

Great *Question*



Great leaders ask great questions. During His ministry on earth, Jesus asked about three times more questions than He answered. His questions still have the power to pull us out of our comfort, out of our overconfidence, out of our settledness in our world and into greater knowledge of His Kingdom. Jesus' questions can shake us up and help to reset our lives.

GREAT QUESTION • Luke 8:22–25 • Tim McConnell • July 14, 2019

Jesus asked more questions than he answered. Somewhere around 10 times more, depending on how you measure. The questions Jesus asked reset lives. They were meant to shake the person up and get them back on track. They are great questions. And they are a great encouragement, because they remind us that God wants to guide and direct us. God doesn't want to leave you to wander off in the wrong direction. God is ready to reorient your heart and mind, to get you back on track. Jesus' great questions are a big help. Today we want to sit with this great question from Jesus: Where is your faith?

Here's how a conversation went recently between me and a family member. "Tim, you really should send a card. That's a big event for her and it should be recognized." "Right. You're right. Could you send me a reminder?" "No, you'll do it. I know you will." "You do? Wow, you really have a lot of faith in me to remember that." "No," my family member said, "but I know your wife." Names have been withheld to protect the innocent. Where you put your faith matters. We all have faith. It isn't a matter of having faith or not having faith. The truth is we all live by faith. We believe and trust things before they prove out. We have to. It's the way of human life to live with some measure of faith. The question is not "Do you have faith?" but "What is the object of your faith?" Where is your faith? Have you placed your faith in a reliable, dependable deliverable? Where is your faith? If your faith is in the wrong thing, or the wrong person, you will suffer. When you put your faith in the wrong thing, bad stuff happens. When your faith is in the finite your future is limited. "Where is your faith?" asks Jesus.

In the middle of Luke we read this account: "One day Jesus said to his disciples, 'Let us go over to the other side of the lake.' So they got into a boat and set out" (Luke 8:22). Simple enough. Jesus says let's do something, we do it. Great start. Boats were common forms of quick transportation and Jesus' friends were mostly fisherman and others well-acquainted with these little vessels, so no problem. But, when you are in the boat with Jesus anything can happen. This is the first act of faith—getting in the boat. When you get in a boat, it's all in. You can't leave one foot on the shore. You really don't want to try either. One foot on the dock and one foot on the boat doesn't

go well for anyone. It's all in or all out. I wonder sometimes if that's why there are so many boat stories in Jesus' life. All in or all out. Which is it? So they got in the boat and set out. It's the first act of faith in the story.

"As they sailed, he fell asleep. A squall came down on the lake, so that the boat was being swamped, and they were in great danger" (Luke 8:23). Jesus sleeps in the storm. He sleeps like a baby. I take great comfort in that. Jesus is never out of control. No matter how anxious I become about my situation, Jesus is not alarmed. That's a second picture of faith, isn't it? But the disciples have a different take on the storm. "The disciples went and woke him, saying, 'Master, Master, we're going to drown!'" (Luke 8:24a). Now we shouldn't underestimate the storm or the seriousness of the threat. Luke tells us they were in grave danger. Luke is a measured thinker. He's not given to exaggeration, and his gospel account is based on interviews and research. That means he looked into it. He got corroborating evidence from a few experts—this was a serious storm. The disciples were no land-lubbers either. They were used to living on the water and some of them were professional fishermen. They worked on the water every day. They knew what was up. The danger was real. Now, the first thing they would have done would be to manage the storm, pilot the boat and use their skills and expertise to survive. It would not have occurred to them first to wake the Rabbi. That may have been last on their list. And you know that's a little insulting sometimes? We preachers have more practical knowledge than we get credit for. I know how to change the oil in my car—I choose not to, that's all. Anyway, "wake the Rabbi" was not step one. "Wake the carpenter" wasn't step one either. They were confident in their own devices ... until they weren't.

How long did they struggle under their own means to keep the ship afloat before somebody said, "What about Jesus? Should we maybe turn to Him?" That's the third picture of faith: faith in my own resources and abilities. They believed more in themselves than in Jesus. Finally they turned to Him: "The disciples went and woke him, saying, 'Master, Master, we're going to drown!'" (Luke 8:24a). Look now, they wake Jesus and tell him the future. "We are going to drown." Because their faith is in their own resources and

abilities, they are confident that they can predict the outcome. They can see the future, and the future is bleak. We are going to drown. According to all my calculations, all my knowledge and experience, all I know—we are going to drown. When your faith is in the wrong thing, your future is limited.

They finally turned to Jesus. What did Jesus do? “He got up and rebuked the wind and the raging waters; the storm subsided, and all was calm” (Luke 8:24b). Do you want to talk to Jesus about your problems or do you want Jesus to talk to your problems? I want Jesus to talk to my problems. Jesus stood up, put the storm to rest like a disobedient child and took a minute to teach those He dearly loves. Here comes the great question: “Where is your faith?” he asked his disciples” (Luke 8:25a). Where is your faith? He doesn’t ask it to shame them or to rebuke them or to berate them. That’s not what Jesus is about. He isn’t like that. But talk about a teachable moment. This is the right time to ask a great question to reset their lives. They have just experienced the unique power of Jesus to grab hold of the situation, calm the storm and change everything at once. Are you sure you want all your faith in your own capabilities? Didn’t that leave you a little short just now? Is this the kind of fear you want to live in regularly? Jesus wants to move His disciples from fear to faith—and faith in the right object of faith; the only object of faith that can carry the day and bear the weight of the hopes and expectations of the human spirit. Jesus asks a great question to reset these disciples’ lives, to reset our lives. Where is your faith?

