

The Gift of Questions

by Thaddeus Barnum

The gift of questions is essential for building strong and resilient relationships, and it requires a willingness to be curious, open-minded, and honest.

Duration: 23:43

Topics: "Questions"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker reflects on the importance of having a strong foundation in God's word. He shares a personal story about how a flick in his life prepared him for his mother's death. He emphasizes that God has a purpose for each individual and that He is constantly working to make them stronger and more compassionate. The speaker also discusses a passage from Luke 13 where Jesus warns about the consequences of not knowing Him personally and being rejected by Him in the end.

Transcript

Almighty Father in heaven, we praise you and thank you for these days that you have given us, and we pray with all our heart that you would give us a holy passion inside of us to pursue you, to know you, to love you, to serve you all our days, and at the last to be with you forever, in Jesus' name, amen. I bid you good morning. I want to spend some time today in this passage of Luke chapter 13, and so if you would go there in your Bibles, there's a one provided for you in the pew as well, and also to Matthew 7 and the Sermon on the Mount, where we see a parallel passage together.

When we come to this passage of Luke 13 chapter 13 verse 22, we come to a unique part of Scripture, and we have this moment when Jesus our Lord is traveling, and this someone comes out, and this someone has a question, and I simply want to stop there and give thanks for this moment. This someone has got a question for our Lord. This time in the Bible it does not say that he asked the question, this person, this someone asked the question to test Jesus, or to put him on trial, or because they knew the answer, they were pursuing him, they were concerned, they wanted to know how many will be saved in the kingdom of God.

They're burdened by the question, and so they come to ask the Lord. They've come with a question, and I, oh if I could just give you that again, if I could impart into your heart, into your soul, into your mind, the gift of questions again, the gift of curiosity. It is the essence, it is the structure of how relationships are built.

It is the way and the means about how we talk together, how we understand, how we explore, how we find out. It's all based on questions. We want to know, we want to ask, and as we ask our ears are now open because we want to hear the response.

That's how relationships live. How many of you are in a relationship where you've already turned the person off? You've already done that, and somehow when questions are taken out of the relationship, the relationship goes dull. It goes stale.

You become one of those old couples at a restaurant that come and sit down and stare at everybody else but your person that you came with. And thank God even at our age we can stare at our iPhone so we don't have to look at each other. There's this break that happens between us.

We find friends, we'll go out and spend a wonderful lunch together, but never ask, never question, never pursue, never have that thing inside of us that looks, digs, finds out about the other. And we've got these barriers that are put up one from another, and you can feel it, you can know it's there. Is it because we've lost interest? Is it because somewhere inside of us we already know what you're gonna say? Is it because somewhere inside I'm more concerned about me than you, and I've lost interest in you losing interest in me? Is it possible that if we really talk, the things we haven't talked will come out, and I'm afraid that they will.

So it's better to assume and to pretend and to avoid than to let the questions have their moment. If you've got troubles in a relationship, I promise you your questions have dried up. And I promise you that the way we feel loved so often is when somebody looks at us and says, I want to talk to you.

We had a guy in this congregation years ago named Jack Field. Oh, he was dangerous. He was the kind of guy that would say, you and I, I want to hear your story.

I want to take you out to lunch. I want to know about you. And you know, just to receive that was to receive a gift of kindness and of love and of grace, because he really wanted it.

When I first met Erilyn, that was the heart behind her. No, not about me. No, no.

She had this pursuit of God. That's why people began to come around to be disciplined by her, because she had these questions, and people have questions, want to be with people that have questions. And she was pursuing the Lord, and her questions got me to start questioning, and me to start pursuing.

That's why I love Alpha so much, because so many people are outside asking questions, but the thing I fear most is that they're going to come to us and ask their questions, but we're done asking questions. We're just the kind of people that sit and know all the answers, because we stopped pursuing. I've heard so many preachers in that place.

I pastor so many pastors in that place, where they get up Sunday after Sunday, and they do a great job at what they do, but their soul is passionless. They've lost that fervor. They've lost what Paul said is that surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord.

I want to know Him. I want to know the power of His resurrection. I want to know the fellowship of His sufferings.

