

Important Questions

Our Questions

- ❑ It is human nature to ask questions. We ask questions for different reasons.¹ We may ask questions in order to learn or know. We may ask questions because we wonder about something. To ask questions for these reasons is to admit that we do not know everything.
- ❑ As human beings, we have questions about life. These questions may be universal or personal, theoretical or practical. And some of these questions are very important to us.
 1. What “important questions” do *you* have about life? Make a list of them.

Questions Jesus Was Asked

- ❑ Jesus was asked many questions. Some questions were good and sincere. Others were not. Some were meant to test Jesus. Some were wrongly based, or wrongly directed. Here are some of the questions Jesus was asked.
 - 📖 “Who are you?” (*John 8:25*) “By what authority are you doing these things? ...And who gave you this authority?” (*Matthew 21:23b; cf. Luke 20:2*)²
 - 📖 “Why do you speak to the people in parables?” (*Matthew 13:10*)³

¹ The noun “question” usually means “an expression of inquiry that invites or calls for a reply.” However, not all questions expect an answer (e.g., rhetorical questions). Even questions wanting a reply are asked for different reasons. For example, some questions are asked to test another person’s knowledge, while other questions are asked in order to learn or know. Some questions are asked because of curiosity, wonder, or doubt.

² These questions addressed Jesus’ identity. Jesus spoke and acted with great authority (*Matthew 7:28-29; 9:6-8*) and he made great claims about himself (e.g., *John 5:21, 6:35, 8:58, 10:30, 11:25-26, 14:9*). For example, Jesus said, “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to [God] except through me” (*John 14:6*). “Who is Jesus?” is still a very important question today, to say the least! Some would say it is the most important question.

³ This question, asked by Jesus’ disciples, addressed Jesus’ manner of communicating God’s truth. Maybe the disciples thought that Jesus should speak more clearly (*Luke 8:9*). Some people today question the manner in which God has chosen to speak. Some demand that he speak “more clearly,” but they do not understand the purpose of God’s revelation and the importance of a humble, responsive heart.

📖 "...what must I do to inherit eternal life?" (*Luke 18:18; cf. Matthew 19:16*)⁴

📖 "Of all the commandments, which is the most important?" (*Mark 12:28, cf. Matthew 22:36*)

📖 "What must we do to do the works God requires?" (*John 6:28*)

Which is the Greatest Commandment?

- ❑ Impressed by Jesus' answer to another question, a teacher of the law had his own question.⁵ Read Mark 12:28-31.⁶
 2. When we think of "commandments" (commands), we may think of rules to be obeyed, or actions to be performed, in order to satisfy the commanding authority. It is a matter of human performance and achievement. But what does Jesus say is most important?⁷

What Must We Do to Get Eternal Life?

- ❑ Jesus said, "Do not work for food that spoils, but for food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you" (*John 6:27a*).⁸ But his listeners did not understand, so they asked Jesus a question. Read John 6:28-29.
 3. According to Jesus, what is needed to receive eternal life?

Reflection/Application

- Many people are too busy to carefully consider the important questions of life. What about you? In the coming weeks, commit to carefully consider "the most important questions."
- If you are a Christian, you might think you have already adequately considered "the most important questions." However, maybe you have trouble applying your responses to everyday life. Or maybe you have trouble defending your responses when others question your beliefs. Commit to thoughtful reflection on "the most important questions."

⁴ This question, asked by a rich, young leader, revealed some of his beliefs about the nature of human life. The man believed that life is linear (not cyclical), ending in physical death, but with a hope of "eternal life" (life beyond physical death). He also believed that he was accountable to God – the One who would determine his destiny. Apparently, the rich, young leader wrongly believed that he could earn "eternal life" by his own efforts. People today have different beliefs about the pattern of life (linear or cyclical, continuing or ceasing at physical death), and many people have questions about what is needed in order to experience the ultimate fulfillment of one's existence.

⁵ This question addressed how one should live. What laws or rules were most important in order to be a good person.

⁶ The teacher's question reflected the common distinction between small and great commandments, and revealed the common belief that human achievement was the most important thing in pleasing God. In response, Jesus quoted the opening words of the *Shema* (Deuteronomy 6:4-5), and then quoted a portion of Leviticus 19:18.

⁷ Jesus emphasizes relationships – relationship with God and relationships with other human beings. For Jesus the whole law is summarized in whole-hearted love for God and self-giving love for others.

⁸ Jesus did not mean, "do not work for a living," but he wanted them to realize that true blessing was not merely material, but spiritual. Furthermore, the great spiritual blessing of eternal life comes only through Jesus Christ.