

Questions Pt. 2

Pastor James Foley – Sunday, April 30, 2023

INTRODUCTION

Thank you for joining us. Whether you are here in person or joining via the livestream you are most welcome! Please have a Bible at the ready and be prepared to take notes as you like. We have much to cover in a rather short space of time.

SETTING THE STAGE

NOTE 1 – We are in the midst of a sermon series on the questions Jesus asked throughout His earthly ministry. Did you know that Christ posed some 130-questions in the Gospel record? It is my desire to explore a number of them in this series, as it is my experience that He continues to pose such questions of His people today! Scripture proclaims that...

Hebrews 13:8 (NIV)

8 Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.

NOTE 2 – Last week we considered questions that touch upon matters of faith...

Matthew 9:28b

28 . . . “Do you believe that I am able to do this?”

John 5:6b

6 . . . “Do you want to get well?”

Matthew 8:26b

26 . . . “You of little faith, why are you so afraid?”

Matthew 16:31b

31 . . . “You of little faith . . . why did you doubt?”

Luke 12:25

25 “Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to your life?”

KEY – Let us not diminish the role of faith in the Christian life...

Hebrews 11:6 (Emphasis Mine)

6 . . . without faith it is **impossible** to please God . . .

NOTE 3 – Please review this message and its notes online at www.NewLifeBarre.org.

NOTE 4 – Let us continue with the following slate of timeless and timely questions. Let us delve in...

QUESTION #1

Matthew 16:13–14

13 When Jesus came to the region of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, “Who do people say the Son of Man is?” 14 They replied, “Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, Jeremiah or one of the prophets.”

NOTE 1 – The disciples were continually among the masses surrounding Jesus, so they had certainly had the opportunity to hear the sentiments of the people. I love how quickly the disciples were able to answer herein, as they began to quickly rattle off some heavy-hitters from biblical history (v. 14).

NOTE 2 – It should be noted that there was good reason for the crowds to connect Jesus to such figures. Consider that: a) Jesus had a message of repentance like JTB; b) Jesus was known to work the miraculous like Elijah; and c) Jesus was known to be a man who sorrowed over the condition of Israel, much like Jeremiah, etc.

NOTE 3 – Of course, the Lord did not ask this question in order to ascertain facts. He is omniscient and was amidst the same crowds as His disciples! Rather, I put forth that He offered this question to set the stage for a far deeper, more penetrating question...

Matthew 16:15 (Emphasis Mine)

15 “But what about **you**?” he asked. “Who do **you** say I am?”

NOTE 4 – I always envision a silence falling upon the disciples, with no one making eye-contact with the Lord. After all, this was a far more probing and personal question, and no one enjoys being wrong in a group setting! Ultimately, Jesus knew that the masses had not captured the gravity or significance of His nature and working; to what degree had His inner circle struggled to properly identify Him? This being said...

NOTE 5 – It is in this moment that a voice speaks forth and, as always, it is the voice of Simon Peter...

Matthew 16:16–17

16 Simon Peter answered, “You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God.” 17 Jesus replied, “Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by flesh and blood, but by my Father in heaven.”

NOTE 6 – Against all odds and in an exceedingly rare moment of insight, Simon Peter responded correctly! Sadly, we do not have the time to consider the blessing bestowed upon Peter of this Father-sourced response, but we shall briefly note that He rightly perceived the truth concerning the identity of Jesus: He was the Christ, the Son of the Living God: the anticipated Deliverer and Divine King of Eternal Ages Past who had come for His people in the fulfillment of prophetic Scripture (i.e., far above any preceding prophetic voice and/or emissary)!

KEY – In light of this backdrop and account, we can only wonder...

Q. To what degree Jesus yet asks this simple but profound question many centuries later?

APP – In our time, a great many have varying opinions concerning the person and work of Jesus (e.g., He was a good man, teacher, philosopher, prophet, charlatan, myth, etc.). Yet what say you? How do you perceive Him? Is your response informed by the world or by the Lord in heaven who yet speaks through His Word and Spirit? The manner in which you answer this question will shape your life and, without question, eternity to come. May the inspired response of Simon Peter (v. 16) serve as your faith-filled answer to this most significant of Qs!

