

Short Sheet # 10

When Kids Ask Tough Questions

Typically two kinds of people asked Christ tough questions: those who were seeking truth, and those who were avoiding it. You will encounter the same kinds of kids in cabin times. It is worth examining Christ's response to both types of people to prepare yourself to do likewise.

Nathanael: A Sceptic Seeking Truth

Read John 1:44-51. Nathanael was a well-read seeker of truth. When Jesus said, "I saw you while you were still under the fig tree," he was referring to Nathanael's study of the Jewish law.

Philip appealed to Nathanael's sense of theological reasoning: "We have found the one Moses and the Prophets wrote about..." Nathanael was not impressed. "Can anything good come from Nazareth?" he retorted. He was sceptical, to say the least.

It is worth noting Jesus' response to a sceptic. He pays Nathanael a big compliment first thing. "An Israelite in whom there is nothing false!" Jesus says here is someone who is honestly seeking truth! And then Jesus shows that he really knows Nathanael. Nate says, "How do you know me?" And Jesus cuts right to the heart of what is most important in Nathanael's life: "I saw you while you were still under the fig tree." Jesus acknowledges Nate's love for Jewish law.

That simple recognition is all it took to turn Nathanael's theological reasoning upside down forever. Suddenly he is proclaiming Christ as the Son of God! Jesus finds this sudden change of heart almost comical. "You believe because I said I saw you under the fig tree? You're going to see a lot better stuff than that!"

When kids ask tough questions in cabin times, we can affirm them for seeking the truth. We can pay them a compliment and put them at ease in their questioning. And before we embark on a 10-minute theological discourse answering their tough questions (as if we could!), it is worth asking ourselves, have we taken time to really get to know this person? Are we able to recognize what is most important in his or her life? If not, maybe before we try to make a theological point, we need to make it a point to take individual time with this friend. Our personal interest will go a long way in answering kid's questions about Christ's credibility.

The Woman at the Well: Asking Questions to Avoid Truth

Read John 4:1-29. The woman at the well had a head-on collision with the Truth, and responded by detouring down the back roads of theological questioning. "I see you are a prophet," she said to Jesus, then began asking him questions about worshipping God - anything to get the attention off of her personal need and the Person of Christ.

Jesus didn't blow her away by saying, "Quit trying to dodge the issue. I want to talk about what is in you, not what is out there." No, he graciously received her questions and used them to redirect her to what he was wanting to say: I am the one you are looking for. He intersected her on the back roads and gently walked her back to the main path.

Sometimes kids will ask questions in cabin times just to keep the focus off of their own personal predicament. We can take a lesson from Jesus and learn to gently redirect their questions back to the issue at hand without embarrassing them in the process. And the bottom-line issue at hand should always be Jesus.

Following is some information that might help you when kids ask tough questions that deserve substantial answers. But remember, we will never win a kid to Christ as the

result of an argument. We win the right to be heard, respectfully present truth for them to consider, and then prove our friendship is unconditional by not forcing them to agree.

How do we Know the New Testament is True?

Following are some excerpts from Josh McDowell's article in "Sceptics Who Demanded a Verdict," Tyndale Publishers, 1989.

'When you study history you need to develop a historiography, a proper approach to evaluating historical documents. There are three basic tests. One is the bibliographical test ... which asks questions about manuscripts.

"A manuscript is a handwritten copy rather than a printed one. One question this test asks is how many manuscripts you have. The more manuscripts you have, the easier it is to reconstruct the original and check out any errors or discrepancies.

"I've been able to document 24,633 manuscripts of just the New Testament. Do you know the number two book in all history in manuscript authority? It's the Iliad by Homer, which has 643 manuscripts.

"Dr. Clark Pinnock, Professor of Interpretations at McMaster's University in Toronto, writes,

There exists no document from the ancient world witnessed by so excellent a set of textual and historical testimonies, and offering so superb an array of historical data on which the intelligent decision may be made. An honest [person] cannot dismiss a source of this kind."

Jesus was just a good man, like Buddha or Ghandi

Jesus made radical claims about Himself. He said He was the only way to God, that He was one with the Father, that no one could have life apart from Him. A good man doesn't make claims about himself that aren't true. It is impossible to read the New Testament and conclude that Jesus was simply a good man.

There are only three choices left, then. Either Jesus was crazy, deceitful or He was who He claimed to be - God. Josh McDowell puts it this way: He was either Lord, liar or lunatic.

Jesus might have been a lunatic, claiming to be God like someone today might claim to be Napoleon or Marilyn Monroe. He might have been a liar, simply saying whatever he wanted to, regardless of its truth. We have to ask ourselves some simple questions. Did Jesus live the life of a lunatic or a liar? Do we measure all time by the birth of a lunatic or a liar? As you look across the world's landscape and see thousands of churches dotting the horizon, are they full of people who are following a crazy person or a liar? Does your Young Life leader appear to be someone who would follow a liar or a lunatic? Or does your leader's life have the ring of truth to it?

Jesus claimed to be God. He claimed to be the only way to have eternal life. If He lied or was crazy, then He wasn't a good man. The only other choice is that Jesus was telling the truth.

What about the people who never hear about Jesus?

God doesn't give us all the answers regarding what He is going to do with everyone else. He does make it perfectly clear what He is going to do with us. He is going to hold us accountable for what we've heard about Christ (John 12:47,48). We do not know how God will deal with those who haven't heard. We do know that God is both just and gracious. We can trust Him to act fairly and also graciously.