

Introduction

Pray.

Luke 10:25-36. (Pg 40 in Lent Guide).

While you're turning there let me just give you a real quick recap of where we've been over the course of this sermon series all about **mission: demonstrating and proclaiming the gospel to people who don't yet know Jesus.**

- **Week 1 – How do we actually change?** And we said that we grow (in all areas of the christian life) including into missional people through *truth, practice, and community* – all empowered by the Holy Spirit.
- **Week 2 – Overcoming the barriers.** When we step into the mission of God, we must face the barriers of the world, the flesh, and the devil – which are working to keep us back from sharing the good news of Jesus.
- **Week 3 – We are *who we are* and *where we are* so the people around us might come to know God.** We took a look at the places God has put us and the people he's put us there with as ready made opportunities for sharing the gospel.

This week, I want to take us a step further, that now as we consider those relationships – our neighbors, friends, coworkers, family – how do we begin to have conversations with them about Jesus.

You ever wonder this?

I get this question a lot as a pastor when I talk to people about sharing the gospel. (and maybe you've wrestled with this over the past few weeks...)

- People ask very simply – “**Where do I start?**”
 - Like at lunch one day, in between bites of sandwich do I just say “let me tell you about our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.”
 - Do I show up to the neighborhood cookout – “I brought chips! Also if you die tonight are you going to heaven or hell?”

Is that the way? Hard...maybe...But perhaps there's a different option.

Luke 10:25-36

Perhaps there's something we could see in the life and teachings of Jesus that might give us a different path towards having gospel conversations with those around us.

It'd be worth us pausing to ask – how does Jesus approach teaching and explaining to others about the kingdom of God? After all, one of the primary things Jesus came to do, according to the book of Mark was “proclaim (preach) the good news of the kingdom of God).

So we can and should ask – How does Jesus go about this? And I think what we'll find is both fascinating and incredibly helpful.

Let me show you one example in our passage today, Luke 10...and then we'll hop around and I'll show you a few others.

Luke 10:25-36

25 And behold, a lawyer (expert in the law – Pharisee/Religious Teacher) **stood up to put him to the test, saying, “Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?”**

Can you imagine getting this question from a friend or coworker? “I thought you’d never ask!” Turn from your sin, put your faith in Jesus, trust Him as Savior and Lord. Evangelism is easy!”

That’s what I think a lot of us would be inclined to do in this scenario. But as we’re going to see in a second, that’s not how Jesus responds.

And that’s because – catch this – Jesus realizes that this question isn’t really a question at all. As it says in the passage, this guy is trying to “test Jesus.” He’s not genuinely wanting an answer – he’s wanting Jesus to agree with his answer.

Jesus knows what the man is trying to do, and so look at how he replies...

26 He said to him, “What is written in the Law? How do you read it?”

Jesus responds with a question.

What Jesus is trying to do with this question, essentially, is figure out how this guy views the world and how he views God.

He asks him – “how do you read the Law?” Meaning – how do you interpret the OT Scriptures? How do you explain what these writings say about God? About you? About eternal life?

How open is this man to God, and to His Word?

It’s an inviting, opening up type of question. The guy responds...

27 And he answered, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind, and your neighbor as yourself.”

He basically sums up his understanding of the Old Testament Law – Love God, love your neighbor.

Now, we know from places like Mark 12, that this is precisely how Jesus himself also sums up the Old Testament Law. So Jesus responds...

28 “You have answered correctly; do this, and you will live.”

You’re right. Love God and love your neighbor. But it’s not enough just to know those things you must do them.

To which the guy asks a follow up question...

29 But he, desiring to justify himself (aka make sure he’s all good to go), **said to Jesus, “And who is my neighbor?”**

Again, it’d be very easy for Jesus to just say “everybody. Everyone is your neighbor. Love everyone.” Moving on.

But notice – this time, he responds, with a parable, a story, about the so-called “good Samaritan.” About a guy who gets beat up, a priest and a Levite (aka two of the prominent religious figures of Judaism) pass by and offer no help, but a Samaritan (who the Jews considered unholy and unclean) is the one to stop and help.

There's a lot of beautiful realities we could pull from this parable, not the point of our sermon today. What's interesting for us today is how Jesus ends the story...

36 Which of these three, do you think, proved to be a neighbor to the man who fell among the robbers?"

Jesus still isn't going to give the guy a straightforward answer to his question. He's going to make the guy answer his own question.

Jesus + Questions

Do you see what Jesus is doing? Jesus keeps asking questions.

And if you read the gospels – Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John – you actually find Jesus doing this all of the time.

Like once you see it, you can't unsee it.

