



## **WEEKLY STUDY September 24-30, 2023**

(Use this guide to individually or with a group dive deeper into this week's sermon.)

### **What in the Word: A Sermon Series on Questions**

**Our sermon series for September is: What in the Word: A Sermon Series on Questions. The Bible can be both wildly inspirational and completely puzzling. How can we understand it? What practical import does it have for our lives? In this series we will explore questions submitted by our church-goers. Did Jesus ever question, "Why me?" Or say to God, "I'm not doing this?" Does prayer really work? Is Jesus the only path to God? Week 4 will be questions our youth have that they will address. Join us as we see to God and our neighbors by asking questions and seeking the Bible's wisdom.**

#### **Our scripture this week is:**

"Moses said to the people, 'Do not be afraid. God has come to test you, so that the fear of God will be with you to keep you from sinning.'" **Exodus 20:20 (NIV)**

"If any of you lacks wisdom, you should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to you. But when you ask, you must believe and not doubt, because the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind. That person should not expect to receive anything from the Lord. Such a person is double-minded and unstable in all they do.'" **James 1:5-8 (NIV)**

"You study the Scriptures diligently because you think that in them you have eternal life. These are the very Scriptures that testify about me, yet you refuse to come to me to have life.'" **John 5:39-40 (NIV)**

- 1)** The first question we considered in this series was, "Did Jesus ever question, 'Why me?' Or say to God, 'I'm not doing this?'" Pastor Sam chose Luke 22: 39-46 as a way for us to reflect and ponder this question. She commented in her sermon that while there is nothing recorded in scripture that portrays Jesus saying, "I'm not doing this," we do read of Jesus, saying to God, "If you are willing, remove this cup from me." And this helps us see Jesus' struggle. Our second question we examined was, "Does prayer really work?" Sam reminded us that there are not always clear-cut answers to our questions, and that questions are good. Our third question is, "Is Jesus the Only Way to God?"

Pastor Sam reminded us that this question is often used to judge others and to decide who is in and who is out. The better question for us is “How do I spend every moment of my time in God’s presence” instead of spending our time judging others. This Sunday was youth Sunday so the sermon messages were brought by our seniors around questions they have had about scripture.

**Question: Like our youth, you may have questions regarding scripture that were not addressed in this series. What questions beyond those we’ve addressed do you have? What in this study has helped you regarding your questions?**

- 2) Our first speaker on Sunday was Elizabeth Barnes. Her question was, “Should we be afraid of God?” And she framed it around Exodus 20:20. Elizabeth told of a friend who talked about the importance of the Fear of God related to faith. Elizabeth said for her fear of God did not go with her image and understanding of God. She talked of how she sees God as only wanting us to grow. And said she felt God wants to be in relationship with us. For her, this results in her wanting to love and live more like Jesus.

**Question: Is fearing God part of your faith? Why or why not?**

- 3) Our second speaker on Sunday was Sarah DeWeese. Her question was, “Can I be a good Christian if I doubt God and question God’s decisions” and the scripture she used was James 1:5-8. Sarah told of being involved in church from the time she was little. But when she was seven, her uncle died and she felt that her prayers for his health had not been answered. She doubted God. She was mad at God. And she stopped going to church except when she was required to at Easter and Christmas. Sarah said her relationship with God and with the church shifted when her dad was hired at Belle Meade and she began to come with him. She talked about the welcoming spirit of Caroline Stone and how she admired Caroline and how their friendship as grown. And she talked about the importance of the Wednesday night knitting group that has included her and made her feel like included. She lifted up her friendship with Peggy Townes and how important that is for her life. And she said for her the relationships she has developed at BMUMC have brought her back to God (even though she still questions God).

**Question: Have you, like Sarah, had a time when you were angry with God and doubted God? Who are the people you feel have helped you know the presence of God – even with questions and doubts? What relationships with others have allowed you to grow in faith?**

- 4) Our third speaker was Adam Streams. His question was “Does scripture really impact our daily lives?” His scripture choice was John 5:39–40. Adam talked about the difference between reciting scripture and letting the teachings of scripture guide the way we live. For him, scripture itself isn’t what makes faith. But living the teachings of scripture are what he believes we are called to do.

**Question: Do you see a difference between being able to recite scripture and living the message of scripture? What differences do you see between these two interpretations of scripture?**

**Prayer: (The prayer is from the Affirmation of Faith the youth included in Sunday's service)**  
**Gracious God. Questions surround us in this life. How do we know your true nature? What are we called to do day by day? Are questions okay? We give you thanks that you are big enough God to handle our questions. Through questions, you beckon us closer, bringing us into a relationship with you – the One who is mystery and wonder, light and life. Through questions, we meet others who become dear companions in life. Help us remember that questions offer honest pathways that help us find our way home. We rejoice that you O God have a place for us, a home that withstands all time and space. When those around call us to stop our questions, help us remember that questions surround us. And in the midst of questions, uncertainty, doubt, and faith, your loving arms stretch around us and hold us tight. Amen.**

**Weekly Challenges: Ask yourself each day, who have I helped to feel included and welcomed and loved this day? Give thanks for the**

*(Weekly study guide prepared by Rev. MaryJane Pierce Norton)*