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Mark 4:40

The fear that the disciples experienced was not imaginary. There was a real possibility that they could drown. Jesus was asleep as the wind and the waves tossed the small boat back and forth. Why wasn't Jesus more concerned?

What role has fear played in your life? How do you know when you are afraid?

Q ~

Mark 10:36

In this passage we encounter a God who wants to hear our requests and even grant them. It's comforting to know that we can come to Jesus just as we are without fear of judgment from him. Sometimes the things we want are not good for us or good for those around us. We have to trust that Jesus knows our hearts and will answer our prayers according to his goodness, wisdom, and glory.

What is the difference between wants and needs? Does Jesus sometimes grant us the things we not only need, but want?

If you could ask Jesus for anything and you know it would be granted without question, what would you ask for? Why?

Jesus, thank you for being open to my request(s). With boldness, I speak honestly the desires that are on my heart, no matter how right or wrong they may be. I trust that you want the best for me and will answer my prayer accordingly. I acknowledge that my understanding is severely limited and that yours is not.

When the other disciples heard what James and John asked of Jesus, they were upset. Do you think the people you know would be upset if they knew your true desires?

Are you ever afraid to say what you really want? Why or why not? When is the last time you got in touch with your true dreams, desires, hopes, and passions?

Jesus uses James and John's request to teach them an important lesson about leadership. In light of what you know about the kingdom, take an objective view of your request (as if someone else had asked it). What lesson might Jesus teach you about the kingdom after hearing your request?

Q ~

Mark 8:29

At this point, what others are saying about Jesus fades away. Jesus turns to you and asks you this question personally. Try speaking the name that naturally arises out of your heart.

Reflect for a few minutes on your life and consider how God has been present to you. After reflecting, what is your response to this question in light of your experience of God?

Are you surprised by your answer? Why or why not?

God, there are many names that describe who you are. Today, I speak out of my experience and use the name _____ to begin this conversation with you.

Search the book of Mark and make a list of the names that people call Jesus. Look over the list. What questions arise for you out of the list? Which ones do you resonate with? Which seem strange or foreign to you?

This question comes at the midpoint of Mark's gospel. What was Mark's intention in placing this story and this question here? What does it mean for you?

Immediately before this question, Mark tells a story about someone who experiences various stages of blindness and sight. Why does Mark put this story right before the conversation about the identity of Jesus?

Q ~

John 5:6

Jesus' question to the paralyzed man seems odd. The answer is obvious, isn't it? Of course the paralyzed man wants to be well. But does he really? He has been paralyzed for 38 years. Sometimes being sick can become our "normal" way of life. Sickness can become part of our identity. We say we want to be well, but do we? What are the implications of leaving sickness behind and embracing wholeness and health?

Are the man's reasons for struggling to get into the pool legit, or are they excuses?

The man said, "I have no one to help me." What role do other people play in the healing process? When does helping no longer "help?"

Jesus, I've been unhealthy for so long that I've gotten used to it. It feels normal to me now. Give me insight into the areas of my life that are diseased and not working the way you intend. I have to admit that I've become content to live in a way that is less than full. It's because. . .

Do you want to get well? Why or why not? What are your reasons either way?

Is there a sickness that you've been carrying for a long time? How long? How have you been shaped by it?

Invite a friend out for coffee. Tell that friend about an area of your life that is diseased. Seek their counsel. Ask for prayer.

Sometimes our bodies fail. What other areas, besides the physical, could use some healing? Invite God into those areas.

Q ~

Matthew 9:28

This is a simple story about two blind men who pursue Jesus, calling out, "Have mercy on us, Son of David." The title they use for Jesus here is important; they identify Jesus as the promised Messiah in the line of David. Jesus asks a poignant question, "Do you believe I am able to do this?" The two men have not asked for healing but for mercy. Therefore, what Jesus is asking is whether or not they believe he is able to show them mercy. In this instance, mercy flows from Jesus in the form of physical healing.

We don't hear the word "mercy" much in our everyday vocabulary. What does mercy mean?