- Jesus loved answering questions, with more questions.
- He loved responding to people's answers with more questions.
- In fact, according to one pastor Dan Grider, who did a study on this, he found that in the 4 gospels – **Jesus asked over 220 questions, but in contrast only directly answered a question he was asked 4 times.**

Let me give you just a handful of examples:

- **Mark 10:17-18 – 17 And as he was setting out on his journey, a man ran up and knelt before him and asked him, "Good Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?" 18 And Jesus said to him, "Why do you call me good?"**
- **Matthew 12:9-11 – 9 He went on from there and entered their synagogue. 10 And a man was there with a withered hand. And they asked him, "Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath?"—so that they might accuse him. 11 He said to them, "Which one of you who has a sheep, if it falls into a pit on the Sabbath, will not take hold of it and lift it out?"**
- **Matthew 22:17-20 – 17 Tell us, then, what you think. Is it lawful to pay taxes to Caesar, or not?" 18 But Jesus, aware of their malice, said, "Why put me to the test, you hypocrites? 19 Show me the coin for the tax." And they brought him a denarius. 20 And Jesus said to them, "Whose likeness and inscription is this?"**
- **Mark 2:8-9 – 8 And immediately Jesus, perceiving in his spirit that they thus questioned within themselves, said to them, "Why do you question these things in your hearts? 9 Which is easier, to say to the paralytic, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Rise, take up your bed and walk'?"**

And we could go on and on and on. 216 more times to be exact.

Now certainly we have plenty of examples of Jesus giving sermons, teaching lessons, illustrating with parables.

- He was not afraid to proclaim truths and realities.
- He didn't *just* ask questions.
 - Often after he asked a series of questions, he would circle back and give statement truths to sort of round out his argument.

But I think a lost and key part of Jesus' ministry of proclaiming the kingdom of God was the fact that – Jesus asked a lot of questions.

And time and time again you'll see that he does so, even in all of those examples I gave, to get people to think – “Why do I think the way that I do?”

Jesus is using questions as a way of encouraging people to think critically about their own beliefs. He's getting them to reckon with what they functionally believe to be true about God, about themselves, and about the world.

Think about Luke 10 – How do you read the Law? How do you interpret the Scriptures? Here's a story, now who do you think is the neighbor and what does it mean to love your neighbor as the law commands?

These are all curiosity-fueled questions, getting a person to wrestle with what they either explicitly believe or functionally believe.

Eventually Jesus gets to the propositional truth – Here's what is right about God, about the world, about you. Here's the good news of the kingdom.

But he opens up the door to sharing the gospel via good, thought-provoking questions.

Curiosity As Missional Tool

Asking good questions, out of genuine love, to help someone wrestle with their beliefs and explore the good news of Jesus is an essential missional skill.

I believe, in the cultural moment in which we live, like we explored together a few weeks ago, if you want to live on mission – you're going to need to know how to ask good questions.

Let me explain why...

We live in a cultural moment increasingly hostile and/or apathetic to the practice of sharing the gospel.

And part of the reason for that, as we mentioned, is that our society is increasingly secular and disenchanting.

- Meaning – 40-50 years ago in America, most people – Christian or not – believed that there was some sort of transcendent entity out there.
- And they believed that that entity could offer us a framework for what is right and wrong, how to live, and how to find purpose in this life. A vast majority believed that something like that was out there.
- Now they might have disagreed on who or what that entity was, or how to connect with it – but the vast majority of people believed that some deity existed out there somewhere in a spiritual realm.

Which meant that talking to people about Jesus, or what is commonly called “evangelism”, in many ways, was just about helping people “connect the dots.” They wanted some version of the Christian faith to be true; we just had to help them answer a few key questions they had in order to arrive there.

- Maybe they had questions about the age of the Earth, or about the exclusive claims of Christianity, or about the problem of evil.
- Or something else – but generally speaking, if you could give people satisfactory intellectual answers to their questions, you stood a decent chance at bringing them to a relationship with Jesus.
- It tended to be that the majority of people who did not follow Christ were curious, or at least open, to the claims of Christianity.
- [A few months ago I read the biography of the late Tim Keller. He was a pastor in NYC for several decades before he passed away last year.](#)

- But the biography talked about how in the 1970s, while Tim was in college, his goal was to convince his classmates that the resurrection of Jesus was both "intellectually credible and existentially satisfying."
- But 50 years later, when asked by his biographer -- "Is that still your goal in ministry?" He very simply said "oh no, no one's asking those questions anymore."

A lot of evangelism used to be about answering people's questions.

But increasingly, that's not how it works anymore. You might still come across some people like that. But more and more, that's not really the dynamic at all.

