**More Like the Master**

In His Questions & Answers

Lesson 19

*“And he answered and said unto them, I also will ask you a question; and tell me…”*

*(Luke 20:3)*

**Bible Q & A**

The question and answer method of teaching was very important in the ministry of Jesus. He used this method in his youth: *“And it came to pass, after three days they found him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the teachers, both hearing them, and asking them questions”* (Luke 2:46). He also used this method later in his ministry. Often Jesus would ask questions of his friends like the multitudes (Mark 9:14-16), the two on the road to Emmaeus (Luke 24:15-17), or his apostles (Luke 24:38). At other times, Jesus would ask questions of his foes like the Pharisees. Matthew records: *“Now while the Pharisees were gathered together, Jesus asked them a question…”* (22:41-42; see also Matthew 21:24-25; Mark 11:29-30; Luke 20:3-4).

Jesus would also answer questions from his friends and foes in ways that were instructive. He answered his apostles (Mark 9:10-11), the Pharisees (Mark 8:11-12), and a lawyer (Matthew 22:35-36). Jesus’ answers were so insightful and pointed that some would not dare ask him any more questions (Matthew 22:46; Mark 12:34; Luke 20:40). The people knew when Jesus *“had answered them well”* (Mark 12:28).

The Q&A method of teaching goes back even before the time of Jesus and it is still a very good method of teaching for Christians today. We can use this method when teaching in our congregational Bible classes. We can also use this method when doing personal evangelism. We will learn in this lesson how we can be “More Like the Master” in asking and answering questions.

**Jesus and His Questions**

Jesus asked questions.

***He asked questions to get people to think.*** When certain scribes charged Jesus with blasphemy, he asked them, *“For which is easier, to say, Thy sins are forgiven; or to say, Arise, and walk?”* (Matthew 9:3-5; Mark 2:6-9). When Jesus was told about how his mother and his brethren were seeking him, he asked the multitude, *“Who is my mother and who are my brethren?”* (Matthew 12:48; Mark 3:33). Jesus asked two questions to Peter and the other disciples to get him to think about spiritual defilement: *“And he said, Are you also even without understanding? Perceive you not, that whatsoever goes into the mouth passes into the belly, and is cast out into the draught?”* (Matthew 15:16-17). Jesus wanted Peter to think about Jesus’ status as the divine Son of God, so he asked Peter a question: *“What do you think, Simon?, the kings of the earth, from whom do they receive toll or tribute? from their sons, or from strangers?*” Jesus, as God’s son, was exempt from the temple-tax, but Jesus supplied the temple-tax anyway so as not to cause a problem (Matthew 17:24-27). Jesus asked his disciples, *“What do you think? If any man has a hundred sheep…”* (Matthew 18:12). He wanted them to think about how God cares for little children just as a shepherd cares for one lost sheep (Matthew 18:10-14).

***He asked questions to get people to understand the true meaning of scripture.*** When the Pharisees accused Jesus’ disciples of breaking the Sabbath by plucking grain, he asked them, *“Have you not read what David did … Or, have you not read in the law…”* (Matthew 12:1-8; Mark 2:23-28; Luke 6:1-5). Jesus asked these questions and referred to Old Testament passages (1 Samuel 21:6, Numbers 28:9,10, and Hosea 6:6) in order to teach the true meaning of the Sabbath as well as to teach a lesson in mercy.

***He asked questions to get people to see their illogical arguments.*** When the Pharisees charged Jesus with casting out demons by the power of Beelzebub (Satan), he asked them three questions: *“If Satan casteth out Satan … how then shall his kingdom stand?” “By whom do your sons cast them out?” and “How can one enter the house of the strong man … except he first bind the strong man?”* (Matthew 12:22-29; Mark 3:19-27; Luke 11:14-23). The Pharisees were illogical to charge Jesus this way because Satan wouldn’t cast out his own demons.

***He asked questions to get people to see their own improper behavior and motives.*** Jesus, knowing the evil thoughts of the Pharisees, asked them on one occasion, “*Why reason you in your hearts?”* (Luke 5:22), and on another occasion, *“How can you, being evil, speak good things?”* (Matthew 12:34). Jesus, knowing the hypocrisy and man-made tradition of the Pharisees and scribes, asked them, *“Why do you also transgress the commandment of God because of your tradition?”* (Matthew 15:3). Jesus asked his disciples, *“What were you reasoning on the way?”* (Mark 9:33). Jesus began with this question and taught his disciples to stop arguing about who was the greatest (Mark 9:33-37). Jesus asked the hypocritical Jews during the Passover, *“Did not Moses give you the law, and yet none of you does the law? Why do you seek to kill me?”* (John 7:19)? He went on to point out their inconsistency in circumcising others on the Sabbath but not allowing him to heal a man on the Sabbath. He asked, *“Are you angry with me because I made a man completely whole on the Sabbath?”* (John 7:23).

