

Questions



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sitting among the teachers,
listening to them and asking them questions.
Luke 2:46

October Questions

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Scripture-based exploration

- Blue Book chapters: Questions, Fear, Wholeness, Trust
- This list of Jesus' questions from the Gospels:

If you love those who love you, what reward will you get? (Matthew 5:46)

If you greet only your brothers, what are you doing more than others? (Matthew 5:47)

Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to his life? (Matthew 6:27)

Why do you worry about clothes? (Matthew 6:28)

Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother's eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye? (Matthew 7:3)

Do people pick grapes from thornbushes, or figs from thistles? (Matthew 7:16)

Why are you so afraid? (Matthew 8:26)

Why do you entertain evil thoughts in your hearts? (Matthew 9:4)

Which is easier: to say, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Get up and walk'? (Matthew 9:5)

How can the guests of the bridegroom mourn while he is with them? (Matthew 9:15)

Do you believe that I am able to do this? (Matthew 9:28)

What did you go out into the desert to see? (Matthew 11:7)

To what can I compare this generation? (Matthew 11:16)

If any of you has a sheep and it falls into a pit on the Sabbath, will you not take hold of it and lift it out?
(Matthew 12:11)

How can anyone enter a strong man's house and carry off his possessions unless he first ties up the strong man?
(Matthew 12:29)

You brood of vipers, how can you who are evil say anything good? (Matthew 12:34)

Who is my mother, and who are my brothers? (Matthew 12:48)

Why did you doubt? (Matthew 14:31)

Why do you break the command of God for the sake of your tradition? (Matthew 15:3)

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

Do you still not understand? (Matthew 16:9)

Who do people say the Son of Man is? (Matthew 16:13)

Who do you say I am? (Matthew 16:15)

What good will it be for a man if he gains the whole world, yet forfeits his soul? Or what can a man give in exchange for his soul? (Matthew 16:26)

How long shall I stay with you? How long shall I put up with you? (Matthew 17:17)

From whom do the kings of the earth collect duty and taxes—from their own sons or from others? (Matthew 17:25)

What do you think? If a man owns a hundred sheep, and one of them wanders away, will he not leave the ninety-nine on the hills and go to look for the one that wandered off? (Matthew 18:12)

Why do you ask me about what is good? (Matthew 19:17)

What is it you want? (Matthew 20:21)

Can you drink the cup I am going to drink? (Matthew 20:22)

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

John's baptism—where did it come from? Was it from heaven, or from men? (Matthew 21:25)

What do you think? (Matthew 21:28)

Have you never read in the Scriptures? (Matthew 21:42)

Why are you trying to trap me? (Matthew 22:18)

What do you think about the Christ? Whose son is he? (Matthew 22:42)

Which is greater: the gold, or the temple that makes the gold sacred? Which is greater: the gift, or the altar that makes the gift sacred? (Matthew 23:17-19)

How will you escape being condemned to hell? (Matthew 23:33)

Why are you bothering this woman? (Matthew 26:10)

Could you men not keep watch with me for one hour? (Matthew 26:40)

Do you think I cannot call on my Father, and he will at once put at my disposal more than twelve legions of angels? (Matthew 26:53)

But how then would the Scriptures be fulfilled that say it must happen in this way? (Matthew 26:54)

Am I leading a rebellion, that you have come out with swords and clubs to capture me? (Matthew 26:55)

My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? (Matthew 27:46)

Why are you thinking these things? (Mark 2:8)

Do you bring in a lamp to put it under a bowl or a bed? Instead, don't you put it on its stand? (Mark 4:21)

What shall we say the kingdom of God is like, or what parable shall we use to describe it? (Mark 4:30)

Why are you so afraid? Do you still have no faith? (Mark 4:40)

What is your name? (Mark 5:9)

Who touched my clothes? (Mark 5:30)

Why all this commotion and wailing? (Mark 5:39)

Are you so dull? (Mark 7:18)

Don't you see that nothing that enters a man from the outside can make him 'unclean'? (Mark 7:18)

Why does this generation ask for a miraculous sign? I tell you the truth, no sign will be given to it. (Mark 8:12)

Why are you talking about having no bread? Do you still not see or understand? Are your hearts hardened? Do you have eyes but fail to see, and ears but fail to hear? And don't you remember? (Mark 8:17-18)

