

¹³ That very day two of them were going to a village named Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem, ¹⁴ and they were talking with each other about all these things that had happened. ¹⁵ While they were talking and discussing together, Jesus himself drew near and went with them. ¹⁶ But their eyes were kept from recognizing him. ¹⁷ And he said to them, "What is this conversation that you are holding with each other as you walk?" And they stood still, looking sad. ¹⁸ Then one of them, named Cleopas, answered him, "Are you the only visitor to Jerusalem who does not know the things that have happened there in these days?" ¹⁹ And he said to them, "What things?" And they said to him, "Concerning Jesus of Nazareth, a man who was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people, ²⁰ and how our chief priests and rulers delivered him up to be condemned to death, and crucified him. ²¹ But we had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel. Yes, and besides all this, it is now the third day since these things happened. ²² Moreover, some women of our company amazed us. They were at the tomb early in the morning, ²³ and when they did not find his body, they came back saying that they had even seen a vision of angels, who said that he was alive. ²⁴ Some of those who were with us went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said, but him they did not see." ²⁵ And he said to them, "O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! ²⁶ Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into his glory?" ²⁷ And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself. ²⁸ So they drew near to the village to which they were going. He acted as if he were going farther, ²⁹ but they urged him strongly, saying, "Stay with us, for it is toward evening and the day is now far spent." So he went in to stay with them. ³⁰ When he was at table with them, he took the bread and blessed and broke it and gave it to them. ³¹ And their eyes were opened, and they recognized him. And he vanished from their sight. ³² They said to each other, "Did not our hearts burn within us while he talked to us on the road, while he opened to us the Scriptures?" ³³ And they rose that same hour and returned to Jerusalem. And they found the eleven and those who were with them gathered together, ³⁴ saying, "The Lord has risen indeed, and has appeared to Simon!" ³⁵ Then they told what had happened on the road, and how he was known to them in the breaking of the bread.

When little children learn to talk, they very quickly master various forms of speech: statement, exclamation, question And once they do, there is no end of questions.

One reason, of course, is that they are little sponges ready to learn as much as possible as fast as possible.
"Whatcha doing?" "What is that?"

Another reason is that they are natural born manipulators and the right questions are useful for encouraging people to reconsider and change their mind.
"How come?" "Can we now?" "Why not?"

But another reason is that they love personal attention
& questions are great way to keep conversation going.
“Why?” “Why?” “Why?”

As part of celebrating Easter, we want to be witness
who talk about wonderful news of new life with others.
So we want to have conversations, understand others
and encourage people to open their minds.
When learning to do this we may take a cue from children
but we also learn it from the master
of sharing good news, Jesus himself.

He is alive and has saved us. He reveals this to these disciples
as they walk along, but one step at a time.

Last week we considered how a first step is listening,
which Jesus also does as he joins these men.

Now we notice especially how he asks questions.

because...

BASIC QUESTIONS ENCOURAGE CONVERSATION
EXPLORING QUESTIONS DEVELOP UNDERSTANDING
CHALLENGING QUESTIONS RAISE NEW IDEAS

BASIC QUESTIONS ENCOURAGE CONVERSATION

¹⁷ And he said to them, "What is this conversation that you are holding
with each other as you walk?"

When you start a conversation in person or on the phone,
what is almost always the first thing people say?

“How are you?” If it is a sincere question
and you actually listen for the answer,

you may learn something about what to say next.

As was noted last Sunday, it is important for people
to feel listened to before we expect them to listen to us,
Sometimes they need encouragement to open up,
or we may need a better idea of who we are talking to

So, when it is our turn to talk, a good place to start
is asking a question. It shows we are interested in them
and who doesn't like others being interested in them?

Jesus asks, “What is your conversation? What is your story?”

Questions enable conversations that are meaningful
and relevant to the other person

Asking questions first can keep us from saying
something stupid or hurtful.

Good questions and their answers can help us discover
how to communicate and connect with different people.
Do they connect with their head or heart or hands?

For example, are they more comfortable with questions
about what they think, what they feel
or what they are doing?

It makes a difference in the best way to talk to them.
The best kind of questions for this are open ended,
not the kind that are answered with just yes or no.

Basic questions are about Who? What? Where? When?
leading to How? and Why?

Questions that get answered are non-threatening questions
that are interested without prying or assuming.

Sometimes it is important to ask permission to ask
what may be personal questions about people's
lives, experiences and beliefs.

