

FACEBOOK IS FILLED WITH QUESTIONS ONE CAN ANSWER TO FIND OUT PERSONALITY TRAITS, STRENGTHS, AND WEAKNESSES.

OR YOU AND FIND OUT SILLY THINGS, LIKE WHAT DOES YOUR BIRTH FLOWER, OR SNAKE, OR SOME OTHER THING MEANS?

SOMETIMES THERE ARE MATH QUESTIONS, OR ONES THAT TEST OUR LOGIC, OR TEST HOW WE THINK.

ALL OF THESE QUESTIONS ARE MEANT FOR FUN AND ENTERTAINMENT.

HOWEVER, THERE ARE QUESTIONS WE MUST CONTEMPLATE, WHICH LEAD US TO SEEK MORE SIGNIFICANT ANSWERS.

AND, SOMETIMES THE POINT OF A QUESTION IS NOT SO MUCH TO SEEK THE RIGHT ANSWER, BUT RATHER TO ENCOURAGE A PERSON TO THINK THINGS THROUGH.

FOR EXAMPLE-WHEN A NOBEL PRIZE WINNING SCIENTIST WAS ASKED HOW HE BECAME A SCIENTIST, HE EXPLAINED IT WAS DUE TO HIS MOTHER.

HE SAID THAT EVERY DAY AFTER SCHOOL SHE SPOKE WITH HIM ABOUT HIS DAY, AND SPECIFICALLY WANTED TO KNOW IF HE HAD ASKED A GOOD QUESTION.

THUS THE MAN LEARNED THAT GOOD QUESTIONS ARE AS VALUABLE, IF NOT AT TIMES MORE SO, THAN GOOD ANSWERS.

IT IS IN THE ASKING OF QUESTIONS WE LEARN TO ANALYZE WHAT WE KNOW, AND CONTEMPLATE WHAT WE STILL NEED TO LEARN, OR NEED TO DO.

QUESTIONS MAY EVEN CHANGE THE COURSE OF A PERSON'S LIFE.

THERE ARE MANY BIBLICAL STORIES IN WHICH A QUESTION BECAME A TURNING POINT IN THE STORY, OR IN THE LIFE OF SOMEONE, AS THEY CHOOSE HOW, OR IF- TO ANSWER.

THE STORY OF BABY MOSES, FOUND IN EXODUS TWO IS ONE EXAMPLE OF THIS KIND OF THING.

THE HEBREW PEOPLE WERE, BY THEN, ENSLAVED IN EGYPT. BUT PHARAOH AND HIS PEOPLE FELT THREATENED BY THE FAST GROWING POPULATION OF SLAVES.

THE MIDWIVES WERE ORDERED TO KILL BABY BOYS BORN TO HEBREW WOMEN, BUT SOME DID NOT OBEY, AND SO MANY BOYS SURVIVED.

STILL, IF THEY WERE FOUND BY THE EGYPTIANS THEY WERE KILLED.

THIS LED ONE WOMAN TO PLACE HER INFANT SON IN A WATERPROOF BASKET.

THEN, SHE SENT HIM DOWN THE RIVER, WITH HIS SISTER, MIRIAM TO SEE WHAT HAPPENED.

THE DAUGHTER OF PHARAOH CAME TO THE RIVER THAT DAY AND FOUND THE BABY, RECOGNIZING HE WAS A CHILD OF THE HEBREWS.

AND IF ANY EGYPTIAN WOMAN HAD THE POWER TO SAVE THE CHILD, IT WOULD BE HER.

THE BIBLE SAYS SHE TOOK PITY ON THE BABE, BUT NOTHING ELSE ABOUT WHAT SHE WAS THINKING OR PLANNING.

IT IS THEN HIS SISTER MIRIAM STEPS FORWARD AND ASKS A QUESTION THAT MAY VERY WELL HAVE HELPED THE PRINCESS DECIDE WHAT TO DO.

EXODUS 2:7 RECORDS HER WORDS- "SHALL I GO AND GET YOU A NURSE FROM THE HEBREW WOMEN TO NURSE THE CHILD?"

THIS QUESTION PROMPTED A LIFE ALTERING DECISION FOR PHARAOH'S DAUGHTER, THE BABY, AND EVENTUALLY BOTH OF THEIR PEOPLES.

SHE SAID YES, AND MIRIAM GOT THE MOTHER OF MOSES TO NURSE HIM UNTIL HE WAS OLD ENOUGH TO GO TO HIS ADOPTIVE MOTHER.

AND SO WE CAN SEE THE QUESTIONS PEOPLE ASK CAN MAKE A BIG DIFFERENCE!