When I broke the five loaves for the five thousand, how many basketfuls of pieces did you pick up? (Mark 8:19)

When I broke the seven loaves for the four thousand, how many basketfuls of pieces did you pick up? (Mark 8:20)

Do you still not understand? (Mark 8:21)

[To the blind man] Do you see anything? (Mark 8:23)

Why then is it written that the Son of Man must suffer much and be rejected? (Mark 9:12)

What were you arguing about on the road? (Mark 9:33)

Salt is good, but if it loses its saltiness, how can you make it salty again? (Mark 9:50)

What did Moses command you? (Mark 10:3)

Why do you call me good? (Mark 10:18)

What do you want me to do for you? (Mark 10:51)

Why are you trying to trap me? (Mark 12:15)

Do you see all these great buildings? (Mark 13:2)

Are you asleep? (Mark 14:37)

Could you not keep watch for one hour? (Mark 14:37)

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

Didn't you know I had to be in my Father's house? (Luke 2:49)

Why are you thinking these things in your hearts? (Luke 5:22)

Which is easier: to say, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Get up and walk'? (Luke 5:23)

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

Where is your faith? (Luke 8:25)

What is your name? (Luke 8:30)

Who touched me? (Luke 8:45)

Will you be lifted up to the skies? (Luke 10:15)

What is written in the Law? How do you read it? (Luke 10:26)

Which of these three do you think was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of robbers? (Luke 10:36)

Did not the one who made the outside make the inside also? (Luke 11:40)

Who appointed me a judge or an arbiter between you? (Luke 12:14-15)

Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to his life? (Luke 12:25)

Why don't you judge for yourselves what is right? (Luke 12:57)

Or suppose a king is about to go to war against another king. Will he not first sit down and consider whether he is able with ten thousand men to oppose the one coming against him with twenty thousand? (Luke 14:31)

Salt is good, but if it loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? (Luke 14:34)

Suppose one of you has a hundred sheep and loses one of them. Does he not leave the ninety-nine in the open country and go after the lost sheep until he finds it? (Luke 15:4)

Or suppose a woman has ten silver coins and loses one. Does she not light a lamp, sweep the house and search carefully until she finds it? (Luke 15:8)

So if you have not been trustworthy in handling worldly wealth, who will trust you with true riches? (Luke 16:11)

Were not all ten cleansed? Where are the other nine? (Luke 17:17)

And will not God bring about justice for his chosen ones, who cry out to him day and night? Will he keep putting them off? (Luke 18:7)

However, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on the earth? (Luke 18:8)

For who is greater, the one who is at the table or the one who serves? (Luke 22:27)

Why are you sleeping? (Luke 22:46)

For if men do these things when the tree is green, what will happen when it is dry? (Luke 23:31)

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

What things? (Luke 24:19)

Did not the Christ have to suffer these things and then enter his glory? (Luke 24:26)

Why are you troubled, and why do doubts rise in your minds? (Luke 24:38)

Do you have anything here to eat? (Luke 24:41)

What do you want? (John 1:38)

Why do you involve me? (John 2:4)

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

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

Will you give me a drink? (John 4:7)

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

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? (John 5:44)

If you do not believe Moses' writings how will you believe me? (John 5:47)

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

Does this offend you? (John 6:61)

What if you see the Son of Man ascend to where he was before! (John 6:62)

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

Have I not chosen you? (John 6:70)

Has not Moses given you the law? (John 7:19)

Why are you trying to kill me? (John 7:19)

Why are you angry with me for healing the whole man on the Sabbath? (John 7:23)

Where are they? Has no one condemned you? (John 8:10)

Why is my language not clear to you? (John 8:43)

Can any of you prove me guilty of sin? (John 8:46)

If I am telling the truth, why don't you believe me? (John 8:46)

Why then do you accuse me of blasphemy because I said, 'I am God's Son'? (John 10:36)

Are there not twelve hours of daylight? (John 11:9)

Do you believe this? (John 11:26)

Where have you laid him? (John 11:33)

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

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

Who is it you want? (John 18:4,7)

Shall I not drink the cup the Father has given me? (John 18:11)

Is that your own idea, or did others talk to you about me? (John 18:34)

Why question me? (John 18:21)

If I spoke the truth, why did you strike me? (John 18:23)

Why are you crying? Who is it you are looking for? (John 20:15)

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

Do you love me? (John 21:17)

What is that to you? You must follow me. (John 21:22)

(All Scripture quoted from The Holy Bible : New International Version. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996, 1984.)