TRANSITION TO 2 & 3

FYI – Whereas our opening question (Matt. 16) fosters insight into the identity and work of Jesus as the Christ, the next two queries touch upon our identity and work in Him. Who and/or what are we to become by faith? Let us consider the following accounts and these interconnected questions of Christ in reply...

QUESTION #2

Mark 9:30–32

30 They [i.e., Jesus and His apostles] left that place and passed through Galilee. Jesus did not want anyone to know where they were, 31 because he was teaching his disciples. He said to them, “The Son of Man is going to be delivered into the hands of men. They will kill him, and after three days he will rise.” 32 But they did not understand what he meant and were afraid to ask him about it.

NOTE 1 – Following the Mt. of Transfiguration (2–13) and the deliverance of a demon-possessed boy (14–29), the passage indicates Jesus avoided the crowds in order to invest into His innermost circle of disciples (30–31). Of course, His lessons were difficult to absorb (32), for they centered upon imminent realities well-beyond the expectations and desires of the apostolic band (31)...

Q. What were the apostles “expecting” of Jesus as the Christ?

- A1.** A conquering God-king who would reestablish the nation of Israel.
- A2.** One who would elevate them to positions of prominence and power.

NOTE 2 – Jesus, perceiving this, would work to correct their flawed dreams and desires (i.e., bringing insight into His greater kingdom purpose with an unassuming yet revealing question)...

Mark 9:33–34 (Emphasis Mine)

33 They came to Capernaum. When he was in the house, he asked them, “What were you arguing about on the road?” 34 But they kept quiet because on the way they had argued about **who was the greatest**.

35 Sitting down, Jesus called the Twelve and said, “Anyone who wants to be first must be the very last, and the servant of all.” 36 He took a little child whom he placed among them. Taking the child in his arms, he said to them, 37 “Whoever welcomes one of these little children in my name welcomes me; and whoever welcomes me does not welcome me but the one who sent me.”

NOTE 3 – The disciples believed that following Christ would lead to elevation, and to a degree they were right; it was just elevation of a different type. They would come to learn that true greatness does not consist of shouting orders from vaunted seats of power, but operating in a spirit of humble service unto the very least (i.e., the child in the arms of Christ cf. vs. 36–37).

NOTE 4 – To what degree does the Lord ask us a similar question: “What are you arguing or fussing about?” That is, “What are you giving yourselves to and does it align with my greater kingdom purposes in the earth? Do you realize how I define greatness, what I define as a life successfully-lived, and to whom I have called you? Such continue to be exposing questions and, much like the disciples, we are rather slow on the uptake (v. 32)...

KEY – Mercifully our Lord is happy to repeat or reaffirm critical lessons for our benefit and/or spl. maturation...

QUESTION #3

John 13:1–5

1 It was just before the Passover Festival. Jesus knew that the hour had come for him to leave this world and go to the Father. Having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end. 2 The evening meal was in progress, and the devil had already prompted Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot, to betray Jesus. 3 Jesus knew that the Father had put all things under his power, and that he had come from God and was returning to God; 4 so he got up from the meal, took off his outer clothing, and wrapped a towel around his waist. 5 After that, he poured water into a basin and began to wash his disciples' feet, drying them with the towel that was wrapped around him.

Q. What do we see in this selection (i.e., simple-and-summary)?

A. Christ taking on the work of a servant as an expression of His love.

NOTE 1 – I do not believe we understand the biz. nature of this activity, as we are far removed culturally. However, the response of Simon Peter reveals that this activity of Jesus violated every acceptable social norm!

John 13:6, 8 (Emphasis Mine)

6 He [Jesus] came to Simon Peter, who said to him, "Lord, are you going to wash my feet?" . . . 8 "**No**," said Peter, "you shall **never** wash my feet."