One thing I do, pressing on, Paul said, straining for what's ahead, putting back what's behind, that I might press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward. He's got this pursuit inside of him, this pursuit, and you always know when somebody's asking and doesn't want to hear, when they're doing it and it doesn't mean anything, but you also know when it does mean something, and this person, this someone comes to Jesus. There's a burden upon the soul, and thanks be to God, our Lord turns back to that person to respond, to connect, because that's how it happens.

It's how the kingdom of God happens. It's when we connect. He responds, thank you Jesus, you didn't turn and just give a theological pat answer.

Thank you that you didn't just turn away and give just some comment. No, he turned, and he turned out of compassion. He turned out of care and concern for that someone, and for those who are around, you can see in your text that he actually turns and says to them.

He speaks to the group. He turns around in verse 23, someone says, Lord will those who are saved be few? And he said to them. He turned to them all around him because he was concerned.

That's the thing about it. I want to ask you, what kind of compassion are you interested in? Are you interested in the kind of compassion that that's just simple, that makes things comfortable for you? Or do you want to have somebody tell you the truth? So many of us try to find doctors that will tell us the truth, so we don't have to go be with them, because they'll tell us the truth. Have you been to your doctor? No, they'll tell me the truth.

This is your test result. Thank you so much. I've been waiting all this time for that.

Thank you. I had a friend who was fired this week. He was given two weeks notice after seven years in the company.

And all this time the employer's been so happy, so happy, so happy. Boom. Only that the person had been kind enough to tell my friend some weeks and some months in advance so they could prepare.

But who wants to say bad news? Who wants to prepare? Who wants to do the right thing? Do you? Do you want relationships where compassion actually prepares you? And that's what our Lord does in this text. He changes the conversation. You'll notice this person wants to talk about how many are in the kingdom of God.

Are there many or are there few? And our Lord actually, He preached on that subject in Matthew 7 verses 13 and 14, where he says, enter by the narrow gate. The gate is wide. The way is broad that leads to destruction.

Many are those who enter by it. The gate is small. The way is narrow that leads to life.

Few are those who find it. So he's already preached this subject and talked about this. He's already mentioned this, this door, this narrow door into eternal life.

But you see his concern isn't about many and few. He's concerned about them. He's concerned about their soul.

And that's why he gives as a response, strive. He says, strive to enter by the narrow gate. And he brings back that door, that narrow door, that one way back in the days of Eden, the Garden of Eden, where that

door into eternal life, into the glories of God was closed to us.

The door of the ark with Noah. There's a door there. There's a door in the Passover with the blood of the Lamb.

Get inside before the destroying angel comes. These are all Old Testament stories that Jesus is giving them. Enter.

Strive to enter by that narrow door. And everything inside of me wants to say, thank you Lord for that kindness. I will strive to enter.

But the problem is, our Lord's not done. Point number two, he says. There's a day coming.

There's a day yet to come in the future. This is very much like the Old Testament prophets. You heard it read beautifully by Kristen in Hebrews 12.

Did you not? Prophet Haggai, he rose up and he said, there's a day coming when the Lord will shake not only the earth, he'll shake the heavens. He will shake the heavens so that everything shakable will not remain but only the things that are unshakable. Our Lord is coming with a kingdom that's unshakable and with a king and a Messiah and a Lord who will usher us into that kingdom.

That's what the Old Testament prophets did. And that's what Jesus is doing here. Who is the king? Who is the Messiah? Who is the Lord? And he's telling us of the kingdom yet to come and a day yet to come.

But that day is hard to hear. That day is hard to hear because he talks about that door. That door is one day going to be closed.

It is going to shut. And on that day, it says, when that door is shut, once the master of the house has risen and shut the door, many, I tell you, will seek to enter. They will not be able because the master will have shut the door once forever for all.

It'll be shut. That day's coming. An event and a time yet to come and you are warned by it.

You now know it's going to happen. Our Lord has now said it. And again, we have this wonderful point.

Thank you, Lord. You're preparing us. You're showing us this day that's yet to come.

That's why I must strive to enter now. He's not done. He's not done.

And what he does next is so hard to hear. In the Sermon on the Mount, he's gentler. In the Sermon on the Mount, he says there's coming a day, people will say, Lord, Lord, but they will not enter the kingdom of God.