Non-Scripture Readings

Living Prayer - Robert Benson

Being with Jesus - Jim Branch

Living in the Question - M.Basil Pennington

Waking the Dead - John Eldridge

None Like Him - Jen Wilkin

Artwork for the Creatives

Take one or two of the questions that stand out to you the most and express them artistically.

What picture(s) come to mind when you think of Jesus? Write or draw about this. (From Rebekah's.)

Music

The Poison Tree - Ghostship

Heal Us (feat. Blessing Offor) - Indelible Grace

What a Beautiful Name - Hillsong Worship

Song of David - Ghostship

Hast thou heard him, seen him, know him? - Indelible Grace

Questions to Ponder

Which of Jesus' questions pop off the page or penetrate you to the heart? What is going on inside of you for that question to matter to you? How does His question relate to your life?

What do you notice about how Jesus asks questions? How can you adopt some of His style?

Week One: Do you want to be healed? (Rebekah)

Read John 5:1-15. Try reading it in at least two different versions. This can help you read the passage slowly and with new eyes.

What stands out to you?

What questions come to mind?

Put yourself into the man's shoes that Jesus healed ... what is your daily life like? What are you thinking when Jesus approaches you? What are you feeling when you see this Man coming towards you, when most people avoid you?

I have so many questions when I read this passage! Some are for clarification purposes, while others are for the cleansing of my own heart. Since this month's theme is **Questions**, let's just dig in with some questions of our own (and maybe a few answers).

What does Bethesda mean?

House of mercy, or place for receiving and caring for the sick

Why five porches/alcoves? Is the number significant?

pentē: five

Original Word: πέντε, οἶ, αἶ, τά

Part of Speech: Indeclinable Numeral (Adjective)

Transliteration: pentē

Phonetic Spelling: (pen'-teh)

Short Definition: five

Definition: five

pentē – five, also used in Scripture with added symbolic meaning ("redemption by grace"). [This is derived from the collocations (associations) that "five" has when used in reference to the Tabernacle, Temple, etc.]

Okay, that info just blew my mind up a bit! OH! There are five porches/alcoves and the man will be redeemed by grace, not by his “works” of getting into the pool!!! I did a bit of research and looking in the Old Testament (Exodus 36 & 2 Chronicles 4 specifically), and found that the building of the tabernacle and the temple furnishings consist of multiples of fives. Redemption by grace! Even in the Old Testament, redemption by grace.

“Jesus saw the man and knew.” How? What did He know?

The word used here for **saw** is

eidó: to be aware, behold, consider, perceive. It is the "seeing that becomes knowing", the gateway to grasp spiritual truth (reality) from a physical plane. A physical seeing (sight) which should be the constant bridge to mental and spiritual seeing (comprehension).

And then the “big question”: Do you want to be healed? (Or as some translations say: Do you want to get well?)

I sometimes read this as the man sitting at the pool, waiting to get into the pool when the waters move so I can be healed and think, Did you just ask me that question? And really, I often have a very sarcastic response, “No, I just like the view. The stones are so comfortable to sit on ALL DAY, EVERY DAY. Do I want to be healed? Would I be here if I didn’t want to be healed? Who is this guy asking me this question? Is He for real? Do I want to get well?”

And then I read the next verse, “I have no one to put me in the pool.” Excuse. And my heart stutters. I have a lot of excuses. Do you? Do you ever say that if this or that were different, you would be better at prayer, being in the Word, putting Christ first, etc? Once the kids are in school, I’ll _____. If only I were married, I’d _____. If I weren’t married, I could _____. Once I get this job, then I’ll _____. If I had a nice porch or quiet place to sit and read, if I could find the time, then I would spend more time in the Word. And I’m not even just talking about our spiritual lives; what about our mental/emotional health? Physical health? Once the weather changes. Once I get this promotion. Next Monday (except Monday never arrives!). Excuses. All of them. So, do you really want to be healed? The One who can heal, fully, is standing in front of you. Do you want to be healed?

