

Small Group Questions

Small groups and individuals can use these questions to engage the content of Sunday sermons.



July 10-24, 2022

Address the Tough Questions

Our recent confirmands posed some tough questions – ones which all of us would like to have answered! For example, can doubt play a positive role in our faith journey? Do we need to believe all the crazy stories in the Bible? Has anyone actually had an "ah-ha" moment that changed their lives?

Be like a wise man who built his house on rock. – Matthew 7:24

Week 1: July 10, 2022

Are Doubt and Questioning OK?

Matthew 28:16-20

Connect:

Describe a time when you struggled in your faith, a time of doubt.

Engage:

After Jesus' resurrection, he appeared to his disciples. Some saw visions of him while others shared a meal with him. One doubting disciple insisted on putting his fingers where the crucifixion nail holes had been. He met with them, taught them, and, in this last paragraph from Matthew's gospel, he commissioned them to go out and make disciples throughout the world.

Read Mathew 28:16-20

1. The Scripture says some worshiped, but some still doubted. What do you think they doubted? Why?
2. If Jesus knew some of them were not entirely on board, why did he commission all of them instead of just the ones who believed and worshiped him?
3. Why didn't their doubt disturb Jesus? How do you think God views the ups and downs of our faith/doubt journey?
4. Doubt seems to disturb many church leaders. Why do you think that is? What are they afraid of?

Apply

Doubt can be the soil from which healthy faith grows. Doubt is a natural part of spiritual development that often indicates that one is moving away from an "inherited" religion toward a deeper personal understanding of God and faith.

How has doubt played a role in your spiritual journey?

Pray

Share joys and concerns and pray for one another, the church, and the world.

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Week 2: July 17, 2022

Do People Believe All the Crazy Stories in the Bible Really Happened?

Luke 24:13-27

Connect:

Is there a story in the Bible that you find difficult to believe happened? Why is it so challenging to believe it happened?

Engage:

A story can convey truth without being literally true. A novel, a poem, a fairy tale, a parable, or any kind of story can impart wisdom and enlarge our understanding. While some in the Christian faith insist that every word in the Bible is historically accurate, many believe the stories convey truth and wisdom about the nature of human beings and their understanding of God – without the need for every tale to be factual.

Read Luke 24:13-27

1. In this post-resurrection story, we can assume that the disciples walking along the road to Emmaus knew their Scriptures. Even so, the stranger (aka Jesus) reinterprets those well-known Biblical stories and provides "the truth" about the resurrected Messiah. Remembering that these same disciples were followers of Jesus and heard him teach many times, what do you suppose he said to them this time that helped them understand the Scriptures in a new light?
2. Do you think the facts about Bible stories are most important, or do you think the meaning behind the story is more significant?
3. What is the purpose of the Scriptures? To help us understand ourselves, our world, and God? Is it to convey history? Both?

Apply

In the last 150 years in America, Christians have made literal interpretation of Scripture the litmus test for faith. But for the previous 1900 years, the church did no such thing. Current scholarship tells us that there are many ways to understand the "fantastical" stories of the Bible: through the lens of story-telling, allegory, and theological meaning. Not all stories need to be taken literally.

How do you react to this statement? What's at stake here?

Pray

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Week 3: July 24, 2022

Did You Ever Have a Real Encounter with God? An "Ah-Ha" Moment?

Numbers 22:21-38

Connect:

Have you ever had or known someone who had an "ah-ha" moment with God. How do you experience God's presence or leading?

Engage:

Balaam is a prophet for hire who the enemies of the Israelites paid to curse them. Remember, in ancient times, prophets were people sensitive to the divine presence (regardless of their religious cult). Prophets were often employed to discern a way to secure a military victory or validate a new king's installation. On behalf of their god, they would issue challenges or blessings to a group of people. Therefore, Balaam, as a paid prophet, had a track record for perceiving divine messages. He was not an Israelite nor an exclusive follower of the Israelite God, Yahweh.

Read Numbers 22:21-38

1. Balaam's story is remarkable in that God intervenes to stop Balaam from pronouncing a curse upon the Israelites. Even though Balaam is a prophet and one who should be sensitive to the divine presence, why do you think it is the donkey that sees the angel and not Balaam?
2. Remember the old fable about the person on the roof during a flood who cries out to God for help. A canoe, a boat, and a helicopter all come by and offer to help. The stranded one repeatedly replies with, "Thanks, I'm good. God will rescue me. Then when they perish and arrive in heaven, they angrily demand that God explain why their prayer was not answered. God responds, "Who do you think sent the canoe, the boat, and the helicopter?" What kind of signs from God have you missed, only to become aware of God's presence, guidance, or provision after the fact?
3. Share a time with you had an "ah-ha" moment and were aware of God's presence, guidance, or provision.

Apply

While few of us have as dramatic a story as Balaam and his donkey, many have had "ah-ha" moments where we encounter God in an enlightening way.

What could you do to be more open and sensitive to God's whispers in your life?

Pray

Share joys and concerns and pray for one another, the church, and the world.