

TEN CRUCIAL QUESTIONS



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For Every Follower of Jesus

Following Jesus means that we have established or are establishing the lifestyle of a follower. Answering these questions will help in that endeavor.

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Ten Crucial Questions

FOR EVERY FOLLOWER OF JESUS

1. Have I settled the question?

What is the question?

It is the decision to follow Jesus. By settling the question you make a firm commitment to follow. This is not: “I’ll give it a try.” It is: “I will do it.”

A half-hearted effort will not survive. A half-hearted effort will lead to frustration, broken promises and failure.

So, when we settle the question we make a solid decision that we will follow no matter what happens. It means we will do whatever is necessary to follow and find every success that God wants us to in this great journey with Jesus.

When we say yes, without reservation, we release God’s power to work in our lives and even in our circumstances to help us grow strong.

This is the first and most important question to answer. Once that question is answered the questions that follow will guide your life, your decisions and your ability to follow more closely and successfully.

So, just say yes to Jesus and begin to follow him right now. Put your absolute trust in him. He will never fail. He will never guide you in the wrong path. And now the next question.

2. Have I set aside time for prayer?

Communication is absolutely critical in every relationship.

Prayer is our communication with God. It is essential for us to have a time of prayer every day. This is a dedicated time for one on one talk with God.

While it is also important that we spend time throughout the day praying - we can pray about anything, anytime - we need focused time in prayer.

Without distraction and interruption, this time is our time to hear from God and to share our hearts and concerns with him.

Important to this time of prayer are: worship and adoration, submission, asking for personal needs, praying for others and listening for his voice.

Many books have been written about prayer but we get better at praying by praying. The model prayer given by Jesus in Matthew 6 is, of course, an excellent guide.

Your time of prayer should be in the same place and at the same time every day, if at all possible. It is advisable to start your day with prayer and this approach is highly recommended and works for nearly everyone.

Make this time sacred and firm, not allowing anything to overrun it or displace it. You will find great strength from your time of prayer and it will make you a stronger, healthier follower of Jesus.

3. Have I set aside time for Bible reading?

The Bible is the story of God and how he has interacted with his people throughout history. It is for every follower of Jesus.

It contains timeless principles, specific directions, transformational truth and helpful guidance. It will continually help you follow Jesus by revealing the heart and desires of God.

It is absolutely essential that you set aside a specific time and place where you will read your Bible every single day!

Ignoring your Bible while you try to follow Jesus will lead to frustration and make you vulnerable to false teachers! You want to follow the truth and the Bible is truth!

There are many ways to read your Bible. Depending on how long you have been a follower, you may read just a chapter a day or, like many people, the entire Bible every single month (but it takes quite a while to get to that point).

Take the time to get to know your Bible. As you read, pray and ask God to reveal his truth to you. If you're just starting out, begin in the New Testament with books like John or Mark. Eventually, you will want to read the entire New Testament.

As you read, you will find you have more capacity to absorb God's truth and a greater appetite for more of his word! This is a good thing! Read, pray, read some more and watch what happens to your spiritual life.

The more you read (and pray) the easier it will be to see where Jesus is leading you! So, set aside the time. Discipline yourself to be consistent. Shut out distractions and interruptions and give yourself time to be with the Word of God. And do it now!!

4. Have I established the priority of worship?

From the reading of scripture, we observe that one of the central activities of heaven is worship. All the glorious host of heaven, all those who are saved and dwelling in heaven eternally will be gathered together to sing and praise and worship God. We will share in the glory and majesty of heaven as we experience God in all his fullness.

As a follower of Jesus, worship must be a high priority. In fact, it should be so important that it is the one thing you do every single week!

When we read the Bible, we see that all of God's plans for his people are plans for us to do things together. This includes worship. When we neglect worship, we are not really following his desires for us.

When we follow Jesus, we will naturally find a place to worship with other followers of Jesus. As we worship together there is power and encouragement.

The Psalmist says that God is enthroned on the praise of his people (Psalm 22:3). So, as we worship and praise God together, we experience his manifest presence.

When we worship, we must focus on God. Worship is all about him. It's not about any individual or group that might be on the platform or in the congregation. We can be too easily distracted by the people around us. Sometimes, our experience with those people leads us to stay away from worship. That must not happen.

When we fix our hearts on God, when we reflect on all Jesus has done for us, he enables us to worship in spirit and in truth.

5. Have I forgiven?

An unforgiving spirit is deadly.

When we fail to forgive, we become bitter and angry. It effects all our relationships starting with our relationship with God.

Jesus told us numerous times that if we are unwilling to forgive our heavenly Father will not forgive (Matthew 6:14-15, Matthew 18:21-35)! So this is a very big deal!

To forgive is to grant a pardon for a wrong and then to treat the person forgiven as if the offense had never occurred! This is powerful and not easy!

If we are to truly forgive, we must have God's help. But we must be willing and want to forgive.

If there is someone who has offended you, someone who has hurt you, someone who has caused pain in your life, you will forgive that person. Every follower of Jesus does this!

You pray for them. You forgive them - even if they don't ask you to. And the more you forgive, the more natural it becomes. Eventually, forgiveness will be automatic with every offense!

An unforgiving spirit only hurts the one who has it. It doesn't hurt the one who has caused the offense. So, search your life. Is there anyone who you need to forgive?