Do you even know that you are sick?

What do you need to get well from?

Do you want to be healed?

Are you willing? Why? (or why not?)

Is there something that needs to be left behind, something you need to let go of in order to get well?

Think of the man at the pool. He had been there for a long time (some translations say 38 years)! Why might the man not want to get well? What might change about his life if he gets well? Is there some part of him that likes being unwell? At least he knows what his days will look like. Being sick might mean less responsibility, not much interaction with others, no one expects him to “show up.” But being well could mean “showing up,” maybe being part of a family fully, “adulthood.” Sometimes we stay sick because it feels easier. Sometimes it’s what we have known for a long time. Sometimes we are not only sick, but we are blind to our illness(es).

Are there places in your life that you are content with being sick? Is being sick easier than being healed? Have you set up your mat and made a home for yourself there? "Somewhere along the way we have accepted that this pattern - this way of being - is just the way life is, so we have learned to accept it and live with it. We have settled. We have decided that things are never going to get any better, so we settle down and settle into our unhealthy habits and patterns and addictions. We settle for far less than what God truly desires for us" (*Being with Jesus*, Jim Branch).

But look what Jesus did, and still does for us everyday - He heals! "Get up, take your mat, and walk." What does "get up" mean?

Arise/get up: egeiró: to waken, to raise up

Original Word: ἐγείρω

Part of Speech: Verb

Transliteration: egeiró

Phonetic Spelling: (eg-i'-ro)

Short Definition: I wake, arouse, raise up

Definition: (a) I wake, arouse, (b) I raise up.

to waken (transitively or intransitively), i.e. Rouse (literally, from sleep, from sitting or lying, from disease, from death; or figuratively, from obscurity, inactivity, ruins, nonexistence) -- awake, lift (up), raise (again, up), rear up, (a-)rise (again, up), stand, take up.

The fact that the word used is "to rouse not only from sleep or disease but also from inactivity or ruin" is just WOW. My goodness, isn't the Lord amazing! He calls us forth and tells us to wake up; in every sense of the word. Stop sleepwalking through life. Wake up! Stop being inactive (maybe stop playing the victim role?). Wake up! Come forth from the life of death and disease you are living. Wake up! Get up! Walk!

What does "walk" mean?

Walk: peripateó: to walk

Original Word: περιπατέω

Part of Speech: Verb

Transliteration: peripateó

Phonetic Spelling: (per-ee-pat-eh'-o)

Short Definition: I walk, conduct my life

Definition: I walk, hence Hebraistically (in an ethical sense): I conduct my life, live

peripatéō (from perí, "comprehensively around," which intensifies patéō, "walk") – properly, walk around, i.e. in a complete circuit (going "full circle").

to tread all around, i.e. Walk at large (especially as proof of ability); figuratively, to live, deport oneself, follow (as a companion or votary) -- go, be occupied with, walk (about).

Look at Jesus' command to the man (and to us). Arise. Wake up. Walk around. LIVE. He calls us from the death of sickness and illness into life. Conduct your life. Stop living a half-life of sickness. Be healed! Live!

"Sin no more, that nothing worse may happen to you" (v.14). What? What is Jesus talking about here?

It seems that Jesus wanted to remind the man (and us) that it is common to make great big promises, to change completely, when in pain and just after the pain has been relieved. But as time goes on, and the memory of the pain lessens, we all begin to forget. Jesus was reminding us to not forget. To keep living the life of health and wholeness He called us to. But there is a warning and reminder for us here also. He is saying that the wrath to come is far worse than anything we could ever experience here on earth. *So continue to live in My Health, in My Light so that you will not live in eternal pain, disease, and death.*

So, do you want to be healed? Jesus tells us in John 10:10b, "I came that they may have life and have it abundantly." That abundant life does not mean living half-asleep. No half living here. "He calls us to fullness. He calls us to wholeness. He calls us to obedience. He calls us to leave behind whatever "story" we have been content to live in, that is less than what He wants for (and from) us, and to follow him fully and completely"

(*Being with Jesus*, Jim Branch).

Arise ... Walk ... Live ... through and in the Power of the One who is able to bring life from death. Be Healed!
Get up, pick up your mat, and walk!