And they will say, but did we not prophesy? Did we not cast out demons? Did we not do mighty works of miracles in the midst? Did we not do these great things? And our Lord on that day will say, you, I don't know you. Because always from the beginning, relationship is everything with him. He's not interested in first what you do for him.

He's interested in you. He's interested in the relationship you have with him. Through that relationship, things happen in the service of God's ministry.

But it's that order. It's that order. But this passage is unlike any other in Luke 13, because what our Lord does is doesn't talk about generalists.

He doesn't talk about generalities. He says what's going to happen is on that day, listen to the pronoun shift. Verse 25, once the master of the house has risen and shut the door, you begin to stand outside to knock at that door saying, Lord, open to us.

Then he will answer, I don't know where you come from. You will begin to say, we ate, we drank in your presence, you taught in our street. But he will say, I tell you, I don't know where you come from.

Depart from me, you workers of evil. Suddenly he's put us out there, us outside. I thought we were talking about many, them.

And he makes it about us and starts to make us feel what it would like to be on that day to stand outside. I wish he were done now, but he's not. He actually allows the hearer to actually hear the sounds of what that day is like.

It is our Lord that uses the phrase weeping and gnashing of teeth. Outside is where there's weeping and gnashing of teeth. And then he gives the sight, not just sound, but sight.

And in that sight, these who are outside, we who are outside, we see Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and the prophets in the kingdom of God. We see people from the east, the west, the north, and the south. They're reclining at the table.

They're eating in the table. We can see them, but we aren't in the kingdom. We're outside.

We're outside. We ourselves cast out. And our Lord says it.

Many of you who think your first will be last, and you who are last will be first. The very principle that was used in the days of the Baptist, when the religious leaders, the Pharisees, the Sadducees, they listened to John, but they couldn't hear him. It was the poor, the outcasts, tax collectors, the prostitutes, those who had nothing, who confessed their sins, who went down into the waters, who awaited the Messiah to come.

They were waiting for him. Why? Because questions had come back. Lord, is it me? Lord, is it me? And you say, what kind of preacher is this? This is not compassion.

This isn't kindness. He makes me feel like I'm a sinner. He makes me feel like I'm a worker of evil.

He makes me feel like I'm outcast. I'm not deserving the kingdom of God. He puts me outside.

That's why we don't ask him questions. Who wants to hear that? But it is compassion. Thanks be to God, it's compassion.

Aaron and I grew up under a wonderful preacher who loved to study, loved to study eagles. When he was a boy in Vermont, and he talked about that passage of Deuteronomy 32, verse 11, when the mother eagle, mother eagle comes down on the eaglets, and everybody's comfortable and safe and happy, and everybody's loving life, and mom's bringing the food in, and getting to know the brothers and sisters, and there's a little bit of bumps here and there, but it's basically good inside of the nest. And mother eagle comes and goes flick to one of them.

And down that eaglet goes down and down and down. Before the eaglet hits the ground, mama comes right underneath, swoops that little thing right back up, and puts it right back in the nest where it's safe. You can almost hear the eaglet saying, Bob, we're done, you and I. You are fired.

Of course, there's that lovely thought that maybe my brothers and sisters are gonna have the same kind of ride. My mom and dad, when I was growing up, they wanted me in that nest. They protected me, especially.

When I was 12 years old, my sister got sick, and though she recovered quite well, my mom and dad decided the best thing to do was to send me away for the summer, and I felt the flick. I had the worst case of homesickness. It's almost like a medical disease.

Plagues the soul when you're alone and afraid. If I didn't have that flick, I would not have been prepared at all for my mother's death a few years later. I would have had no resources to begin to learn, because what happens when that eaglet is spinning down is the eaglet begins to learn that God has put something, these little nubs, on the side of you.

As the nubs grow, you begin to learn you were meant to fly. It saves your life. It feeds you, keeps you from the enemy.

God made you something else, but he's making you strong. He's making you real. He's doing something inside of you.

