

EXCERPT

IVP Books

Live the Questions
How Searching Shapes Our Convictions and Commitments

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Life is full of questions—about our identity, our relationships, our faith—and sometimes it seems like there are no easy answers. But our questioning can lead us on a journey into greater understanding and purpose. Jeffrey Keuss takes us on a tour of Scripture to find insights from people who asked questions of God and others, exploring what those questions can teach us about doubt, faith, and uncertainty in our everyday lives.

The Power of Asking Good Questions

Too many people feel that the goal of life is to get to a point of clarity and certainty about their own identity apart from the messiness of trusting others and living deeper into the questions and uncertainty that life brings. Shakespeare's famous words from Polonius to young Laertes in *Hamlet* come to mind:

This above all:—to thine own self be true;
And it must follow, as the night the day,
Thou canst not then be false to any man.

What is interesting is that when Shakespeare wrote those lines in the Elizabethan period, they were meant to be a joke or a laugh line of sorts, since it would have been considered simply absurd to base the goal of life on mere self-fulfillment. Hundreds of years later, to seek after mere self-fulfillment as the summation of life is no longer a joke but seemingly a noble pursuit. Yet as Amory Blaine discovers at the end of the Fitzgerald story, to “know myself” is not enough. Ultimately, the course of his life that led him to this conclusion is somehow wrong, given his despair in crying, “That is all.”

How do we prevent such tragedy, the sort that ends with a despairing “that is all”? How do we counter this story, such that the ending cry of a despairing and broken generation can find direction and resources beyond finding “all Gods dead, all wars fought, all faiths shaken?”

One suggestion found in Scripture is this: *By asking better questions and learning to have faith amid doubts, we can learn to trust in our relationships with God, with others, and with creation over our need for certainty at all costs.* Through the chapters of this book, you will encounter examples of questions asked by people of faith in the Bible, and you'll glimpse how asking questions like theirs can offer a pathway to something beyond a despairing “that is all” result in the journey of faith.

Life is best shaped by good practices that build good habits for human flourishing, and asking good questions is one such habit, one that's often overlooked. Perhaps that's because we can think that the goal of life is finding not merely the answers but also how to ask sustaining questions.

I hope you find that to be human is to ask more and more questions, and that deep meaning is found in the journey and pursuit of where and to whom those questions will bring us. This is what Esther Lightcap Meeks in her book *Longing to Know* reminds us of when she speaks of faith leading to confidence rather than total certainty: we can never have total certainty, but we can have a great degree of confidence and hope in our faith when it is tethered to our deep relationship with Christ and the path forged by his life and ministry.

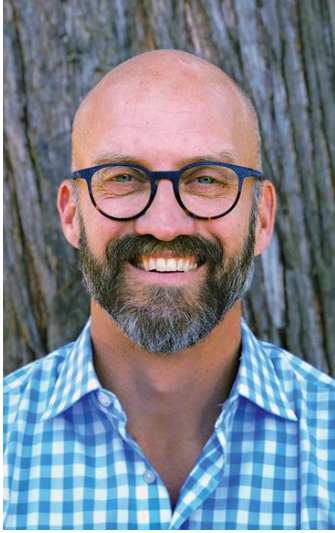


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Another truth vital at this point is to remember that if we're not careful and wise, the tiny moments of excitement that are offered by the latest technological upgrade, viral video, cultural craze, or fashion statement can, and often do, take us away from the core of who we are and who God made us to be in one important way: *they can turn off the questions before we've sat with them for long enough.*

What if the questions bubbling up in our hearts are those God actually wants us to ask?

What if learning to sit with the unknowns can actually make us more like who God desires us to be?

In our hunger to find answers and the weariness that often comes when we don't find the answers to life's questions in ways we desire—questions like, *Who am I? Why do I keep doing the things that I do? Why do I keep hurting the people around me that I love? What am I so scared of all the time?*—finding some tiny moment of excitement might seem like the only way to keep from going crazy. But what if God wants to join us in our bewilderment, in our sense of being off balance, in our visceral but unfulfilled desire to have answers?

—From the introduction, "The Power of Asking Good Questions"



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