Week Two: Why are you so afraid? (Summers)

Take a stroll through your imagination with me for a second. You're one of the followers who has been granted up-close-and-personal access to Jesus during His public ministry. You've just sat on the mountainside grass for hours and listened to Jesus teach about His Father's kingdom. His Sermon on the Mount amazes you at its radical call to be salt and light in a decaying and dark world. You are moved by Jesus' concrete description of how to pray to the Father. You lean in as He continues teaching about worry. "Therefore, I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more important than food, and the body more important than clothes?" Jesus pauses to look up and point at the birds flying above the mountainside. You glance up to take them in, too, as He continues speaking. "Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they? Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to his life?" (Matthew 6:25-27)

Jesus continues to speak for a little longer and your heart is stirred. When He's finished, you follow Him along with the crowd and see Him heal a man with leprosy. You know Jesus must be exhausted, but He keeps healing others who are brought to Him. Finally, He hops into a boat with you and His other disciples. You cast off the shore and out into the middle of the lake. Jesus lies down and closes His eyes and you understand His need for rest. You and some of the other followers speak in hushed tones about the wonders of the day.

Suddenly a storm rises up out of nowhere. Lightning tears through the sky. Thunder rumbles so deeply that it rattles your bones. Waves build and climb, water sloshing into the boat. The boat begins rocking and creaking under the weight of the water and the stress of the waves lashing its sides. Fear grips your chest. This is a big and dangerous storm! You look over and see Jesus continuing to sleep on the cushion. How can He be sleeping through this storm? He must be more exhausted than you thought! But you need Him, He will know what to do about this terrifying situation. You make your way carefully to Him, sloshing through the water now inside the boat, and shake Him, saying, maybe a bit too loudly, "Lord, save us! We're going to drown!" (Matthew 8:25)

Jesus opens His eyes and sits up. He looks at you, tenderly and gently, and sees your fear. He recognizes the terror in your eyes. But He also sees your unbelief. "You of little faith, why are you so afraid?" He asks. Then and only then does He speak commandingly to the waves and the winds, who listen to His voice and stop on a dime. The lake becomes calm once again. But your heart continues to toss and churn. You know He has looked deep inside of you, seen what you don't want to admit, that your faith is yet small, that your fear was a symptom of your unbelief.

Whew. I don't know about you, but this account, especially when I personally put myself in it, kicks me in the gut. Jesus's question: "Why are you so afraid?" cuts to the core. What do you mean, Jesus? Why shouldn't I be afraid? The storm is raging, the waves are crashing, the lightning is striking. This is frightening! But I always know that Jesus isn't merely asking about the surface level. No, He is always searching our hearts, exploring our deepest parts of ourselves. Why are you so afraid? Were you not listening to Me earlier in the day on the mount? When I talked about the kind of kingdom God desires, how He cares for even the birds of the air and the flowers in the fields? I have shown you how faithful I am. I have displayed how faithful my Father is. Is that not enough to trust Me, to trust My Father?

Sometimes we let the circumstances of our lives carry greater weight than the truth of God's Word. We know -- at least, cognitively -- that God is good, that He cares for us. However, the storms that surge in our lives blind us and distract us from the truth of His love for us: *Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they?*

Fear is such a blatant enemy of our spiritual life. Fear robs us of our trust, our freedom, our intimacy. It can be so large, so hidden. I'm so grateful that the searching eyes of God see my fear, that it's not hidden to him. I'm grateful that He can look in my eyes and ask me why I'm afraid. Jesus cares so deeply about us, about our most inner selves, that He takes the time to look closely into our hearts to see the places where we are afraid, where we struggle with unbelief. He desires to cast out this fear, if only we will let Him.

Speak your fears to Him. Name them in prayer, which takes away their power. Then ask for God to cast them out. Ask Him to strengthen your unbelief, to embolden the truth of His Word in your heart.

“Jesus came to cast out our fears. He announced a God of perfect love in whom no fear can exist. He himself and all his messengers, whether angels or apostles, say constantly, ‘Do not be afraid.’ But it is far from easy not to let the many real fears make us deaf and blind to the God of perfect love. The news of every day, concrete emergencies of our own daily life and our own inner self-doubt makes us often fearful before we are fully aware of it ourselves. What we truly need is a safe place to dwell, to take off our heavy armour and let the perfect love of God touch us, heal us, and guide us from the land of fear to the land of God.” (Henri Nouwen, from the forward to *Rule for a New Brother*).

