



REAL WOMEN!

Asking the Right Question

**R. E. A. L.
Women!
R. elevant
E. ncouraging
A. live
L. ionhearted**

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Questions, Questions, Questions. Questions can be good, useful tools or they can be tormenting weapons of doubt and unbelief that bring confusion and distress as we face life's challenges. Swirling questions of "who are you?" "Why do you think you can do this?" are tormenting questions; these are not of God.

A few months ago God began to talk to me about the role of questions in the life of believers. Darryl and I were invited to go and see a piece of property in New Hampshire. We met a fellow who had purchased this property over 20 years ago. Not too long after he purchased it, he felt the Lord say to him, "This isn't for you, but it is for my servants." So, with a desire to help him decide what to do with it, we ventured off. It was a beautiful autumn day, just right for exploration. The property owner, Charlie, told us there was a beautiful view at the top of the ridge, so we set off. He was right! This property was beautiful, but not easily accessible. So I began to really ask the Lord, "How can this be developed? How, Lord?" God began to speak very clearly to me. "You are asking the wrong question. The question should not be, "How", but who and why?" When Charlie has a clear understanding of who this is for and understands the purpose (the why) for the land, the development of this property will be simplified.

The Lord continued talking

with me about the problems of starting with the "how", when we want to move ahead in our life or ministry. He immediately brought to mind two different scriptures. The first scripture He brought to my mind was Mary's response to Gabriel when he told her she was going to have a baby. "Mary asked the angel, "But how can this happen? I am a virgin." Mary went quite naturally to the practical. I am not married, I have no husband as of yet, and how can I possibly have a baby? The angel replied, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the baby to be born will be holy, and he will be called the Son of God. Mary released her faith and said, "I am the Lord's servant. May everything you have said about me come true." And then the angel left her. What an excellent response. Father, I don't understand it, but may everything you have said about my life come true. Show me how to walk this out. The angel gave her the next step by connecting her life to Elizabeth's. God wants to help us with our hows as well. As we listen, pray and seek Him, He will show us our next step. Sometimes, life doesn't seem this simple. That is when we find ourselves in fear and confusion.

The second scripture God brought to me was when the prophet Elisha was in a town named Dothan. His enemies surrounded the town. Elisha was at peace, but his servant was fearful and afraid. He got up early one morning and was con-

fronted by troops, horses and chariots everywhere, according to 2 Kings 6:15. "Oh, sir, *what do we do now?*" the young man cried to Elisha, or as the King James Version says, "Alas, my master, *how shall we do?*" I think he is not alone in those very thoughts. At the bottom line we often wonder, "Alas, my Lord, *how shall we or I do, in this situation?*"

Every beginning journalism student knows the importance of covering the who, what, where, when and why questions in their story. When faced with situations that stretch us beyond our capacity we must go back to the who. Who is in charge here? Who is calling us upward and onward? Who is putting these dreams in our hearts to forge ahead? It was Elisha's obedience to the Lord that put him in the situation of having the Arameans surrounding him. Elisha knew that God was taking care of him, and he was at peace. When the young servant came to him in fear, Elisha calmly said, "Don't be afraid!" Elisha told him. "For there are more on our side than on theirs!" The servant had been staring at the enemy all around them, and I am sure he thought, "What can Elisha mean?" Then Elisha prayed, "O LORD, open his eyes and let him see!" So many times we need our eyes opened to see from God's vision. This allows us to see His provision for our situation. If our eyes become bound to the "how" we will not be able to see the 'who'-



Ask the right Question

Statement of Faith:

**We are becoming
Relevant, Encouragers
who are Alive to God and
His Spirit, even to the point
of Being Lion-Hearted!**

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- our God. *The LORD opened the young man's eyes, and when he looked up, he saw that the hillside around Elisha was filled with horses and chariots of fire. 2 Kings 6:17*

So what happens when we ask the wrong question? Especially, the "Alas, master, how shall I be?" "How-does-this-affect-me" type of questions lead us away from the Lord, not to Him. They lead us into fear and worry, adding anxiety and stress, which complicates hearing from the Lord His solution and plan. Coupled with our own condemning heart, wrong questions can become sources of torment. The how questions move into the "why" questions. Why should you start that new ministry or enlarge your business? Who are you, after all? Why should God answer your prayers for healing, finances, promotion etc. because look at how you have failed Him.

God clearly spoke to me that day, walking on Charlie's property, that I was starting with the

wrong question. I believe the Lord desires to help us ask the right question at the right time. The how question left me feeling small and inadequate (even though it wasn't even something I was going to be involved with!). It left me overwhelmed and confused. The who question and the purpose or why at this time question, began to inspire and motivate me. I could see tired pastors and leaders coming to this beautiful place and being refreshed. I could envision leaders gathering together to seek the Lord and find direction and insight. As I shared these things with Charlie afterward, it brought him peace as well. The how question still must be answered, but it can only be answered from a place of faith, not fear and inadequacy. If God has a "who" in mind, He will give wisdom for the how. So it is in each of our lives. God has a who for you to reach. He has a how for it to succeed. He has a why that is clearly stated in His word—that He might be glorified. He moves in His own season, *answering* the "when's". He

likes immediately, He also moves in the 'nows', and he also likes us to wait. In other words, we must seek Him as individuals. He will be found of us and we can trust Him to lead us into all His good and wonderful ways.