FURTHERMORE, IT SHOULD BE NO SURPRISE THAT GOD, AS THE BIBLE SHOWS, IS VERY SKILLED IN ASKING QUESTIONS.

FOR EXAMPLE, WHEN THEY DOUBTED, GOD ASKED ABRAHAM AND SARAH- "IS ANYTHING TOO DIFFICULT FOR THE LORD?"

THEN, IN RESPONSE TO JOB'S COMPLAINTS THE LORD ASKED: "WHERE WERE YOU WHEN I LAID THE FOUNDATIONS OF THE EARTH? TELL ME, IF YOU UNDERSTAND."

AND OF ISAIAH, GOD INQUIRED- "WHOM SHALL I SEND? WHO WILL GO FOR US?"

IN ISAIAH CHAPTER 55 WE HAVE AN EXAMPLE OF GOD ASKING A SERIES OF QUESTIONS, THROUGH THE PROPHET, INTENDED TO DRAW HIS PEOPLE BACK TO HIM.

JESUS, ALSO HAD THE SKILL OF ASKING QUESTIONS THAT COULD CHANGE PEOPLE'S PERSPECTIVE AND LIVES.

IN TODAY'S READING, JESUS AND THE TWELVE WERE APART FROM OTHER PEOPLE, WHEN HE QUESTIONED THEM.

JESUS' FIRST QUESTION CONCERNED THE TWELVE'S OBSERVATIONS ABOUT WHAT OTHER PEOPLE SAID ABOUT HIM.

IN THIS WAY HE TESTED HOW WELL HIS DISCIPLES LISTENED TO AND OBSERVED OTHER PEOPLE.

THE ANSWERS THEY GAVE TO JESUS WERE REASONABLE ASSUMPTIONS BASED ON THE PEOPLE'S UNDERSTANDING OF THEIR RELIGIOUS TEACHINGS.

THE RESPONSES SHOW THAT THERE INDEED HAD BEEN MUCH DISCUSSION ABOUT HIM AMONG THE PEOPLE.

IT ALSO SHOWS THAT THE DISCIPLES WERE AWARE OF WHAT WAS BEING SAID ABOUT JESUS.

THEN THE SAVIOR ASKED WHAT WE COULD CALL THE "BIG QUESTION"—"WHO DO YOU SAY THAT I AM?"

IN OTHER WORDS JESUS WAS PUSHING HIS DISCIPLES TO THINK ABOUT WHAT THEY KNEW ABOUT HIM, FROM THEIR OWN EXPERIENCES WITH HIM.

ABOUT THIS INQUIRY THE ORTHODOX STUDY BIBLE SAYS CONCERNING JESUS:

"WHO DO YOU SAY THAT I AM? IS THE GREATEST QUESTION A PERSON CAN EVER FACE, IT IS THE QUESTION THAT DEFINES CHRISTIANITY."

OF COURSE, AT THE TIME, CHRIST'S DISCIPLES HAD NO CLUE ABOUT ITS SIGNIFICANCE.

NOR DID SIMON PETER GRASP THE REAL TRUTH BEHIND HIS DIVINELY INSPIRED ANSWER.

JESUS HOWEVER, DID KNOW THE IMPORTANCE OF BOTH THE QUESTION AND SIMON'S RESPONSE.

THEREFORE IT SHOULD BE OF NO SURPRISE THAT HIS QUESTION, AND THE ANSWER PETER GAVE, IS A TURNING POINT IN THE GOSPEL STORY.

INDEED PETER'S RESPONSE TOLD JESUS MORE THAN THE MAN'S OBSERVATIONS AND THOUGHTS.

IT REVEALED TO HIM THAT HIS FATHER HAD CHOSEN PETER FOR A SPECIAL LEADERSHIP ROLE IN THE CHURCH JESUS WOULD BUILD.

THE SAVIOR KNEW FROM THE ANSWER HE WAS GIVEN IT WAS NOT INTELLECT OR PERCEPTION THAT GAVE PETER THE "RIGHT ANSWER", BUT GOD'S SPIRIT.

WE SHOULD NOTE, HOWEVER, IF YOU READ MORE OF THIS GOSPEL STORY, KNOWING THE RIGHT ANSWER AND UNDERSTANDING IT ARE OFTEN TWO DIFFERENT THINGS.

BUT, FOR THE MOMENT, THE ANSWER ITSELF WAS ENOUGH FOR THE SAVIOR TO DECLARE THAT PETER WAS BLESSED BECAUSE HE HAD BEEN GIVEN THIS INSIGHT THROUGH GOD'S SPIRIT.