***He asked questions to teach important lessons.*** When Jesus asked his disciples at Caesarea Philippi, *“Who do men say that the Son of man is?”* He wanted to teach them about his true identity as the Son of God (Matthew 16:13-20).

Jesus answered questions.

***He answered with more than just a “yes” or “no”.*** Jesus could have answered some questions briefly with a one-word “yes” or “no”, but he chose to say more in order to teach. (Read Matthew 17:24-27 and compare Peter’s one-word answer with Jesus’ answer.) He did this with the question about being born again (John 3:3-8), the question about his identity (Matthew 11:2-6; Luke 7:18-23), the question about the number of saved (Luke 13:22-30), and the question about his kingdom (Luke 17:20-37). He answered in order to teach. He didn’t just want to show he had the right answer, but he wanted to get people to think. He wanted them to learn truths from his answers.

***He answered to expose hypocrisy.*** Sometimes Jesus was asked questions by Jewish fault-finders. When Jesus was asked if it was lawful to heal on the Sabbath, he asked his own question about the man with a sheep in the pit. Jesus asked them if it was lawful to do good or save a life on the Sabbath (Matthew 12:9-14; Mark 3:1-6; Luke 6:6-11; 13:11-17). The Jews were hypocritical and inconsistent in allowing a man to rescue a sheep out of a pit on the Sabbath, but not allowing Jesus to heal the man. Jesus was not working on the Sabbath (Exodus 35:2; Deuteronomy 5:14), he was doing good on the Sabbath. The hardened Jews on this occasion would not answer Jesus, nor would they accept what he had done, but went out and took counsel how they might destroy him. Jesus’ teaching with questions was not always accepted by good and honest hearts.

***He answered according to need.*** Jesus would often answer a question based upon what the person needed, not necessarily upon what he wanted. For example, when John’s disciples asked Jesus about the amount of fasting, he taught them a much needed lesson on the purpose of fasting (Matthew 9:14-17). When his disciples came and asked, *“Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven”?,* Jesus responded with a much needed lesson on humility (Matthew 18:2-5). When the rich young ruler asked, *“What shall I do to inherit eternal life?”,* Jesus answered his question and then added a much needed lesson on sacrifice and service (Mark 10:17-21). When Peter asked Jesus about how often a person should forgive, Jesus taught the much needed lesson on forgiveness (Matthew 18:21-35). When his disciples asked Jesus about the stones of the temple, he taught the much needed lesson on the events leading up to the destruction of Jerusalem (Matthew 24). Other examples of Jesus answering this way can be found in John 6:28-29, John 9:2-3, John 14:5-7, and John 18:33-37.

***He answered questions that reflect distorted views.*** Jesus was asked if it is lawful to put-away one’s spouse *“for every cause”.* He answered the Jews and told them that marriage is a permanent relationship for life and there is only one cause for putting-away; that is, fornication (Matthew 19:3-9).

***He answered questions that proposed a dilemma.*** Jesus often did not answer according to the choices given him. When Jesus was asked about paying tribute to Caesar, he answered showing that one may honor Caesar and God at the same time. He demonstrated that there is no dilemma between serving Caesar and God (Matthew 22:17-21). Jesus did this again concerning the question of the resurrection. He did not answer according to the choice given him (Matthew 22:23-33). He did this again when he was asked, *“Which is the great commandment in the law?”* He answered by pointing out two (not one) of the commandments: Love God and love your neighbor (Matthew 22:34-40).

***He answered questions with questions.*** When Jesus was asked by the Jewish leaders about his authority, he answered with a question about John’s baptism and about a man who had two sons (Matthew 21:28-32). Jesus’ questions on this occasion exposed the Jew’s lack of respect for God’s authority. There was no reason for him to answer their question about his authority if they themselves would not submit to God’s authority. Jesus would often answer a question with the question: *“Have you never read?”* He wanted to expose the ignorance in the ones who were testing him. Jesus did this with the question about putting-away (Matthew 19:4), the question about one’s neighbor (Luke 10:25-26), and the question about breaking the Sabbath (Matthew 9:14; Mark 2:23-25).

