



Theme: Better Not Bitter

"Becoming Better Through Being Curious Like Jesus."



You also can get these Meditation Moments each day directly on your phone. Just text "**med moments**" to **970-426-0700** to receive the **daily Meditation Moment** each morning and start your day grounded in faith and peace.


Weekly Memory Verse:

²⁰ Then [Jesus] asked them, "But who do you say I am?" Peter replied, "You are the Messiah sent from God!" – Luke 9:20

Meditation Moments for Monday, July 28 – Read **Luke 9:18-25**. One of the practices of Jesus that we don't often hear about is the practice of asking questions. Martin Copenhaver estimates the number of questions Jesus asked in the title of his book, *Jesus is the Question: The 307 Questions Jesus Asked and the 3 He answered*. In today's text from Luke, we see Jesus ask Peter: "Who do you say I am?" (Luke 9:20) This question alone is potentially life changing. Your answer to that question determines more than your belief about Jesus; it reveals what you believe about yourself, your relationship to Christ, and your perspective on life. We often talk at Summit Church about how each person must wrestle with faith to claim it as their own. You can't have the pastor's faith, or anyone else's. It must be yours as you ask these questions Jesus puts before us. Asking these questions is one of the practices which help us to be better and not bitter. This week, we invite you to ponder the questions of Jesus for yourself; allow them to stretch you and perhaps expand the framework through which you understand God.





Consider these questions; 1) Who do you say Jesus is... every day? 2) Who do you say Jesus is now? 3) What difference does your answer make in your life? (Questions taken from *Questions Jesus Asked* leader guide by Magrey R. DeVega)

 Reflect on this quote by Rabbi Abraham Heschel: “We are closer to God when we are asking questions than when we think we have all the answers.” Do you agree or disagree? Why or why not?

Prayer: *Loving God, open my heart and my mind so that I may grow in my understanding of who you are and who you call me to be, in the name of your Son, Jesus Christ. Amen*


Tuesday, July 29 – Read **Matthew 8:23-27**. People in biblical times viewed the sea as a frightening place because they believed it was the entrance to the underworld and that it was home to sea monsters like the Leviathan. Writer and Pastor Magrey DeVega wrote, “the sea is a symbol of chaos and death. It’s a force that inspires fear.” When the disciples cry out in fear in the middle gale force winds that crash against their boat Jesus asks them: “You of little faith, why are you so afraid?” The disciples might have thought that the answer to that question was obvious.

 Reflect on this idea: “Maybe Jesus is neither ignoring the disciples’ fear nor rebuking them for it but introducing a way to conquer their fear through the simple act of asking a question with disarming curiosity. Why are you afraid? What is it that scares you? What do you think is the limit of your faith right now because of your fears?”

 “...Imagine Jesus asking you these questions...to invite you explore the source of the fear, to test its validity, and to learn to rely on what is true instead of on the falsehoods that fear would have you believe.” - Magrey De Vega. What do you fear most? Does your fear lead to a life that is better or bitter? Why?

Prayer: *Loving God, thank you for your continuing presence and faithfulness. Let us remember that you are always with us. When we are afraid, help us remember to ask questions about our fear and to look at the reasons we are afraid. Guide us as we discern answers to our questions. Help us to comfort others when they are afraid, as you provide comfort for us in frightening times. In the name of your Son Jesus, we pray. Amen.*

Wednesday, July 30 – Read **Luke 12:25-31**. In this section of Luke's gospel, we read two questions Jesus asks about worry: “Who by worrying can add a single hour to his or her life? Since you cannot do this very little thing, why do you worry about the rest?” Magrey DeVega suggests, “If we imagine a list of Gospel passages titled Easier Said Than Done, this pair of questions would likely be near the top.” Jesus then adds a few more rhetorical questions in quick succession: “Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing?” “Are you not of more value than the birds of the air?” “And why do you worry about clothing?”

 Reflect on this quote from Martin Copenhaver: “Rhetorical questions are not like other questions. In fact, for a time printers used a different form of punctuation for rhetorical questions. It was an ordinary “?” turned around (¿). That practice died out in the seventeenth century, but the point remains: rhetorical questions are different from other questions. They are more to produce an effect than

summon an answer." What kind of effect do you think Jesus wanted to create by asking the questions in this passage?