False objects of faith creep into our lives silently. In Christian terms we call them idols. An idol is anything you put your faith in that isn’t God. They creep into even a Christian disciples’ life. I heard a sad story recounted by pastor Chip Ingram a few weeks ago. He had a Christian friend who was a billionaire hedge-fund manager. This man was, with Chip and a few others, a founding member of a new church plant near Atlanta. In a big way, his resources and his generosity were making it happen. Well, his friend disappeared for a week. Chip said eventually they found him in his cabin in the mountains of Georgia. They learned that his fund had decreased dramatically, it was losing value, losing ground and he had hid it and lied to cover it up. They found him dead in his cabin with

a discharged shotgun and a note that simply said, “Sorry I let everyone down.” His life was leaning on a false foundation. This Christian man had put his faith in something other than God. He had put his faith in his wealth and suddenly his only value was his checkbook and the ways he could make things happen in the world, even for the church, through money. Even for believers, we must keep our guard up against false idols, against unworthy objects of our faith.

So, where is your faith? I want to give you a few questions this morning as a kind of checklist. Has something crept into your life that you value more than Jesus? Has an idol crept into your heart? Is your faith falsely placed? Here are a few questions to ask. Many of these come from Tim Keller’s book, *Counterfeit Gods*. I recommend reading that or a book like that to sift out a few idols that may be competing for your faith. Here are the questions: What is the last thing on your mind when you go to sleep? What is the first thing you check on in the morning when you wake? Where do you derive your meaning and identity? What can set you off in an uncontrollable rage or unusual despondency? What is it you don’t believe you could live without—literally, you would rather die than lose it? What do you fear the most? What gives you unmanageable feelings of guilt or shame? Where is your faith?

There are lots of potential answers, aren’t there? Even for those of us who say Jesus is Lord and swear that God is at the center of our lives, things creep in and take up space. Is it work? Is that where your identity and purpose lies? It can keep you going for awhile, particularly if it’s a rewarding job that gives you some positive attention and feedback from others. Work can keep a life going; it does for many people. You know when you’ll find out that you made work an idol? About four to six weeks into retirement! Ask someone here at church about that. “I had no idea my identity was so wrapped up in work.” It’s not enough. Is it money? You can get addicted to that. There’s never enough, you know. It never reaches enough. Money will leave you short. Is it your body? Or sex? We keep these sermons PG, thank you, but for many people there is no end to the workouts, the diets, the surgeries, anything to keep the body right. We all know time is going to catch up with us! Is your faith in your physical life? There are more possibilities than just these three.

Some make an idol out of the success track. Kids, this can be you. You get so wrapped up in doing the next thing to get the next piece of the college application squared away that when the dream school rejects you, it's hard to know how to move forward. Or your online life gets to be so important to you that when your social media persona takes a hit or you are trolled or bullied, you don't know if you can survive it. Where is your faith?

See, here's how an idol works. A false god demands greater and greater sacrifice with lesser and lesser return. It's hard to get enough of what almost satisfies. These false gods always have a promise around the next bend, over the next hill, just past the next necessary sacrifice, that's where satisfaction is found. It's hard to get enough of what almost satisfies. Before you know it, you are chained to an idol. Jesus asks "Where is your faith?" not to make us feel bad or make us feel guilty about where our heart is, but to break us free from false idols. The object of your faith becomes the object of your worship. The object of your faith is where you pour out your devotion. If money is all there is to you, you will worship money. If the physical is all there is to you, you will worship your body (or other bodies). If notoriety is all there is to you, you will worship popularity. And here's the final trick: what you worship is what you will become. Ralph Waldo Emerson said, "A man is what he thinks about all day long." Whatever captures your devotion will shape your life. Where is your faith?

I don't wonder if you have faith. I wonder where your faith is. The disciples had all kinds of faith. They had faith in the boat. They had faith in their nautical expertise. They had faith in the storm—they believed they knew what future it held. The one place they hadn't placed their faith was the only place that faith can ultimately rest: in Jesus. When your faith is in the wrong thing, your future is limited. So, at the end, Jesus' great question led them to a great question of their own: "In fear and amazement they asked one another, 'Who is this? He commands even the winds and the water, and they obey him'" (Luke 8:25b). Who is this? I hope you know. This is Jesus. He is the Lord. And He is the only one worthy of your faith.

STUDY GUIDE
GREAT QUESTION • "Where Is Your Faith?"
Luke 8:22–25

UP: Connect With God Through Spending Time in His Word

Read aloud the passage for the week: Luke 8:22–25.

- 1) Imagine yourself in the shoes of one of the disciples. What would it have been like to experience this series of events?
- 2) Reread verse 25. Again, if you were one of the disciples, what would have been going through your mind when Jesus asked this?
- 3) Describe a time when you have not turned to Jesus in the midst of a challenging situation or a season of "unknown." What was that like? Were you aware that you were turning from God? How did you manage that situation?
- 4) Describe a time when you have turned to Jesus during one of life's storms. What was different about this experience from the previous situation you described?
- 5) What does it look like to turn to Jesus when the storms of life come? Are there spiritual disciplines or other practices that accompany this?
- 6) Reread verse 25. Jesus has calmed the storm, so why do you think the disciples are still afraid?
- 7) How does the question in verse 25 challenge you to grow in your knowledge of Christ's Kingdom?

OUT: Connect With the World Around Us (Join God in His Mission)

Many of our neighbors, friends, family and co-workers don't know Jesus. They are attempting to navigate the various storms of life on their own. Pray for one person in your life who doesn't yet know Jesus. Pray that they would come to faith and that they would be filled with the Holy Spirit.

IN: Connect with Each Other

Think of someone in your life right now who is struggling through a storm or dealing with worries (large or small). How can you be an encouragement to them this week?