These two men are blind, but they are able to see Jesus clearly. Discuss what it means to "see" clearly with the heart, or to have spiritual 20/20 vision.

Jesus, when our bodies don't work the way they are supposed to, it's so frustrating. You offer mercy, which sometimes takes the form of physical healing. Help me to desire mercy in whatever form it takes. It's easy to believe you are "able," but it's another matter altogether to believe that you are "willing." Give me the faith to believe that you are both. Give me grace to receive and celebrate your mercy in whatever form it takes.

What does it mean that God is merciful (mercy-full)? Invite the Spirit to use your imagination and picture God full of mercy. What do you see?

Why do you think the two blind men asked for mercy instead of physical healing?

Petition God, letting him know that you believe he is "able." Then, pour out your heart, asking God to act.

Q ~

Luke 24:38

In this post-

Q ~

Luke 24:38

When Jesus appeared to the disciples after the resurrection, they were filled with doubt. They couldn't believe that it was really him. He came to them in a resurrected body, with resurrection power. It wasn't the same Jesus they remembered.

What doubts do you have? Have you ever voiced them? Why or why not?

Why might gazing upon the crucified/resurrected feet and hands of Jesus be the cure for troubled hearts and minds?

Jesus, people who have no doubts about their faith or about your goodness seem a bit suspect to me. There is so much in this world that calls into question your love, power, and involvement. Thank you for taking my doubts seriously. Thank you for not being angry with me because I have doubts. Give me the strength and conviction to trust you without having to have all the answers to everything.

Make a list of your doubts. Are some more concerning/serious than others?

Rather than being afraid of your doubts, make friends with them. See them as companions on the journey. What helpful lessons are your doubts teaching you? What dangers are your doubts alerting you to? Share these discoveries with a good friend over coffee and a piece of pie.

Jesus, the one who has risen from the dead, asks the question about doubts using the word "arise." What is the significance of this? How do doubts arise? From where do they arise? Where does their power come from?

Q ~

John 1:38

The questions of Jesus get at the deepest desires of our hearts. Jesus turns and asks the two who are following him this simple yet multi-layered question.

This is the first question that Jesus asks in the book of John. What is the significance of this?

Sometimes we feel more strongly about what we don't want. Why is it easier to know and share what we

Q ~

John 13:12

Jesus washes his disciples' feet, returns to his place around the table, and puts on his robe. Then he asks the disciples this profound question. It extends beyond the upper room to include the manger, the cross, and the empty tomb. It can even be taken back to the creation story in Genesis.

What is the relationship between, power, leadership, identity, and service?

What is the modern equivalent of washing feet?

Jesus, at times I catch a glimpse of what you have done for me. But to say that I would be a lie. Thankfully, all it takes is a small glimpse to change my life forever and to live for you completely. One day I will understand fully all you have done, but until then transform me into a disciple seeking deepening levels of understanding. Open my heart, mind, ears, and eyes. As you do, may I respond with equal amounts of love and gratitude.

Think of three specific things that God has done for you. Praise him. Then tell someone about God's goodness in your life.

A fitting response to God's generosity and goodness is gratitude. Hold a small "thanksgiving" gathering in the spring or summer. Have special food/desserts/drinks and share together what you are thankful for.

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Q ~

John 13:38

Peter boldly proclaims that he will lay down his life for Jesus. But Jesus knows Peter better than Peter knows himself. Peter will one day be ready to *really* lay down his life for Jesus, but first he has a lot of growing to do. Rather than dying for Jesus, he will deny Jesus in a matter of hours.

What does it mean to live for Jesus and die for Jesus at the same time?

Q ~

Matthew 7:3

Jesus uses an exaggerated image to describe how the judging scenario often plays out. His question is an honest one that invites us to dig deep into our hearts to gain understanding into *why* we judge others while ignoring our own obvious yet blinding faults.

Why is it easier to see other people's faults rather than our own?

Humbly share with the group the "plank(s)" in your eye.

Q~

John 18:4,7

Q ~

Luke 2:49

As a young boy, Jesus asks his parents and those looking for him this interesting question. We have lots of reasons why we search for Jesus. Sometimes at the root of our faith is fear. We don't want to go to hell. Sometimes we pray and seek God because we want blessings. Sometimes we use Jesus like a lucky charm.