We know that we will all go through storms in our lives. The question is, will our faith sustain us? Or will we be gripped with fear? I pray that we can know and trust that God's heart for us is good. He can be trusted even when circumstances look grim, even when the water is sloshing into our boat, because He loves us so immensely and completely.

Week Three: Can you drink the cup I am going to drink?

(Suzanne)

I'm not big on sacrifice. lately I've had to face that I don't like giving up my comforts, even though I think of myself as a hardy woman, a warrior. It's been disconcerting as I see who I really am vs who I want to be.

This came home to me recently (and literally) when I spoke about getting screens and blinds for our new inner city home. And wouldn't it be great to screen in our back porch? The mosquitoes are so dreadful — they love me and I hate them — so we could gather our neighbors and friends more comfortably with a screened-in back porch. And I could make it so pretty with flower pots

From my husband's point of view, that would set us apart from our neighbors who have less disposable income or who rent. They just cannot afford to do such things. Point taken. But oh, I did not like it. I wrestled with the fact that Jesus came to a poor family in an obscure place and gave up the glories of heaven to be with us. When He came, He came like the poor. No upscaling. He came humbly, sacrificially. Point taken again. It was best if I gave up those visual ideals and comforts for my home. And I admit it: it felt like a sacrifice to let them go.

So to our question (Matthew 20:22): an eager, loyal mother wanted her sons to sit at either side of Jesus once He was in heaven, in the seats of Highest Honor. But such exaltation comes at a high cost, for those seats are hallowed ground, and the trio did not understand the depth of what they were asking. In fact, if the mother knew the high cost of those seats — a martyr's death and exile — I'm not sure she would have asked.

Jesus highlights the cost by asking His question: “Can you drink the cup I am going to drink?” The cup of which He spoke symbolized His mission: choosing Earth and people over the glories of Heaven, satisfying God's wrath (because of our sin) on the cross, feeling the stripes upon His back, hearing the mockery and disdain in mankind's voices, living humbly, scorning sin, defeating the

devil, giving love in return for hate, choosing grace and mercy over judgment. Could they do that too?

When Jesus references the cup, to what is He referring? Figuratively, the cup represents the life of someone and/or the judgment of God. Here are a few examples:

You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies. You anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows. Psalm 23:5

I will lift up the cup of salvation and call on the name of the Lord. Psalm 116:13

...let them drink the cup of the wrath of the Almighty. Job 21:20

Awake, awake! Rise up, Jerusalem, you who have drunk from the hand of the Lord the cup of his wrath, you who have drained to its dregs the goblet that makes people stagger. Isaiah 51:17

This is what the Lord, the God of Israel, said to me: "Take from my hand this cup filled with the wine of my wrath and make all the nations to whom I send you drink it. So I took the cup from the Lord's hand and made all the nations to whom he sent me drink it..." Jeremiah 25:15,17

Jesus was going to drink the cup of wrath to satisfy His Father's holy judgment and to open the opportunity for us to experience abundant life in Him.

This little poem runs through my head as I ponder this question:

*Can you pay the price,
can you sacrifice,
can you lose your life,
can you bear their strife,
can you take the pain
for such heavenly gain,
Can you drink My cup?*

This question echoes throughout the boundaries of time to us today.

"We can," they answered.

Jesus said to them, "You will indeed drink from my cup, but to sit at my right or left is not for me to grant" (Matthew 20:22,23).

Every one of the disciples except the Apostle John, who died of old age, was martyred. Every one of them gave their lives for the Gospel. Indeed, they drank the costly cup of Christ as they were crucified, burned, run through with spears, scourged, beheaded, and stabbed.

But there's more: after the cup has been drained, then what? Is that all there is? Suffering, then death, then the new heaven and the new earth? No: the cup of sacrifice here, the reward of honor there. The apostles are highly honored in "everything new" (see Revelation 21).

Hebrews 11:13-16 helps us understand why the apostles and countless Christ-followers after them would choose the cup of sacrifice: *All these people were still living by faith when they died. They did not receive the things promised; they only saw them and welcomed them from a distance, admitting that they were foreigners and strangers on earth. People who say such things show that they are looking for a country of their own They were longing for a better country—a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared a city for them.*

They knew this earth, this time, was not their home. So they lived that way. They lived sacrificial lives, willing to take the cup the Lord handed to them. They lived and died for Him, gladly.

