
 - > Do you not see that instead you are weak and the only good that comes from you is a result of My grace implanted in your soul?

Note: A good question to ask yourself if you are truly repentant would be this: *If you had it all to do over again, would you do the same thing?* If the answer is YES – then you're not repentant!

QUESTION: Do you identify with Peter's position – sometimes prideful, then denying, then repenting, and being confronted with your love for Jesus?

HOPE: “All that the Father gives Me shall come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will certainly not cast out” (John 6:37).

Point: We may falter, we may fall miserably to the bottom, but if we have come to Christ He will not cast us out, but will uphold you by His own hand – cleanse you thru His Word.

- He pursues you and me, as He did Peter, and brings us back into the joy of fellowship and usefulness in His kingdom.
- The searching question, “*Do you love Me?*” causes us to wring your heart out before the Lord, to see our own unworthiness, to feel the horror of our sin; yet to know that in spite of it all because He has given us grace.

Q: What was Peter’s answer to Jesus’ question?

II. The Answer to the Question

- Peter’s response on all 3 occasions of the questioning is ‘yes’ – Yes, he had denied – Yes, he had fallen from usefulness – Yes, he was unworthy to be called a disciple of Jesus Christ.
- But he could say with all integrity of heart, “Yes, Lord; You know that I love (*phileo*) You.”
- This was a moment for Peter to focus on the grace of God that has been given to him – in spite of his lack of *agapa* love, Jesus still has a command for him to obey and demonstrate even that level of love for his Lord

Notice what transpires in his answer.

A. His answer came with honesty and without excuses.

He is confronted with a ‘yes’ or ‘no’ answer to a probing question.

There was no room for offering ‘maybe’ or ‘I don’t know’ or ‘I’m not sure’ to the pointed question, “Do you love Me?”

- I’m sure there are many of us who have been waffling when it comes to this question of your love for Jesus Christ – HE is the One asking US this question!
- Are you honest this morning? Do you love Him . . . even if it’s more of a *phileo* than *agapa*?

B. His answer came in light of Christ’s Omniscience.

- Peter knew that He was speaking with the Omniscient Lord
- We can have one intention in our heart and offer another answer on our lips. No one will not know it . . .but nothing is hidden from Him: our motives/desires/affections – He knows!
- that makes this a very hard question: As the Psalmist say, “Search me O God, and know my heart, try me, and know my thoughts . . .” Psalm 139:23-24
- You see, our love for Christ is a reciprocal love – we love Him because He first loved us. This truth refers to His special love shown to us in saving grace so that we responded to Him in repentance and faith.

Point: * **The love for Christ did not originate in our own personal affections – it was a gift of His grace.** To realize that love for Christ is in our hearts is to rekindle the assurance that we are His and He is ours.

Application: What is evident in your own heart? As this question is asked of you, would your response be as Peter’s, “Lord, you know I don’t really have an *agapa* love for you as you do for me – not in light of all my sin and denials of you!

- But are you growing in that love? Do you really desire to ‘walk in the Spirit and see the fruit of the Spirit in your life – *agapa* /love (self-sacrificing, God-like love for Him!).
- We looked at the question/answer to the question, now let’s finish-up by looking at the:

III. The Command after the Questions

- This served as a reminder to Jesus' previous words in John 15 – if you love Me, you'll keep my commandments!
- Knowing that joy of assurance should always give motivation to press on in the Christian life in obedience to our Lord. It is never a cause for apathy or self-satisfaction.
 - > Those who claim assurance yet have no desire to go on in obedience to the command of Christ are still in their sins.
 - > Our Lord gives no alternative. If we love Him, we will keep His commandments.
- What did Christ command Peter upon profession of his love?

A. Feed the sheep. vs. 15-17

- The words that Jesus uses come from the realm of shepherding. "Tend My lambs....Shepherd My sheep....Tend My sheep."

Point: The command calls upon Peter to exercise the role of a shepherd with the precious flock of our Lord Jesus Christ – no matter what level of love you may have, God wants you to OBEY Him and do what He says.

EXPLAIN - WHO ARE THE SHEEP – our children, those believers God brings in our path.