NOTE 2 – Peter rightly understood the washing of feet was the work of a house-servant (i.e., the least of all). Such was not the work of the master of the house who hosted the meal; hence his response. What Peter failed to realize was (again) the nature of Jesus' greatness and the impact such was to have on all who confess Him! Jesus would work to address this in kind...

John 13:12–17

12 When he had finished washing their feet, he put on his clothes and returned to his place. "Do you understand what I have done for you?" he asked them. 13 "You call me 'Teacher' and 'Lord,' and rightly so, for that is what I am. 14 Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet. 15 I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you. 16 Very truly I tell you, no servant is greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him. 17 Now that you know these things, you will be blessed if you do them.

NOTE 3 – Christ Jesus asked His own of centuries past: "Do you understand what I have done for you?" (v. 12). Jesus needed His own to recognize the gravity of what had transpired (i.e., beyond the mere washing of feet)! He needed them to realize that this act of humble service was to set for them an enduring example, to be oft imitated and replicated long after His Return to the Father. His call to sac. service was not a one-off or minor teaching to be casually cast aside, but a critical aspect of truly being His...

NOTE 4 – I posit that Christ still poses this query of those who profess faith by Him. To what degree do we understand that the selflessness and sacrifice evident in the life of Christ (e.g., foot washing, etc.) sets forth an enduring example that we are to embrace? I believe He still calls us to perceive the gravity of what He has done in times past, that it might find and fuel contemporary application. Those who would pursue connection with Him are invariably called to minister in ways beyond our comfort. Yet the blessing!

Q1. To what degree are we committed to serving UNTO the least of these? (i.e., Children, etc.)

Q2. To what degree are we committed to serving AS the least of these? (i.e., House-Servant)

TRANSITION TO 4 & 5

FYI – Clearly our ways are not His ways, and our nature struggles with His higher call unto sacrificial service. Serving the Lord is not easy, and it does come with a cost. Those who profess Christ must be willing to operate as servants in His Name. Accordingly, the remaining questions deal with matters of cost...

QUESTION #4

NOTE 1 – Matthew chapters 5–7 contain what is commonly referred to as the “Sermon on the Mount.” Herein, Christ outlines the ways of His kingdom, establishing what it means to serve Him in the newness of life. Some of His most challenging words re. the cost of discipleship are found herein, with calls like the following....

Matthew 5:43–48

43 “You have heard that it was said, ‘Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ 44 But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, 45 that you may be children of your Father in heaven. He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. 46 If you love those who love you, what reward will you get? Are not even the tax collectors doing that? 47 And if you greet only your own people, what are you doing more than others? Do not even pagans do that? 48 Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.”

Q. Did you catch the question(s) of Christ buried within this selection?

Matthew 5:46–47

46 If you love those who love you, what reward will you get? Are not even the tax collectors doing that? 47 And if you greet only your own people, what are you doing more than others? Do not even pagans do that?

NOTE 2 – These queries indicate that our sense of commitment, charity and service are to go well beyond the norms and standards of the world around us. This is difficult, yet this is what it means to be a Christ-follower! Based upon previous portions of Scripture we have noted, you may find yourself willing to serve the least (e.g., children – cf. Mark 9). You may even find yourself willing to wash the dirty feet of your brethren (cf. John 13). Yet to what degree are you willing to so treat your enemies, in accordance with the nature of our God...

Matthew 5:43–44

43 “You have heard that it was said, ‘Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ 44 But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, 45 that you may be children of your Father in heaven.

NOTE 3 – Jesus’ call to serve or love is not limited in the ways we naturally limit them; they are boundless. Honestly, they border on nonsensical to the earthly-minded man or woman, for who could ever love like this? Yet perhaps this is the point! We can only love as His example and life flows in and through us.

NOTE 4 – Before we seek to deflect or downplay our obligation to even our enemies, thinking that perhaps Jesus misspoke or overstated His case, I would offer the following. Reflecting back upon our previous passages (cf. John 13), note the men whose feet Jesus washed as an act of service: a) one ultimately betrayed Him (Judas); b) one imminently denied Him (Simon Peter); and nine would shortly abandon Him (the Nine). However, He washed!