Consider the following questions: On a scale from 1) "no sweat" to 10) "full panic," what is the worry quotient in your life right now? Why? How would your life be different if you lived the way Jesus sets forth in this passage?

Prayer: *Loving and ever-present God, you tell us to "stop worrying." Sometimes, that seems like an impossible instruction to follow because there seem to be so many things to worry about. Yet we know you love us. We know you will always care for us. Help us to be mindful of your presence and your blessings every day. Use us to bless others and help others be mindful of your presence so that they too may worry less and desire your kingdom more. Amen*

Thursday, July 31 – Read Mark 8: 34-38. The questions Jesus asks in this section of text are: "What good is it for a man to gain the whole world yet forfeit his soul? Or what can a man give in exchange of his soul?" These questions are rhetorical and yet need to be answered by followers of Jesus. How we answer these questions can shape our priorities and perspectives; and clarify what we are really living for. What good will it do to pursue things that ultimately do not matter rather than discover the true-life God desires for us?



Consider this quote attributed to Ralph Waldo Emerson: "The gods we worship write their name on our faces, be sure of that. And a man will worship something...That which dominates will determine his life and character. Therefore, it behooves us to be careful what we worship, for what we are worshipping we are becoming."



Reflect on these questions; what are you worshipping, what are you becoming and what are you really living for?

Prayer: *Loving and ever-present God, we want to follow Jesus. We look to you for wisdom as we discern your call for our lives. We look to you for courage as we say no to the life the world offers us and yes to the life you offer us. Amen.*

Friday, August 1 – Read Luke 6:27-36. In essence, this passage calls for a radical love that transcends the limitations of human nature and mirrors the boundless love of God. We are encouraged to love our enemies through the question, "If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you?" Jesus is asking us to consider whom we will love. It is an intentional choice we need to make.



Consider these questions: Whom do you love? Who are the first people to come to mind when you hear this question? Who do you find it easy to love? Why is it easy to love them? Who do you find it hard to love? What makes it difficult to love them?



Find and watch the commercial called "Worlds Apart" by the Heineken Corporation. It is available to see here, <https://vimeo.com/214839985>. It is about 3 pairs of total strangers with dialectically opposed views on climate change, feminism, and transgender issues. By the end of the commercial, and by the journey of discovery of each other's humanity each pair decides to continue to

be in conversation with each other and enjoy each other's company. This commercial is a beautiful example of how we can learn to have empathy and yes, even love for folks very different from ourselves. How did you feel as you watched this commercial? Where do you think those feelings came from?

Where did you see Jesus' challenge to love others lived out in this commercial?

Prayer: *Loving and ever-present God, thank you for loving us. We confess that it is not always easy for us to love others, especially those we consider to be our enemies. Help us to have empathy for others. Open our hearts to be forgiving, remembering that you have forgiven us, in the name of your Son, Jesus Christ, Amen.*

Saturday, August 2 – John 1: 35-38. The last question we will consider this week is the first one Jesus asks in the book of John. "It would be the first question of many in this Gospel, as no other writer relies on questions to the extent John does to tell the story of Jesus. Jesus asks two men, "What are you looking for?" (Magrey DeVega)



Consider more of Magrey DeVega words on this passage. "In the broadest sense, this last question is one of the most prominent and most important in the human experience. It is a question about desire and longing, not for temporal possessions or pleasures, but for ultimate meaning and purpose. It gets to the question we begin asking as children when we wonder what we will become when we grow up. It tugs at us when we venture into adolescence and discover our identity and personhood. We push into adulthood with this question at our heels, pondering careers and life choices. At the end of our lives, it is one of the greatest questions we answer as we look in the rearview mirror." Today, at this point in your life, how would you respond to Jesus' question, "What are you looking for?"

Prayer: *Holy and Loving God, you ask us questions that invite us to seriously consider our faith and our relationship with you. You ask us questions that draw us closer to you and the life you desire for us, so we can be better and not bitter. We thank you for the questions. We pray for wisdom as we seek the answers. We pray for courage as we seek to live the lives to which you call us. Thank you for our community of faith, help us to encourage one another so together we may be committed to a lifelong journey of practicing the way of Jesus, our Lord and Savior. Amen*