

The Importance of Questions

Introduction:

Everything we know is the result of **questions**, of someone contesting the veracity (habitual observance of truth) or hidden implications of established “facts” or “arguments.” (Neil Postman)

Great questions from the Bible: Genesis 3:9-13, Genesis 4:9, Exodus 17:7, Psalm 22:1, Jeremiah 8:22, Psalm 139:7, Psalm 8:3-4, Isaiah 40:25-26, Micah 6:6-8, Mark 8:27,29, Matthew 19:16, Mark 8:36-37, Romans 6:1-3, Romans 8:35...

Body:

Genesis 4:9 Then the LORD said to Cain, "Where is your brother Abel?" "I don't know," he replied. "Am I my brother's keeper?"

“Am I my brother’s keeper? Is usually applied to physical well-being. It is used to enforce the axiom that we have duties to perform in behalf of the unfortunate who need food and clothing, shelter, and medical attention. We who are eminently blessed by God are not to be thankful that we have bread to eat while others starve; we are rather to be grateful to the kind providences of heaven that we have bread to share with others who have none.

It blesses us when we take advantage of the opportunity to share what we have with others. To feed a hungry man, to clothe a naked child, to bring medical care and attention to the sick, or to comfort the distressed, has a recompense paid only by God.

The true turn of the story of Cain and Abel, however, is not outward but inward. It is not physical but spiritual. It’s not the body but the soul. This point can be seen in Genesis and Hebrews

Genesis 4:4-5 (New International Version)

4 But Abel brought fat portions from some of the firstborn of his flock. The LORD looked with favor on Abel and his offering, **5** but on Cain

and his offering he did not look with favor. So Cain was very angry, and his face was downcast.

Hebrews 11 By Faith Abel offered a more excellent sacrifice than Cain...

In his envy and his wrath at the acceptance of his younger brother, the true nature of Cain is fully displayed. He slays Abel by his own hand, and the earth drinks up the blood of Adam's second son.

Genesis 4:10 (New International Version)

10 The LORD said, "What have you done? Listen! Your brother's blood cries out to me from the ground.

The question from God to Cain, "Where is Abel thy brother?" and the counter-question of Cain, "Am I my brother's keeper?" make a kind of introduction to the entire Bible. Life responsibility, soul responsibility, is a recurring teaching of the whole scriptures; it is woven into wrap and woof of the biblical fabric.

Ezekiel 3:17-21 (New International Version)

17 "Son of man, I have made you a watchman for the house of Israel; so hear the word I speak and give them warning from me. **18** When I say to a wicked man, 'You will surely die,' and you do not warn him or speak out to dissuade him from his evil ways in order to save his life, that wicked man will die for his sin, and I will hold you accountable for his blood. **19** But if you do warn the wicked man and he does not turn from his wickedness or from his evil ways, he will die for his sin; but you will have saved yourself. **20** "Again, when a righteous man turns from his righteousness and does evil, and I put a stumbling block before him, he will die. Since you did not warn him, he will die for his sin. The righteous things he did will not be remembered, and I will hold you accountable for his blood. **21** But if you do warn the righteous man not to sin and he does not sin, he will surely live because he took warning, and you will have saved yourself."

In the New Testament, the responsibility for the salvation of all men, of all generations, of all peoples everywhere, is laid upon the Church in the great commissions to be found in the gospels and in the book

of Acts.

Acts 20:26-27 (New International Version)

26 Therefore, I declare to you today that I am innocent of the blood of all men. **27** For I have not hesitated to proclaim to you the whole will of God.

All of this emphasizes the heavy and weighty responsibility by which we are chargeable before heaven for the spiritual welfare of all men. God will surely call us into account, "Where is Abel, your brother?" Our souls are not free from blood until we have done our best to win the lost to the saving knowledge of Christ our Savior, our only hope in this world and in the world that is to come.

It is only when we have done our utmost to win others to Christ that we can say with the Apostle Paul, "Wherefore I take you to record this day, that I am pure from the blood of all men." Until this can be said by every one of us in all truth and in all sincerity, we are responsible to a God who will some day call us into account.

But we must remember that this is a work that God has prepared and equipped us for. The instruments of salvation are in our hands; God has committed them to us. There is no doctrine to be seen more frequently in all of God's holy word than this charge and commitment.

Proverbs 11:30 (New International Version)

30 The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life, and he who wins souls is wise.

Daniel 12:3 (New International Version)

3 Those who are wise will shine like the brightness of the heavens, and those who lead many to righteousness, like the stars forever and ever.

Matthew 28:19-20 (New International Version)

19 Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, **20** and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely

I am with you always, to the very end of the age."

Make disciples, go, baptize, teach...

James 5:20 (New International Version)

20 remember this: Whoever turns a sinner from the error of his way will save him from death and cover over a multitude of sins.

Acts 10:6 (New International Version)

6 He is staying with Simon the tanner, whose house is by the sea."

Acts 11:14 (New International Version)

14 He will bring you a message through which you and all your household will be saved

Why didn't the angel tell him the words whereby he and his household could be saved? Because the instruments of soul salvation God has entrusted to us. We are to preach the Gospel; we are to win men to Christ; the responsibility for their salvation lies upon us.

Acts 9:5-6 (New International Version)

5 "Who are you, Lord?" Saul asked. "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting," he replied. **6** "Now get up and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do."

King James Bible □ And he trembling and astonished said, **Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?** And the Lord [said] unto him, Arise, and go into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do.

Acts 9:10 (New International Version)

10 In Damascus there was a disciple named Ananias. The Lord called to him in a vision, "Ananias!" "Yes, Lord," he answered.

Why didn't the Lord tell him what to do? Because he mediates His truth through others. It is thus through all Christian history; the message of God is delivered to us to deliver to other men. We are

saved to save others; we are called to win others; we are elected as the instruments of salvation for lost men everywhere. The responsibility of their salvation lies upon us.

Romans 10:13-15 (New International Version)

13 for, "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved."

14 How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? **15** And how can they preach unless they are sent? As it is written, "How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!"

God's truth is mediated through human personality. There is not a syllable of the Holy Scriptures written without human hands. There is not a soul saved without a soul-winner. There is not a spiritual work done without a consecrated worker. There is not a sermon preached without a preacher. God and you make the Kingdom. God and you make the Church. God and you do the work. God and you win souls.

Am I my brother's keeper?

God help me to be true to the trust. I am.

Invitation:

As I reflected this last week on my lesson one of the thoughts I contemplated was, how important it is to ask for help. We have this wonderful tradition in the churches of Christ where we extend an invitation, a request to our members, and visitors, to come forward and ask for help etc...

I want to remind us that God gives us what we need and if you are needing help we are here as God's servants to bring you that blessing, but we have to ask for help.

It isn't that God needs us to ask, asking the question is important because of what we have to do in order to ask it

We have to acknowledge our need...

We have to humble ourselves...

We have to see and acknowledge that we can't do it on our own...

Asking the question also displays our faith in God and His people...