Q. How can we not do the same in accordance with His will and desire?

QUESTION #5

NOTE 1 – Let us conclude with a selection from the Gospel of John (i.e., wherein Christ offered a difficult call)...

John 6:53–57

53 Jesus said to them, “Very truly I tell you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you. 54 Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise them up at the last day. 55 For my flesh is real food and my blood is real drink. 56 Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood remains in me, and I in them. 57 Just as the living Father sent me and I live because of the Father, so the one who feeds on me will live because of me.

NOTE 2 – Though time does not permit us to “unpack” this rather enigmatic call (i.e., a call to faith in Christ), let us consider that these words put-off much of His audience, including many within the ranks of His disciples. Knowing this, Jesus asked a rather piercing question. Consider...

John 6:60–61

60 On hearing it, many of his disciples said, “This is a hard teaching. Who can accept it?” 61 Aware that his disciples were grumbling about this, Jesus said to them, “Does this offend you?”

NOTE 3 – The answer was a resounding YES, in light of what Scripture reveals in the subsequent text...

John 6:66 (Emphasis Mine)

66 From this time many of his **disciples** turned back and **no longer followed him**.

NOTE 4 – It would seem that the ministry of Christ was at a crossroads. Would Jesus acquiesce to the whims of the crowds, augmenting or downplaying His teaching to make it more palatable to the once adoring crowds OR would Jesus continue in His ministry (i.e., even if it meant losing fans)? We who know the rest of the story know Jesus chose to serve His Father despite the cost...

KEY – Yet Jesus directs one more question to His innermost circle of followers before moving on...

John 6:67

67 “You do not want to leave too, do you?” Jesus asked the Twelve.

NOTE 5 – This question had to be answered! Would the Twelve fold and abandon ship or press on in service? Despite His difficult words, would they carry on and trust (i.e., even if He made little sense in the short term)? Their answer is chronicled in the pages of Scripture...

John 6:68–69

68 Simon Peter answered him, “Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. 69 We have come to believe and to know that you are the Holy One of God.”

APP – Yet what of you? Jesus’ words remain difficult for many. His Word at times seems intolerant and radical. It may be easier to serve a Christ made in our own image (i.e., One who endorses whatever is trendy, acceptable and sensible within our context, yet no such option exists. His Word is forever settled in heaven, meaning we can choose to abandon or desert Jesus, but never change Him or His ways. We have only to yield. It is my hope in seasons of offense that your reply will match that of Simon Peter and the disciples (vs. 68–69)!

SUMMATIONS

KEY – In summary...

Matthew 16:15b

15 “Who do you say I am?”

Q1. Are you willing to embrace biblical revelation re: His nature and work?

Mark 9:33b

33 . . . “What were you arguing about on the road?”

Q2. Are you willing to let Him redefine your life’s purpose and sp. trajectory?

John 13:12b

12 . . . “Do you understand what I have done for you?”

Q3. Are you willing to consider and apply the example He has set forth for you?

Matthew 5:46–47

46 “If you love those who love you, what reward will you get? Are not even the tax collectors doing that? 47 And if you greet only your own people, what are you doing more than others? Do not even pagans do that?”

Q4. Are you willing to serve Christ, even if it means loving the most unlovable?

John 6:67a

67 “You do not want to leave too, do you?”

Q5. Are you willing to embrace His teaching if-and-when it serves to offend?

CONCLUSION

NOTE 1 – Feel free to give either in person or online at www.NewLifeBarre.org.

NOTE 2 – Check out our website for any of our beyond Sunday ministries (MM, WM & CYC).

NOTE 3 – National Day of Prayer this Thursday at Noon. Prayer Meeting at 6:30pm on Thursday PM.

NOTE 4 – Potluck Supper taking place immediately after this Service. May God bless our time of connection!

2 Corinthians 13:14

14 May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.