Then, when people are ready for them,

EXPLORING QUESTIONS DEVELOP UNDERSTANDING

And they stood still, looking sad. ¹⁸ Then one of them, named Cleopas,
answered him, "Are you the only visitor to Jerusalem who does not
know the things that have happened there in these days?" ¹⁹ And he
said to them, "What things?" And they said to him, "Concerning Jesus
of Nazareth, a man who was a prophet mighty in deed and word before
God and all the people, ²⁰ and how our chief priests and rulers
delivered him up to be condemned to death, and crucified him. ²¹ But
we had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel.

Jesus obviously knows very well what things
have been happening, better than anyone else.

He could have just started telling them.

But they have obviously been told quite a bit by women & others
without fully understanding or believing them.

So that they come to understand, it is first important
to understand them. What do they think happened
and what does it mean to them?

What do they think it means that Jesus was a prophet?

What did they expect Jesus to do in redeeming Israel?

We can easily talk with people about things like

God, sin, grace, faith, forgiveness, and much more
without realizing that what these words mean to them
may be very different from what they mean to us.

By exploring questions we first learn what they think & mean
so we learn how to best express what we think & mean.
When talking with someone about a difficult family situation
one might ask, "What kind of things have you tried so far?"
If they say they have prayed until they are exhausted,
you know that "Just pray about it"
was probably not the best thing to suggest.
When Jesus met blind Bartimaeus, instead of presuming,
he asked first, "What do you want me to do for you?"
When we notice someone needs spiritual help or support,
asking good questions is a good way to learn first
about their concerns and needs,
their beliefs and knowledge of God's word,
their way of seeing the world and dealing with life.
Exploratory questions are important for truly understanding
another person's knowledge, reasons and conclusions
before we move on to a deeper kind of question.

CHALLENGING QUESTIONS RAISE NEW IDEAS

²⁵ And he said to them, "O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe
all that the prophets have spoken! ²⁶ Was it not necessary that the
Christ should suffer these things and enter into his glory?"

How would you respond to a question like that?

Probably just shut your mouth.

Jesus also asked questions that ended conversations
but not until it was time for him to do the talking.

We may first want to ask other questions without being
condescending or making others feel foolish,
or trying to trap people into a certain answer,
but still challenging others to consider alternatives,
like when Jesus was confronted about paying taxes
and asked about a coin, "Who's image is this?"
or when he was confronted about his authority and asked
where they thought John the Baptist's authority was from.

Challenging questions target worldviews and beliefs.

They ask "why?" "What makes you think that?"

"What if...?" "How would you explain...?"

Like other questions, they are based on the context.

When talking with one who believes we come from evolution
one might ask, "What does this mean
about the value and purpose of your life?"

When talking with someone who believes everyone is basically good and naturally goes to heaven, one might ask,

“How do you deal with failure to do what you know is right?”

“Do you think there is anyone who deserves punishment?”

Questions can lead people to examine their assumptions in ways they may not have done before and prepare them to consider other options.

They can plow the ground to prepare for the seed of gospel.

This is where Jesus now led these disciples.

What if God really is in control of all things and knows better than anyone what is happening?

What if Jesus really was a mighty prophet as they hoped.

Had he said anything about suffering, dying & rising?

What if Israel really does need to be redeemed,

not just from political or economic domination but from the debt of sin and the domination of the devil?

What if all of people's sacrifices in temple weren't enough and there needed to be a final perfect sacrifice, what might that sacrifice be?

What if Jesus really was the ultimate redeemer?

What if the women were right & he really was alive?

What would that say about the effect of his sacrifice?

What if Jesus is not a failure but revealing his glory?

What if we are now fully forgiven and free?

What if we can be sure God loves us no matter what?

What if Jesus was with us and knew everything in our lives?

What if we too will live again even after we die?

What if all of this is clearly laid out for us in the Bible in a way that will make our hearts burn within us?

What if Jesus is also revealing this to us personally when we break bread and receive Holy Communion?

What if this is good news wonderful enough to run in the middle of the night to share with others?

These are good questions for us to seriously think about and to seriously consider asking others about in respectful, open ended, ongoing conversations that are started with good questions that help us overcome our skepticism about whether they can ever have true faith in Jesus. and may help them overcome their skepticism

about whether we really care about them.

BASIC QUESTIONS ENCOURAGE CONVERSATION

about others' who, what, when, & where

EXPLORING QUESTIONS DEVELOP UNDERSTANDING

of what others know, understand, think and experience

so that we know the context in which...

CHALLENGING QUESTIONS RAISE NEW IDEAS

and begin opening hearts, eyes and minds to amazing truths

of what Jesus truly has done to redeem us

and the answers he has to all our needs now and forever.