**The Christian and Questions**

People ask religious questions for various reasons: some to learn, some to test, some to embarrass, some to humiliate and ridicule, some to poke fun, etc. A person may have a good or a bad motive in asking religious questions and a Christian can learn by practice to answer the way Jesus would answer (see Matthew 22:15-17). Christians will be asked questions by people with different motives. Some will ask with an honest and searching heart, others will not. When Jesus faced an honest person, he answered patiently. When Jesus faced a dishonest person, he answered critically and directly. Jesus was wise and discerning. He looked for the reason and the motive behind the question and then answered accordingly (Luke 5:22). We can learn from Jesus to do the same.

We need to be ready for Bible Q&A in the local church. Questions about spiritual matters and Bible matters will naturally come up in local congregations of Christians today. We must be prepared to ask and answer questions in a proper way to arrive at the truth of God on the matter. Paul and Barnabas were prepared to discuss the *“question”* (issue) of circumcision with the Jerusalem church (Acts 15:2,7). James was also ready with an answer to the question of circumcision (Acts 15:13). In the same way, we must be prepared as well to discuss Bible questions in the local church. Later, Paul was *“called in question”* about his beliefs on the resurrection (Acts 23:6, 29; 24:1; 25:19) and he stood ready to discuss it on trial. *“Questionings”* that do not pertain to God’s word should be avoided (1 Timothy 1:4; 6:4; 2 Timothy 2:23; Titus 3:9), but at all other times we should be ready to ask and answer questions and arrive at the truth of God’s word.

We need to be ready for Bible Q&A in personal evangelism. When Peter was asked on the day of Pentecost, *“What must we do?”,* he was ready with an answer (Acts 2:37-38). When Philip was with the Eunuch and the Eunuch asked him a question about Isaiah 53, he was prepared with an answer (Acts 8:34-36). When Paul was asked by the jailor, *“What must I do to be saved?”,* he was ready with an answer (Acts 16:30-33). Paul writes: *“Let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer each one”* (Colossians 4:6). Peter writes: *“being ready always to give an answer to every man that asks you a reason concerning the hope that is in you…”* (1 Peter 3:15). Questions and answers will naturally come about in doing personal evangelism. Therefore, Christians need to know what they believe and why they believe it. We need to know God’s word and be prepared to defend it. We can follow Jesus’ example and be ready with a proper answer when we are asked questions.

**More Like the Master in His Questions**

Jesus was the master teacher. People marveled at his questions and answers (Mark 12:17). From an early age, Jesus knew how to ask and answer questions. He didn’t spoon feed his followers. He wanted them to arrive at the truth through teaching and learning. Often, as soon as a person is given the right answer, he stops thinking. However, Jesus wanted people to think, so he answered in different kinds of ways to get them to keep thinking. Jesus did not answer questions to impress people, but to teach people. There were a few times when Jesus would not answer when it did not serve a good purpose (when he was on trial before Pilate, Mark 14:60-64 and Luke 23:9), but for the most part he attempted to answer in a way that helped the one asking the question. How do you respond when people ask you religious questions? Do you answer differently to different people (the curious, the inquisitive, the argumentative, the fault-finder, etc.)?

Jesus did not let his opponent do all the questioning. Sometimes he answered a question with a question and put his opponent on the defense. When you ask your opponent why he believes what he does you might just see his countenance change colors. The person asking you the religious question often does not want the truth. Those who do not want the truth will not find it and even if they do, they will often reject it. Some people ask questions but they do not want the truth. Some people ask religious questions but they do not like the Bible answers! They ask questions as long as they get the answers they like. Other people ask questions because they seek to learn, to know, and to obey God’s word. Good questions and answers given by Christians can help determine whether or not a person is looking for the truth. Let us all be “More Like the Master” in teaching others with our questions and answers.

**Questions**

1. What common method of teaching did Jesus use from an early age and throughout his ministry?

2. What were some reasons why Jesus asked questions?

3. What were some questions that Jesus asked truth-seekers and what were some questions that he asked fault-finders?

4. What were some ways in which Jesus answered questions?

5. Why did Jesus answer questions the way he did at times?

6. What were some answers that Jesus gave truth-seekers and what were some answers that Jesus gave fault-finders?

7. What are some motives, good and bad, that might be behind certain religious questions?

8. What are some ways that a Bible class teacher in the local church can ask and answer questions like Jesus did?

9. What are some ways that a Christian doing personal work can ask and answer questions like Jesus did?

10. What are some differences between how Jesus handled Q&A and how we often handle Q&A today?