It sounds so simple; so why is it so hard? Why do all these idols and selfish things get in the way of such pure living? That's another question for another day. But here are some questions for you to consider:

How would your life change if you knew this place, this earth, this neighborhood, was not your **true** home? That it was a temporary place in which you were called to love and serve and tell others about the great God who rescued you from sin and death and hell through His Son? Would that simplify your life? Would that knowledge guard you from placing undue importance on things like creature comforts and outfitted homes and clothes and ... (you fill in your own blank)?

Are you willing to sacrifice your safety? Your comforts? Your finery? Your time? Your school system? Your shopping? Your food?

I have a new vocabulary word I'm practicing. **Alembic**: anything that transforms, purifies, or refines.

Being in my new neighborhood is an alembic experience. My God is an alembic God. Jesus asks alembic questions.

Father, transform us into people who, like those in Hebrews 11, are willing to sacrifice for You because we have our eyes on a heavenly country. May we be willing to drink this cup. Amen.

Week Four: Who Do you say that I am? (Rebekah)

"What comes into our minds when we think about God may be the most important thing about us." -A.W. Tozer

Read Matthew 16:13-20. If possible read the passage in several translations to allow you to read slowly and with new eyes.

What stands out to you?

What questions come to mind?

Put yourself into the scene. You are one of the disciples. You have been with Jesus for awhile now - possibly almost 3 years. You have walked with Him. Seen miracles performed. People healed. People brought back to life. And now Jesus asks you, not only who do people say that I am, but who do YOU say that I am.

UHHHHH ... feeling a little awkward here, Jesus.... Why are you asking me this? Who are you?

Ummmmm ... Are you really asking *me*?

You glance nervously around at the other disciples, anyone else want to take this one? And then ... Peter! Thank you Peter! Yes, he speaks up again! Whew!!!

But really, how do you respond? Who is Jesus?

Who do you say that Jesus is? Make a list of who He is to you. Try not to focus only on "church answers" or how others would describe Him. Who is He? Who is He to you?

How would you describe your picture of God? Maybe even draw a picture of how you envision God. When you think of God, how do you picture Him?

What picture(s) come to mind when you think of Jesus? Write or draw about this.

How are these pictures different? How are they similar?

I like how The Message translates Jesus' response to Peter (v.17), "You didn't get that answer out of books or from teachers. My Father in heaven, God himself, let you in on this secret of who I really am." God will reveal Himself to you. Ask Him to reveal to you who He is. Ask Him for a Scripture passage, a metaphor, a phrase, a word, or an experience to give you a picture of who He really is. The question of who is He is like a mirror held up to our own lives. This mirror allows us to "see what our lives tell us about who we really believe Jesus to be. For instance, if our lives are full of worry or anxiety, what does that tell us about what we really believe to be true about Him? Or, if our lives are full of fear and insecurity, what does that say about what we truly believe? Or if our lives are consumed by busyness, hurry, and rush, what does that tell us about our image of him?" (*Being with Jesus*, Jim Branch). What does this mirror/question reveal to you?

Peter answered the question well, but he would spend the rest of his life figuring out what his answer really meant. He knew, as we should, that God is always revealing Himself to us, that we can never get to the end of our knowing of Him. This is one of those tensions we talked about in previous months. You do know God, but you are always learning more about Him. M.Basil Pennington in his book *Living in the Question* says that "when we put someone in a box that we kill the relationship" (p.44). Ask the Lord to open your eyes and your heart to new discoveries about Him. How is He revealing Himself to you today, this week, this month, this year?

Who do you say that He is?

Short Form: If your group can't do all this stuff:

Look through the 135 questions. Read them through, perhaps out loud, as a group. Mark the questions that seem to strike you as significant. Once you are through going through all of the questions, go back through them one by one, exploring each others' answers. May Jesus bless your time together with Him. Did I offer peace today?

Did I bring a smile to someone's face?
Did I say words of healing?
Did I let go of my anger and resentment?
Did I forgive? Did I love?
These are the real questions.

~Henri Nouwen