PETER WAS ALSO TOLD THIS WAS THE ROCK UPON WHICH JESUS WOULD BUILD HIS CHURCH.

THE QUESTION IS-WHAT DID JESUS MEAN BY SAYING HE WOULD BUILD THE CHURCH "ON THIS ROCK"?

MORE SPECIFICALLY, HOW DOES THE BIBLE REVEAL WHAT JESUS INTENDED?

WHAT JESUS ACTUALLY SAID WAS -PETER'S CONFESSION ABOUT HIM IS THE FOUNDATION UPON WHICH THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH IS BUILT.

THIS DECLARATION, ALONG WITH THAT OF PETER HAVING THE KEYS TO THE KINGDOM, IS SOMETHING THAT REQUIRES FURTHER INVESTIGATION.

FIRST, IT IS HELPFUL TO KNOW THAT THE SCRIBES AND PHARISEES WERE SAID TO HAVE THE KEYS TO THE KINGDOM BECAUSE THEY INTERPRETED AND ENFORCED JEWISH LAW.

THUS THEY HAD THE POWER TO ADMIT OR EXCLUDE PEOPLE FROM THE TEMPLE, WHICH FOR THE JEWS MEANT FROM BEING ACCEPTED OR REJECTED BY GOD.

SO IT IS WITH THIS IN MIND WE MUST LOOK AGAIN AT JESUS; STATEMENT ABOUT PETER, AND THE KEYS.

SOME THINK JESUS MEANT FOR PETER TO HAVE THE ROLE OF OVERSEER OF THE CHURCH ON EARTH, BEING IN CHARGE OF THE MAJOR DECISIONS AND RULES ABOUT MEMBERSHIP, ETC.

AND THE BOOK OF ACTS TELLS US THAT PETER WAS THE FIRST TO PREACH THE GOOD NEWS ABOUT JESUS ON PENTECOST.

HIS SERMON WAS IN A SENSE AN UNLOCKING OF THE DOOR TO SALVATION BY INVITING HIS FELLOW JEWS TO BELIEVE IN JESUS.

BUT WHILE PETER TOOK THE LEAD AMONG THE APOSTLES FOR A WHILE, SOON AFTER THAT, HE DID NOT HAVE EXCLUSIVE AUTHORITY IN THE EARLY CHURCH.

MUCH TO THE CONTRARY PETER HAD TO EXPLAIN HIMSELF TO HIS FELLOW APOSTLES MORE THAN ONCE.

WE ARE ALSO TOLD THAT THERE WAS A COUNSEL OF APOSTLES WHO MADE THE RULES FOR THE CHURCH.

FURTHERMORE, JESUS SAID IN MATTHEW 18:18 THAT THE LEADERS OF CHURCH WOULD HAVE THE AUTHORITY TO BIND AND LOOSE, MEANING FORBID AND ALLOW.

AND SO WE CAN SEE THAT WHILE PETER HAD AN IMPORTANT ROLE TO FULFILL, HE DID NOT HAVE EXCLUSIVE AUTHORITY IN THE EARLY CHURCH.

ANOTHER MISUNDERSTANDING ABOUT PETER AND THE KEYS IS IN THE IDEA THAT HE IS THE GATEKEEPER OF THE "PEARLY GATES"- MEANING HEAVEN.

IN FACT THERE ARE NUMEROUS JOKES AND CARTOONS ABOUT SOULS ENCOUNTERING PETER SEEKING ENTRANCE INTO HEAVEN.

MY FAVORITE ONE IS ABOUT SOMEONE IN HEAVEN WHO COMES TO PETER AND ASKS HIM- "WHO ARE ALL THESE NEW PEOPLE?"

PETER REPLIES-"I HAVE NO IDEA." AND WHEN HE WAS ASKED HOW THAT COULD BE SINCE HE IS THE GATE KEEPER-

PETER ANSWERS –“I DON’T NOT KNOW BECAUSE JESUS HAS BEEN HELPING PEOPLE INTO HEAVEN OVER THE BACK FENCE AGAIN, JUST LIKE HE HAS DONE BEFORE.”

THE BEST PART OF THIS STORY IS- IT REMINDS US THAT IT REALLY IS GOD THROUGH JESUS, AND NOT PETER, WHO IS IN CHARGE OF GRANTING OR DENYING SALVATION AND THUS ACCESS TO HEAVEN.

THIS CONFIRMS THAT THE FOUNDATION FOR CHRIST’S CHURCH IS NOT PETER HIMSELF, BUT RATHER HIS CONFESSION OF JESUS AS MESSIAH AND SON OF GOD.

