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# QUESTIONS JESUS ASKS



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# GETTING THE MOST OUT OF QUESTIONS JESUS ASKS

**O**n a recent trip, we drove past a church with a banner out front that said, “Got questions? God has them too.”

Our first reaction was to wonder why God would have questions about anything. Then we remembered questions God asked people in the Old Testament and questions Jesus (God incarnate) asked people in the New Testament.

In his book *Jesus Is the Question*, Martin B. Copenhaver maintains that in the Gospels Jesus asks 307 questions, is asked 183 questions, and gives direct answers to only eight of the 183 questions he is asked. While we have not checked out the numbers, even a quick reading of the Gospels shows that Jesus preferred to ask questions rather than to answer them directly. Jesus, says Copenhaver, is no Answer Man.

Instead, it is the questions Jesus asks that have particular power to engage us, especially over time. Some of Jesus’ questions are straightforward, but many more of Jesus’ questions are more like his parables. There is more than one way to interpret them. We can see something different each time we encounter them. They are evocative—that is, able to evoke something in us. The questions have a power to move us, and often to a place we have not been before.\*

That banner in front of the church we drove by was probably meant to stir up interest in a sermon series on the questions of God. But our conversation in the car that day eventually led to the LifeGuide Bible Study *Questions God Asks* and this LifeGuide Bible Study, *Questions Jesus Asks*. Note that the titles are present tense: *asks* rather than *asked*. We believe that through conscience, Scripture, and circumstances, the Lord still asks us these same questions today.

Sadly, we cannot recall the name of the church or even the name of the town where we saw the banner. But whoever put it up, wherever it

was, thank you. We hope it brought good results for your church, your community, and the kingdom of God.

### **SUGGESTIONS FOR INDIVIDUAL STUDY**

1. As you begin each study, pray that God will speak to you through his Word.
2. Read the introduction to the study and respond to the personal reflection question or exercise. This is designed to help you focus on God and on the theme of the study.
3. Each study deals with a particular passage so that you can delve into the author's meaning in that context. Read and re-read the passage to be studied. The questions are written using the language of the New International Version, so you may wish to use that version of the Bible. The New Revised Standard Version is also recommended.
4. This is an inductive Bible study, designed to help you discover for yourself what Scripture is saying. The study includes three types of questions. Observation questions ask about the basic facts: who, what, when, where, and how. Interpretation questions delve into the meaning of the passage. Application questions help you discover the implications of the text for growing in Christ. These three keys unlock the treasures of Scripture.

Write your answers to the questions in the spaces provided or in a personal journal. Writing can bring clarity and deeper understanding of yourself and of God's Word.

5. It might be good to have a Bible dictionary handy. Use it to look up any unfamiliar words, names, or places.
6. Use the prayer suggestion to guide you in thanking God for what you have learned and to pray about the applications that have come to mind.
7. You may want to go on to the suggestion under "Now or Later," or you may want to use that idea for your next study.

### **SUGGESTIONS FOR MEMBERS OF A GROUP STUDY**

1. Come to the study prepared. Follow the suggestions for individual study mentioned above. You will find that careful preparation will greatly enrich your time spent in group discussion.

2. Be willing to participate in the discussion. The leader of your group will not be lecturing. Instead, he or she will be encouraging the members of the group to discuss what they have learned. The leader will be asking the questions that are found in this guide.
3. Stick to the topic being discussed. Your answers should be based on the verses that are the focus of the discussion and not on outside authorities such as commentaries or speakers. These studies focus on a particular passage of Scripture. Only rarely should you refer to other portions of the Bible. This allows for everyone to participate in in-depth study on equal ground.
4. Be sensitive to the other members of the group. Listen attentively when they describe what they have learned. You may be surprised by their insights! Each question assumes a variety of answers. Many questions do not have “right” answers, particularly questions that aim at meaning or application. Instead the questions push us to explore the passage more thoroughly.

When possible, link what you say to the comments of others. Also, be affirming whenever you can. This will encourage some of the more hesitant members of the group to participate.
5. Be careful not to dominate the discussion. We are sometimes so eager to express our thoughts that we leave too little opportunity for others to respond. By all means participate! But allow others to also.
6. Expect God to teach you through the passage being discussed and through the other members of the group. Pray that you will have an enjoyable and profitable time together, but also that as a result of the study you will find ways that you can take action individually or as a group.
7. Remember that anything said in the group is considered confidential and should not be discussed outside the group unless specific permission is given to do so.
8. If you are the group leader, you will find additional suggestions at the back of the guide.

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\*Martin B. Copenhaver, *Jesus Is the Question* (Nashville: Abingdon, 2014), 97.

# WHAT DO YOU WANT?

*John 1:29-42*

**T**oday a white flag appeared on the strip of grass between our sidewalk and the street. It marks where the city plans to plant a tree. The thing is, we opted out of the tree-planting program. Two phone calls and an email to let the city know, and we still got the white flag. We are all for trees and tree planting, but our front yard is already too shady, with a large maple overshadowing our flowers and shrubs. We wish the city had asked us “What do you want?” or in this case “What do you *not* want?”

When God incarnate asks “What do you want?” the issues are more serious than whether we want a tree planted in the front yard. The question forces us to examine our deepest desires.

**Group Discussion.** Consider the question “What do you want out of life?” How would you have answered that question ten years ago? How has your answer changed since then (if it has)?

**Personal Reflection.** To what extent do you feel you have received what you want out of life?

This study’s Scripture passage has no parallel in the other three Gospels. It reveals that the brothers Andrew and Simon Peter had already met Jesus before he specifically called them to be his disciples. It also shows that Andrew was already a disciple of John the Baptist. Andrew’s companion here is not named; he could be the apostle John who avoids naming himself throughout the Gospel. Andrew lost no time in introducing Peter to Jesus. The two brothers must have continued their fishing business together until they decisively left their nets to follow Jesus after the miraculous catch of fish (Mark 1:16-18).  
*Read John 1:29-42.*



6. Although the two disciples didn't answer directly, how does their response serve as a form of answer (vv. 38-39)?

7. When non-Christians begin to show interest in Christ, what are some things they may be looking for?

8. In verses 39-42, what evidence do you see that Andrew and the other person found—or didn't find—what they were looking for?

9. What was the immediate result of Andrew's encounter with Jesus (vv. 41-42)?

10. Why do you think Andrew was so definite about Jesus' identity as the Messiah (v. 41)?

11. If right now Jesus asked you “What do you want?” or “What are you looking for?” would you be comfortable or uncomfortable? Explain.

12. How does your daily life reflect what you want most?

13. How would you like to revise what you want most?



*Pray that you will want what Christ wants for yourself and for others.*

#### **NOW OR LATER**

Study Matthew 6:25-34 and Luke 12:22-34 in which Jesus emphasizes seeking the kingdom of God above anything else. These familiar passages may be hard to read with fresh eyes. Try to read them in light of the contrast between what we consider most important and what Jesus considers most important.

Study Psalm 16 in which David rejoices in what the Lord has provided and rejects other avenues of gain.

Study Philippians 3:7-11 and 4:10-20 in which Paul expresses ready acceptance of what he has given up for Christ and contentment with what Christ has provided.