- One of the lessons in response to this question: You can't keep living in the light of your failure – you need to repent (Jesus said, 'when you have turned back' after Peter made his boastful statement) . . . and get busy obeying again!

Point: * **With forgiveness and restoration to fellowship comes the charge of Christian service.**

B. Be faithful unto death (vs 18)

The Lord unveiled for Peter that he would die a violent death as an older man. Peter had shrunk from death in the time of denial, but he would one day face it again.

According to ancient tradition, Peter was crucified; reportedly he was crucified upside down at his own request.

- Explain about the martyrs down through church history – more in the 20th century than ever recorded – and it's not getting any better (refer to Voice of the Martyrs magazine!)

C. Follow Jesus Christ (vs 19)

- Q: What does that look like? – while the answer to this question deserves a much longer answer, let me summarize the essence of following Him in two areas.

1. Following Christ is an attitude of devotion and true affection which is set upon the Person of Christ!

- It is a following in fellowship with Him. We worship, pray, and seek the Lord as we follow Him. We seek to fellowship with Him. We desire to know Him more intimately. We long for His presence as we worship Him.
- I think John Piper explains it well when he clarifies the essence of what love for Christ is.
 - ❖ Loving Christ is desiring Him beyond his gifts.
 - ❖ Loving Christ is treasuring Him beyond his gifts.
 - ❖ Love for Christ is delighting in Him beyond his gifts.
 - ❖ Love for Christ is being satisfied in Him beyond his gifts.

- ❖ Love for Christ is **cherishing** Him beyond his gifts.
- ❖ Love for Christ is **savoring** Him beyond his gifts.
- ❖ Love for Christ is **valuing** Christ and **prizing** Christ and **revering** Christ and **admiring** Christ beyond his gifts.

2. Following Christ also demands that we understand what Jesus Christ has commanded of us.

- We can only follow Him if we know what He desires of us. This can be found only in the Word of God. .

TRUTH = the reflex of the heart set on Christ is being a doer of the His Word – being obedient.

- This is the "Love Triangle" of 1 John:
 - > God loves us; we love others; and only then is love returned to God.
 - > So John can write, "**Whoever says, 'I love God,' but hates his brother is a liar. The one who doesn't love the brother whom he has seen can't love a God whom he hasn't seen" 1 John 4:20**

Conclusion

- The question has been asked – All of us must respond.
- There is tremendous grace and mercy with the Lord.
- Let's run to Him who alone can restore us from our brokenness and renew us in service to Him.

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Do you love me? John 21:15-19

Introduction:

Input: What do you know about Peter's life as a disciple of Christ?

I. The Question Asked: *Do you love me?* (vs. 15-16)

Cf. Matthew 26:31-35.

A. To _____ him

“And there are other things that the devil neither can nor will do; he will not give men a spirit of divine love, or Christian humility and poverty of spirit; nor could he if he would. He cannot give those things he has not himself; these things are as contrary as possible to his nature (Jonathan Edwards on Revival, Banner of Truth, 118).

B. To _____ his motives – it searches the true intentions of our hearts

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C. To _____, _____, and _____ Peter to see the gravity of his sin, while at the same moment resting in the greatness of Christ's mercy and power to restore us.

Q: Do you identify with Peter's position – sometimes prideful, then denying, then repenting, and being confronted with your love for Jesus?

II. The Answer to the Question

A. His answer came with _____ and without _____.

B. His answer came in light of Christ's _____.

* The love for Christ did not originate in our own personal affections – it was a gift of His grace.

III. The Command after the Questions

A. _____ the _____. (vs. 15-17)

* With forgiveness and restoration to fellowship comes the charge of Christian service.

B. Be _____ unto death (vs 18)

C. Follow _____ (vs 19)

1. **Following Christ is an attitude of devotion and true affection which is set upon the Person of Christ!**

* The essence of what love for Christ is.

- ❖ Loving Christ is _____ Him beyond his gifts.
- ❖ Loving Christ is _____ Him beyond his gifts.
- ❖ Love for Christ is _____ in Him beyond his gifts.
- ❖ Love for Christ is being _____ in Him beyond his gifts.
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- ❖ Love for Christ is _____ Christ and _____ Christ and _____ Christ and _____ Christ beyond his gifts.

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