Father, I ask that you help us to ask the right questions. Teach us how to seek you for wisdom and insight. You are Lord of our life and we trust you. Amen.

Written by: Martha Rodman

Are You Questionphobic?

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likely to listen to what you are saying. There are ways to politely and respectfully short circuit the 'talkers', those who like to take up more than their share of the time allotted, but they need to be heard as well. Listen to the potential questions they are not asking aloud behind the ones they are.

Trust: Trust the Holy Spirit will bring the proper answer, or get comfortable with "I don't know, but I will find out for you". Be humble.

Choose: Choose to trust the Holy Spirit in helping your followers learn and develop the ability to ask and answer questions. Model how you would like it done. Be an example of the believer in this area. Ultimately they are God's children and He knows how to help them. Choose to intercede for them.

Guidelines for those asking questions:

Check your motives. Jesus answered true seekers with helpful answers. He responded to accusative questioners with revelation about themselves. Make sure your motive for asking the question is truth.

Timing: Make sure your leader has enough time to answer your questions when you ask them. Schedule an appointment if necessary.

Listen: Listen to the answer before you ask another question.

Trust: Trust the heart of your leader to be seeking and hearing from the Lord. Deal with any anger or frustration issues with the Lord, in prayer first. Practice forgiveness.



Leadership Encouragement

Are You Questionphobic?

Leaders are by the nature of their job description, question askers and question answerers. However, many leaders seem to be “questionphobic”. They attempt to avoid putting themselves in vulnerable positions. Perhaps past hurts, insecurities or pride causes leaders to skirt around questions their followers may ask. I confess, I have been a closet “questionphobic”. God began to help me deal with these issues. I could blame my past (always a convenient excuse!), lack of training in exactly how to respond, or simply fear and insecurity. God said, pride and fear. What humbling that revelation brought.

Jesus certainly seemed to embrace questions. He had his share of honest, tricky, and ignorant questions. He answered questions from naysayers as well as from those who were seeking truth. He had many techniques for responding to those questions. One example, He liked to answer hard questions with hard questions. He also used question-asking to provide instruction opportunities as He taught. Study the Scriptures and see how Jesus handled the issue of questions.

Jesus is not afraid of our questions. He is not intimidated by them. He is not nervous about them. Why then do so many of His leaders struggle with people asking them questions? If we are to become like Jesus, then we must become comfortable asking as well as answering questions.

Leaders: Asking the Right Question
(Information, Insight, and Instruction)

Questions are asked for many different reasons. Some are asked to find simple information, “How do you prepare your teaching material?” Other questions are used to seek a deeper insight into a situation, “How will the change in schedule affect your life?” Or instruction, *Then Jesus said to his critics, “I have a question for you. Does the law permit good deeds on the Sabbath, or is it a day for doing evil? Is this a day to save life or to destroy it?”* Luke 6:9.

Questions are excellent tools to gain entrance into other people’s thoughts, ideas and feelings. A well crafted question can cut through many layers and expose the true thoughts and intents of the heart. As a stu-

dent desiring a teaching certificate from the University of Washington, I learned how difficult it is to actually write clearly stated test questions. If I wanted to accurately measure a student’s knowledge, I had to have a test that accurately reflected the material covered in a very clear and concise manner—not an easy thing to do. As a young teacher, I felt the test results reflected my ability to teach the students under my care. If they did well, I would feel good. If they did poorly, I felt bad about myself, often fighting anger and frustration at “Why they weren’t they getting it?”. I could have continued teaching without being concerned but those feelings actually motivated me to try a little harder to reach them with the material. I set myself to become more innovative and creative in my approach, which made me a better teacher.

The same is true for ministry leaders. If we discover, through asking questions, that those we are leading do not comprehend our vision or understand the ‘whys’ of our methods, we can become angry and frustrated. Or, we can learn to communicate in clearer or different manners. Most ministry leaders do not have the opportunity to craft written test questions to see if their students are getting it. They usually discover the test results by overhearing conversations, watching behaviors or simply by asking direct questions.

It takes courage and faith to ask some questions. It takes courage and faith to hear some answers and it takes the love of God operating in and through our lives to answer questions without reacting in the flesh and hurting rather than healing. We can find comfort in knowing not all people received Jesus’ answers. Not all people will receive your answers. But most will. Most will be encouraged. Most will listen. Most will be better off for it.



Guidelines for answering questions

Dealing with differences of opinion: What if someone has a different opinion? One that falls in a grey area? We must be grounded in His love and secure in our calling to allow differing opinions on those things *that even theologians interpret differently.* (Example:

Women’s role in leadership) We must be clear about those things in which the Word is clear.