Forgive them, for your sake, for Jesus' sake! Then enjoy the peace that comes when you forgive!

6. Have I committed to a submissive lifestyle?

We are not comfortable with the idea of being submissive to those around us. As we grow up, we yearn for the day of independence and autonomy! Yet, as a follower, we soon discover that submission is a highly prized value of the Kingdom of God!

Jesus told his disciples that they could not even follow unless they took up their cross daily! That means that every follower is ready to die every day for Jesus. It means we have given up our right to live, to chart our course, to change our minds!

Further, we are told in Ephesians that we must submit to one another out of reverence for Christ! Wow! That's not at all what the world looks like!

But we aren't here to look like the world! We are here to look like Jesus. Jesus submitted to his Father's leadership and plan. He demonstrated this in his life and death! This is ultimate submission. We must embrace this lifestyle, just as Jesus did.

Our first level of submission is to God. In all things we submit to God. Our next level of submission is to the leaders God has placed over us. Our next level of submission is to one another. At every level of submission we cannot violate the next higher level.

We are called upon to conscientiously humble ourselves under the hand of God. We can trust him. He will care for us!

We certainly need his help but our willingness releases his power to help us!

7. Have I decided to love unconditionally?

Love is the great commandment. “Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength.” And “Love your neighbor as yourself.” Jesus was clear about these two being the most important.

Love in this context means unconditional love. It is quite different than the conditional love so common today! We tend to love those who love us, those who have done something for us. Yet, Jesus tells us to love even our enemies.

When we love God, we love him without condition but it is relatively easy because he has lavished his love on us. When we love others without condition it means we love them no matter what they do to us or for us! It means they don't earn our love.

This love is not a feeling or emotion. It's something we decide to do. Followers of Jesus have decided that they will love others, no matter what!

When we decide to love, we begin to tap into the love of God - the source of all love! We participate in the nature of God. It is then that we begin to experience the transformational power of God. As we live a life of love we soon find that we cannot help but love people!

It is a wonderful experience to love God be loved by God and to love others with unconditional love! Deciding to love is one the of the best decisions you can ever make!

Begin to love unconditionally today!

8. Have I committed to be a peacemaker?

Jesus said, “Blessed are the peacemakers for they shall be called the children of God.” Matthew 5:9

We live in a world of conflict. Where ever you look you will find conflict. It’s in entertainment, politics, sports, families and even, sometimes, in church. There is continual conflict between nations and peoples.

But we are called to bring the peace. When we walk into a room, peace should break out!

What is required to be a peacemaker?

We must love in order to be a peacemaker. We must love those in conflict enough to help resolve the conflict.

We must also pray. When conflict is brought to our attention, we must pray for peace.

We must listen. Many conflicts have as much to do with communications as anything else. Emotion gets in the way of communication. The ability to listen is so important. We must listen to the parties involved and we must listen to Jesus who will guide us with his wisdom.

We must follow Jesus closely to discern his leadership and help for times of conflict.

In every situation, we must seek God’s will and common good. We must seek healing for those involved and reconciliation.

The world desperately needs peacemakers. It is the desire of God that people should get along but many need a little help. A commitment to being a peacemaker makes you like Jesus and changes lives along the way!

9. Have I removed distractions?

Distractions are those things that keep you from the great things God desires for you. And not all distractions are sin!

When we follow Jesus, we know that we must avoid sin. That is an early lesson that we learn. But, there are distractions that can hurt our walk with Jesus. Author Jim Collins said: “Good is the enemy of great.”

Jesus desires great things for us. Anything that keeps us from those great things are distractions. And everyone is different. Someone else’s distraction may not be yours and yours may not be someone else’s. So we cannot necessarily look to others for specific things.

Ask God, “What is distracting me from you?” Begin to examine your life. What keeps you from doing the things you know God wants you to do? What things rob you of worship time? Prayer time? Bible time?

These things could be entertainments like sports, hobbies or television. They could be things we indulge in like food, travel or socializing. None of these things are bad in themselves but are they keeping you from living a life of following Jesus?

It is hard to give up these distractions because we enjoy them. In order to do so, we must totally trust God. We must believe that what God has in store for us is so much better! And it is!!

When we settle the question, the answer to this question becomes easier. God is our life. Whatever distracts from that, good or bad, must be eliminated! This choice becomes easier with time and will soon become automatic!

No more distractions!

10. Have I been honest?

Question one is the most important question of the ten. This is the second most important. It is easy to convince ourselves that we have given the right answers to all previous questions. But there is a biblical reality: “the heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure” (Jeremiah 17:9)

This is not a negative assessment, just a realistic one. We are uncomfortable with our shortcomings so we try to justify them or gloss over them. But in order to be all God wants us to be, we must be honest with ourselves. Are we able to say with all certainty that we have answered all the questions well or have we fallen short?

Here is where repentance comes in. We must repent of our tendency to make excuses for our failures. We must own our shortcomings and ask God to correct them and help us grow from them. He is faithful. He will do it.

Our life of following Jesus is a life of constant correction and improvement. When we can answer all ten of these questions in the affirmative, he will challenge us with more growth inducing questions!

This is the most exciting and dynamic life that can be lived! It is full of positive change and life changing action! When we follow Jesus, we will participate in eternally transformational service!

So, we can be honest without fear. Our honesty will lead us to more spiritual growth and greater spiritual victories!