- More and more, if you go up to the average non-Christian and say "hello – I'm a Christian, and I'm here to answer any questions you have about Christianity," they're going to look back at you with a blank stare.
- Most people just don't have those questions anymore. We're all afraid they have them and will ask them, but they don't.
- The current has shifted from curious or open, to closed and cynical.
- Increasingly, people are not wanting the message of Jesus to be true, and just waiting on someone to come along and answer their questions.
- They might not even feel a need for it to be true in the first place.

Most people out there right now already have a set of answers to life's biggest questions.

- Questions like why are we here? What is our purpose? What is life all about? What does it mean to be a "good person"?
- Even those who wouldn't know how to articulate their answers to those questions, at least operate out of functional answers to them.
 - They've already decided what life is all about and how to work towards the best life they can.
- And for the most part, people tend to be pretty satisfied with their answers. They're pretty content with their existing worldviews. Or at least, found a way to distract themselves from any apparent tensions their worldviews might create within them.

This is the reason that so many of you have mentioned to us that the reason you struggle to share the gospel is because everyone around you seems to have their life and deep questions figured out.

- You feel like you have no "in" through some burden or struggle or guilt they are experiencing.
- "I don't know how to talk about Jesus, because it seems like they're doing just fine."

So we need a better way.

We need, as the late Tim Keller said, to be ready, not to answer people's questions, but to question people's answers.

Asking good questions, out of genuine love, to help someone wrestle with their beliefs and explore the good news of Jesus.

This is how you would claim the world, and your life, and reality works – *are you sure about that?*

Is that actually holding up to reality? To logic? Is your professed belief actually working for you? Are there cracks in your worldview?

Practical Help on Questions

Now, let me take it one step further, and help you think through this really practically – What types of questions help your neighbors, coworkers, family, or friends wrestle with their worldviews?

Now this is not an end-all, be-all sort of list, but I do want to help give you some categories and some examples to get you started.

Conversational Questions

**Ways to extend the discussion and help draw out someone's ideas a bit more. So someone says something like – “We used to attend church but don't anymore.” Or “More and more I feel bored with my job.” Or “

- Can you tell me more about that?
- Could you say that in a different way?
- Will you elaborate on that a little?
- I've heard people say that before. What does that mean exactly?

Personal Questions

- You sound really passionate about that. How did that come about for you?
- I can tell this issue is really personal for you. Would you be willing to share more about why?
- What makes you say that exactly?
- Could I hear more about that part of your story sometime?

Philosophical Questions

- Do you think there's such a thing as a “good person”? What makes a person good?
- Do you believe there are evil people in the world? What do you think should be done about that?
- In your opinion, what is the problem with the world? What do you think would solve those problems?
- What would you define as the ultimate goal in life?

CLEAR CAVEAT

- Now, just to be very clear – the goal is not just to ask questions forever. Certainly Jesus does not ask questions forever.
- In most of the examples you'll find in the gospels, he starts with questions to get that person's view of the world exposed, and then replies with the truth about the kingdom of God.
- That's the goal – I'm asking good questions, in genuine loving curiosity, to get you to think critically about what you claim to believe, and then to offer Jesus as the truth of all reality.

Personal Example

To help us land the plane, I want to share one example from my life of how this can go. I don't do this to paint myself as the “got-it-all-together” expert or “look, I'm like Jesus!”... I just want to help give you a picture of this for your life...

Several years back I became friends with a guy we'll call *Peter*.

He and I had known each other for a year or two.

- And over that time, as friends do, we had conversations about all sorts of things – football, how to make the best fried pickles (he worked in the restaurant industry), all surface level stuff.

But one day after a round of golf, the conversation we were having sort of took a turn. Peter turned to me and just flat out said – “You know, when we first met, I didn't think we were gonna be friends. Mainly because you're a pastor, and pastors are not my favorite. Most of them are hypocrites. Or judgmental. Or they just like to yell and tell people they're going to hell.”

(Come to find out, this was the eventual lead up to inviting Lindsay and I to his wedding, but I digress).

- Now, a big part of me at that moment wanted to argue – “that’s not every pastor. Just the ones that make the news. I know so many great pastors who love God and love His people, and preach Jesus faithfully.”
- There was also this part of me that wanted to sort of puff myself up – “yeah, I know. I’m a pastor, but isn’t it great that I’m also cool. Look at my tattoos.”

But instead, I decided to just ask him one of those **conversational questions**. “Sounds like you have thought about this a bit. Why do you feel that way?”

He started opening up about his own background within the church. Some hurt him and his family had experienced when his parents went through their divorce when he was younger. The way he perceived the church, and especially the pastor, turned their back on him and his family.