Create a Safe Environment: for the leader and the follower

Safety: If you as a leader desire to know the heart of your followers, you must cultivate a safe environment. An environment where honest questions can be asked, and honest answers received. I learned, as a public school teacher, that students do not respond freely if they do not feel safe. It was important that I, as the teacher, made sure each student felt it was ok to ask a “stupid” question, knowing that question would be answered in a polite and respectful manner. This is the same in ministry. Cultivating a culture of safety takes time and grace from the leader. Consistency in Christ-like behavior is crucial to build this “safe zone”. No personal attacks allowed.

Prepare: Before beginning a question and answer or discussion time, take the time to set the parameters. Re-focus the group on the topic. Take the time to pre-think the questions in advance that will most likely give you the answers you need (not necessarily the ones you might like to have!) to help the group to grow.

Timing is important: Many leaders ask questions but do not give the listener time to consider their answers before they move along to the next question. If people feel a time crunch, they will not freely share their thoughts or opinions. You may get an answer, but it may not be the fullest or most honest answer needed. Make room for the “ponderers”—these are people who need time to really think about their answers before they speak. Some of the greatest insights can come from these deeper wells.

These folks may do better when given the questions before hand so they can pray and think through their answers.

Listening: When you ask a question, take the time to really listen to the answer. Keep your eyes focused on them. Concentrating on their words as well as their body language will help create a safe setting. If, as a leader, you hear them, they will be much more

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Building Together Across Generations

R.E.A.L.

Women

My Dear Sisters, of all ages,

What a season to live in. What an amazing time to serve the Lord. Have you had your faith tested? Has your love been stretched? How about your hope? 1 Corinthians 13:13 reminds us that *now abide faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these is love*. No matter how difficult your roads, these three “graces” as they are sometimes referred to are eternal, which means they should be a part of our real life as well. The word “abide” means to live or reside in a place. Isn’t it fortunate that we, as believers, no matter our season or station in life can have these three amazing additions to our lives? However, these areas are also areas where Satan tries to rob us.

One of the most comforting gifts God can give us is a relationship with people who have walked with Jesus longer than we have. Their experience and trust in Him helps impart faith when we are struggling with faith, hope in times of hopelessness, and a reminder of love when we are feeling unlovable. Perhaps, you currently do not have access to this type of relationship—seek it out. I am so aware of how much we as sisters in the Lord need each other. We tend to isolate and withdraw during our difficult times, but, according to Scripture, we should reach out and call for the elders! *Are any of you suffering hardships? You should pray. Are any of you happy? You should sing praises.* ¹⁴ *Are any of you sick? You should call for the elders of the church to come and pray over you, anointing you with oil in the name of the Lord.* ¹⁵ *Such a prayer offered in faith will heal the sick, and the Lord will make you well. James 5: 13-15.* Struggling with hopelessness can make us sick, as Proverb 13:12 states: *Hope deferred makes the heart sick, but a dream fulfilled is a tree of life.* Solomon reminds us that there is nothing new under the sun; your struggle is not new to God or others. Do not let pride or the fear of man keep you from calling, emailing or asking for help.

Young mothers, if you are stressed with your children. Seek out help. You don’t have to go it alone. Sometimes you can find help in your own peer group. Young mothers helping young mothers—sharing information, resources and baby sitting or play dates can relieve much stress. Moms of Pre-schoolers or MOPS, is a wonderful place to find some extra advice and caring for this season of life. Form a reading group to read and discuss relevant material.

Do you find your marriage in difficulty, request help. Seek out a married woman who loves and respects her husband; see if she could meet with you. If you don’t know who to talk with, ask your pastor for suggestions. Many people do not know others outside of their own peer group, or they are afraid the other person would be too busy or not interested in your situation. This may be true, but it may not be as well. You will not know unless you ask! Do this before your marriage is in crisis when the issues are small, and you may save yourself much trouble. Dear sisters, please know that I am available to be an ear for whatever you may be facing. I may not be the wisest person you know, but we can pray together and seek the only wise God, trusting that He will share His wisdom with us. You do have a friend in me, at least I will try!

We come across so many women that feel like they don’t have any friends. This is not what God intends. If you find yourself in that situation, begin to pray about it. Ask Him for friends and do not pre-disqualify those He brings into your life. On the outside you may not feel like they are a good fit, but show yourself friendly and you may discover a hidden treasure. Ask Him to open your eyes to those around you who may need your friendship; your life will be enriched.

If you are struggling in *any* area, get help. We need each of you to be strong and healthy. Darryl preached a message at Living Word Fellowship dealing with the Iron Yoke of Oppression. If you feel you have been battling Satanic oppression, check out our website www.impart.org There is help and hope for you. If you need more help in this area, give us a call.

Finally, consider this scripture about hope.

We can rejoice, too, when we run into problems and trials, for we know that they help us develop endurance. ⁴ And endurance develops strength of character, and character strengthens our confident hope of salvation. ⁵ And this hope will not lead to disappointment. For we know how dearly God loves us, because he has given us the Holy Spirit to fill our hearts with his love. Romans 5: 3-5

My prayers and thoughts are toward you all. I pray this season of walking with Him will reveal these graces in each of your lives.

With much love, Martha

Encouraging

Enthusiastic

Enduring

Examples

Eager

Sign up for

The Email Version of

Real Women!

Email your request:

Martha@impart.org