Why do we have to search for Jesus?

Is it possible to search for Jesus and not find him?

Jesus, I seek you. But when I find you, you ask me this penetrating question about my motivation for seeking you. I know you're not a magic genie or a dispenser of good feelings or a way to minimize my fearful and anxious thoughts. Eventually, I want to se

Q ~

John 21:16

Picture yourself on that beach. You are one of his disciples. Jesus turns to you and asks, “Do you love me?” In your imagination, look into the eyes of Jesus as he asks the question. Eyes are a window to the soul. They give us a glimpse into the inner life of a person. What do you see in the eyes of Jesus?

Peter was hurt when Jesus asked him a third time. If Jesus asked you three times, how do you think you’d feel? Why?

Have you ever been loved deeply or loved someone else deeply? What was that experience like? Can you put it into words?

Jesus, you ask such demanding and difficult questions. You ask me to be vulnerable, sensitive and open, which is sometimes hard and scary. You also encourage me to be honest. My honest answer to your question is. . . The reason for that is because. . .

Jesus could have asked Peter, “Will you deny me again?” “Can I trust you?” “Are you sorry for what you have done?” But instead, Jesus asks Peter, “Do you love me?” Why?

After Peter’s response, Jesus says that Peter will die for that love. What are the connections between love and dying?

Q ~

Luke 12:25

Jesus talks about something we're all familiar with: *worry*. He places our anxious feelings in a context that involves God's goodness, involvement, and care. Jesus invites us to pay attention to creation in this case, flowers and birds. He encourages us to notice how God takes care of them and then challenges us to let go of our worry and trust in his power and generosity.

On a scale from 1-10, how much do you worry?

What do you tend to worry about?

Does worry accomplish/do anything?

Jesus, I'm worried about . . .

Give me the courage and the power to trust in you and to leave my worries behind. Give me wisdom to know what I can actually influence and control. Grow me in my faith and help me to drop my anchor into your goodness and grace.

Consider your family of origin. Were you influenced/shaped by a family pattern of worrying? Was there a particular person who carried the anxiety?

How do you know when you are worrying? What are the signs? How can others tell when you're feeling anxious?

Invite some friends over for tea. Invite everyone to talk about what they are worried about the most.

Q ~

Matthew 5:46

Jesus is talking about loving our enemies—showing goodness and graciousness to those who don't give it back. When we love those who don't love us, we act just like God, who loved us while we were still sinners.

What does the word "enemy" mean to you?

Have you ever prayed for an enemy? Why or why not?

Jesus, this is probably one of your most counterintuitive questions. My enemies are big jerks! But Lord, you loved me and showed me kindness when I was your enemy. You came searching for me when I was lost, prideful, and stubborn, doing my own thing. You loved me when I didn't love you back. And now look at what you've done! Your gracious and faithful love drew me in and turned my world upside down.

Pray for an enemy every day this week. Did your feelings and attitudes toward him or her change over time?

Allow yourself to feel the depth of your anger and hatred for your enemies. Pray for God to meet you in those feelings. Sit there with Jesus and breath slowly and deeply.

Find a way to love someone who can't possibly love you back. Pay attention to this experience and write it down or tell a close friend about it.

Q ~

John 8:46

Jesus asks a very powerful question in the midst of a dispute about truth and lies. Jesus insists that everything he says about himself, the kingdom, life, and the Father is absolutely true. But those who are listening to him would rather believe lies.

Do you really believe deep down that Jesus is telling the truth about everything? Why or why not?

Q ~

Mark 4:40

By this point in the gospel of Mark, Jesus has performed numerous miracles. This question comes in the midst of a story about Jesus calming the wind and the waves—perhaps his most powerful miracle to date. Jesus asks a difficult question about their current state of faith.

Rate your faith on a scale from 1-10. Why that number?

Is faith hard or easy? Why?

Jesus, you know I'm not there yet. But because of your grace, I'll keep growing in my faith every moment