Now at that point I could have said “that sounds really tough.” And sort of changed the subject and went on with our golf round. But loving curiosity is key. And so I asked a more **philosophical question**. “I wonder,” I asked Peter, “if that’s your view of Christians, how has that affected your view of God?”

He went on to talk about how it has turned him off to even really considering God as a valid part of life. “If that’s how his so-called followers act, I don’t think believing in God is all that appealing.”

Now at this point I knew you can’t simply ask questions 100% of the time, so I just gently and winsomely shared – “First, I’m really sorry for how you and your family were treated. But to be honest Peter, messed up Christians is kind of what makes this whole God thing more appealing to me. The fact that people who follow Him aren’t perfect, is actually incredibly encouraging to me, because I mess up all of the time. In fact, what I love about Jesus is that being messed up is not just okay, it’s sort of the whole point. That’s what Christianity is about – God’s love for messed up people like you and like me.”

Now, I wish I could say that at that moment, the 17th green, Peter repented of his sins, placed his faith in Jesus, and had his life now and into eternity changed.

But...that’s not what happened. In fact after that, one of us hit a historically bad shot, we laughed, and we moved on to talking about other things.

Him and his wife came with us to church a couple of times, we had a handful more spiritual conversations, and then we moved away and haven’t talked to them in a few years.

And to my knowledge, Peter still is not a follower of Jesus.

But I find myself praying, every so often, that something about that conversation made Peter at least a little less sure of his “answers.”

- That maybe, that piqued his curiosity about a different way to view Jesus, the world, and his life..
- And that maybe one day, that uncertainty will lead him to investigate whether or not there are better answers out there.
- And my prayer is that God puts someone or something in his life that leads him to consider the way of Jesus. But – **I’ve got to trust the Father to do what I can’t do.**

But all that being said, do you see how conversation went very differently than...

- If I would have immediately gotten argumentative – “no you’re wrong about pastors and Christians.”
- Or if I would have shied away and not with genuine loving curiosity pressed with questions?

- Or if I would have just asked questions forever and never shared an alternative view of God + His people?

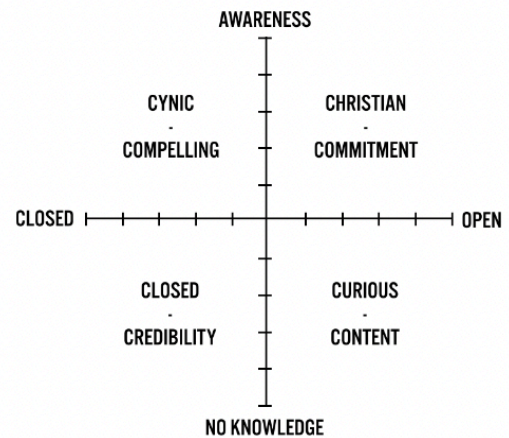
Through love, curiosity, and questions – we turned an obstacle he had into a gospel opportunity. And it happened simply because I spent some time questioning his answers. And that’s what we’re going for.

Practice Guide

You’re going to spend time this week in your practice guide on something called the **Gray Matrix**. It’s a way to lovingly think about where various folks are in your life, but it can be a bit confusing so I just want to explain it for a second...

Then with each individual, you’re going to look for:

1. **Opportunities for the gospel** – What are ways their current view of life creates open doors for the gospel? Ways you can build on the friendship to begin making bridges to the gospel.
2. **Obstacles to the gospel** – What are ways their current view of life creates an obstacle to the gospel. (Peter – view of Christians).
3. **Next Steps** – In light of that, what’s a great next step (think – great question you can ask them next time you are together).



Now, I just want to address one thing before we pray and move into our time of response – there’s going to be some of us who are resistant to do this because you’re going to feel like “this is turning people into projects.”

Let me just help you see something real quick...

- Today our oldest, Harper, turns 4. It’s her birthday. She’s very excited.
- There are ways I want Harper to grow in this next year. Lindsay and I have assessed some of where she’s at – in regards to her coming to know Christ, reading, social skills, chores around the house, different things.
 - And we have a plan of how we want to help her grow and develop over the next year.
 - In crass terms – I have an agenda for her life. That she grows up into a flourishing and functioning adult who loves Jesus and loves other people.
- The reason why I care to do all of that, is not because she’s “my project” – it’s because I dearly love her. And because I dearly love her, I want nothing but flourishing and wholeness for her.
- So to think about – *where are my non-Christian friends, coworkers, neighbors currently at and how can I engage them in conversations about Christ* – is not to make them into a project.
 - It’s driven out of a deep love and deep awareness that without God they will not flourish, not now or into eternity.

Genuine, love-driven curiosity that leads to questioning people’s answers and building bridges to the gospel in people’s lives.

That’s what we’re after this week.

Pray.