OF COURSE UNDERSTANDING THE CONFESSION WOULD ONLY COME AFTER CHRIST’S DEATH, RESURRECTION, AND THE OUTPOURING OF THE HOLY SPIRIT ON PENTECOST.

IT WAS THEN PETER PROCLAIMED, WITH NEW AND FULLER INSIGHT, THE WORDS HE SPOKE TO JESUS IN TODAY’S GOSPEL READING.

HE TOLD THE CROWD THAT JESUS OF NAZARETH WAS SENT BY GOD AND DID MIRACLES AMONG THEM.

JESUS WAS WRONGLY ARRESTED AND CRUCIFIED, BUT GOD RAISED HIM FROM THE DEAD-AND EXALTED HIM TO SIT AT GOD’S RIGHT HAND.

THEN IN ACTS 2:36, PETER DECLARES- “THEREFORE LET ALL ISRAEL BE ASSURED OF THIS: GOD HAS MADE THIS JESUS, WHOM YOU CRUCIFIED, BOTH LORD AND CHRIST.”

THEN THOSE PRESENT ASKED PETER A QUESTION THAT HAD THE POWER TO CHANGE THEIR LIVES: “WHAT SHALL WE DO?”

IN OTHER WORDS, THEY WONDERED HOW THEY SHOULD RESPOND TO THE TRUTH OF PETER’S WORDS.

THIS SUGGESTS THEY ACCEPTED THEIR GUILT CONCERNING JESUS OF NAZARETH, AND SENSED THERE WAS SOME WAY THEY COULD MAKE THINGS RIGHT WITH GOD.

IT WAS IN FACT THEIR QUESTION TO PETER THAT OPENED THE DOOR OF REPENTANCE PETER HAD UNLOCKED THROUGH HIS TESTIMONY.

THIS STORY IS ONE OF MANY EXAMPLES OF WHY IT CAN BE BENEFICIAL TO SEARCH SCRIPTURE TO DISCOVER AND THINK ABOUT WHAT QUESTIONS ARE ASKED, BY GOD OR PEOPLE.

INDEED, SCRIPTURE TEACHES THE VALUE OF OUR QUESTIONING, AS A WAY TO DRAW US CLOSER TO GOD.

FOR EXAMPLE, LOOK THROUGH THE PSALMS SOMETIME TO FIND HOW OFTEN THE PSALMIST ASKED THINGS OF GOD.

OF COURSE ASKING DOES NOT ALWAYS MEAN WE WILL GET AN ANSWER WE LIKE, AND SOMETIMES WE DO NOT GET A DISCERNABLE ANSWER.

BUT IN OUR SEEKING AND QUESTIONING, WITH THE HELP OF THE HOLY SPIRIT, WE DRAW NEARER TO GOD, WHO IN CHRIST, HAS DRAWN NEAR TO US. AMEN

SERMON SUMMARY: EXODUS 2:1-10 & MATTHEW 16:13-20

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QUESTIONS MAY EVEN CHANGE THE COURSE OF A PERSON'S LIFE. THE STORY OF BABY MOSES, FOUND IN EXODUS TWO IS ONE EXAMPLE OF THIS KIND OF THING.

TO SAVE HIS LIFE HIS MOTHER PLACED HIM IN A BASKET AND SENT HIM DOWN THE RIVER, WITH HIS SISTER WATCHING. PHARAOH'S DAUGHTER FOUND HIM.

HIS SISTER STEPPED FORWARD AND ASKED A QUESTION THAT MAY VERY WELL HAVE HELPED THE PRINCESS DECIDE WHAT TO DO. EXODUS 2:7 RECORDS HER WORDS- "SHALL I GO AND GET YOU A NURSE FROM THE HEBREW WOMEN TO NURSE THE CHILD?"

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FURTHERMORE, IT SHOULD BE NO SURPRISE THAT GOD, AS THE BIBLE SHOWS, IS VERY SKILLED IN ASKING QUESTIONS, SINCE THERE ARE MANY EXAMPLE OF THIS IN SCRIPTURE.

JESUS, ALSO HAD THE SKILL OF ASKING QUESTIONS THAT COULD CHANGE PEOPLE'S PERSPECTIVE AND LIVES. IN TODAY'S READING, JESUS AND THE TWELVE WERE APART FROM OTHER PEOPLE, WHEN HE QUESTIONED THEM.

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JESUS SAID PETER WAS BLESSED AND IN THIS ROCK HE WOULD BUILD HIS CHURCH, GIVING PETER THE KEYS TO THE KINGDOM. IN JUDAISM THE SCRIBES AND PHARISEES HELD THOSE KEYS.

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