That's the whole point. That's called compassion, is it not? Isn't that compassion? Isn't it compassion, or do we want, do we want to continue? That's why when our Lord, in the Sermon on the Mount, when he ends the story, and he gives us the story of the narrow gate, and he tells us about the dialogue of us, of us, some of us thinking we're in, but we're not in. We've deceived ourselves.

We're outside. The reason he does it, he tells at the end of his talk, his Sermon on the Mount, he says, and I'll tell you why, because if you can hear my voice, if you can do what I say, the storms are gonna come, and when they come, they're not gonna touch you. Why won't they touch you? Because your house is built on me.

Your house is built on me, and with me, you can do all things. With me, you can stand any storm. Do you want the Lord to build you strong, build you on rock, or do you want to be that soft, cushy, little Christian, sitting in the nest, thanking God that your mom doesn't tell you the truth? So many of our churches are like that.

I'm not kidding you. We're in a day and an age where our culture has gone mad, and our churches are acting like it's not happening around us, and our Christians are not being taught what it means to be strong in Christ. Our kids are gonna get picked off if we're not strong in Christ.

Does anybody care? I went, we went to a church. I couldn't believe it. You see what's happening in the news.

You know what's going on. Don't you think we would care for our Christians to grow them up in Christ, be strong in Christ, have a passion to pursue Him? And it was the sweetest, nicest, Reese's peanut butter service I've ever been to. No meat.

I didn't say it out loud, but I thought, I've come, I've come. No meat, no meat. Vegetarians, no meat.

Where's the beef? That goes back to 1980s, doesn't it now? There you go, back to the 1980s, just like that. An old commercial, an old woman who couldn't find the beef in the midst of her McDonald's or what, I can't remember the commercial, but I can tell you that's the kind of thing that's happening in America today. I had to have a young, I had to have a young couple when I was early in my ministry, early on.

My job was to do marital counseling. They loved each other. I had the Episcopal handbook on how to train for marriage, milquetoast perfect, and we got into the marital counseling.

They looked and said, please, at the service, would you teach about Jesus? I said, why? He said, because we're 25 and 26 years old, and already our friends are married, have kids, and divorced. Already. Culture is slamming marriages.

You've got to rise and tell us how to build our house on the rock of Jesus Christ. And immediately I saw the image, early in the ministry, early I saw the image. It's like building boats that were made for the bay, when we should be making boats that are made for the open ocean.

Strong for the open sea. Strong to handle the worst of storms in life. The church, we need to be ready, and we're not.

Nor our children growing up behind us, and I'll tell you why it's so simple. It's gonna make you think it's too simple, but it's not. It's not.

I promise you it's not. If you could just, if you could just ask the Lord to give you the gift of questions again. Be revived and ask him for curiosity again.

Be contagious with who you're with, and actually desire to talk with them. If there are things unsaid, ask the Lord for wisdom to know when to say it, and how to say it, but stop having superficial relationships that go nowhere, and mean nothing, when you can actually love them by talking with questions. We can learn to do it with each other.

We can learn to do it again with the Lord, and pursue him with all we've got. That's what makes us strong. That's what makes us disciples.

So when the people come in, that we've brought in for Alpha, the big question mark of life, you've got this in your bulletin. It's, I don't have it anymore, but it's got a big question. It's I thought I brought it up here with me.

I completely did not. The big question, they better find in us are people asking questions too, because they want to look into somebody's eyes. Not that has a pat answer.

Not somebody who's dull and glazed over, pats them on the back, says a little prayer, and sends them on their way. They want to connect, and those who connect are on the same journey, asking the same questions, with the same passion. Whatever was to my prophet, Paul said, I now consider loss for the sake of Christ.

What is more, I consider everything a loss, compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. Are you dull in your walk with the Lord? Have you been dull in your relationships with others? Have you gone stale? Have you stopped reading? Have you stopped seeking? Have you stopped

searching? Now is the time. Get curiosity back into your soul.

Start again, and allow the Lord to do a work inside of you that brings that wonderful gift. He wants you to pursue Him, because He wants to pursue you. Give us questions Lord.

Give us questions into our soul, so that we can be inside that door, and help others to get into. Hallelujah.

Audio: <https://sermonindex1.b-cdn.net/28/SID28857.mp3>

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/thaddeus-barnum/the-gift-of-questions/>

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net