



Blackfoot

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The Need to Encourage Questions

by Doy Moyer

One of the objections I have heard from those who have left Christ and His people is that “the Church” does not allow anyone to question beliefs, doctrines, or practices. Even among those who have not left or who have embraced a broad ecumenical view of religion, there is sometimes this undercurrent of complaint that the church does not allow questions. While that is not everyone’s experience, there have been enough of these complaints that brethren ought to pay attention and respond.

This problem is also one of the signs of cultish behavior. Anecdotally, I have been involved in discussions with cultish-style groups where they include someone in training. It is soon apparent that questions are not being encouraged, and when a discussion does not go as planned, I will see no more of the trainee. They were essentially told to accept what they are given, no questions asked. I have even been told, “we are not here to learn anything from you; we are here to teach you.” Might we be guilty of a similar attitude?

This is challenging for parents because we have so much invested in our children. We do not want to see them leave the Lord, so we double down on what they are supposed to believe and do. There is a fine line that parents must walk. They are to bring up their children in the discipline and instruction of the Lord (Eph 6:4). At the same time, they are to teach their children to grow up, think for themselves, and develop their own faith. We

aren't looking to raise robots. The problem is that strong-armed tactics and forced beliefs without allowing questions can, ironically, be what drives our children away. They will think that we cannot answer the questions or we have something to hide. If we fear questions, we fear truth, and this will come out if we suppress efforts to find answers.

The seeker mentality is seen in Acts 17:11: "Now these Jews were more noble than those in Thessalonica; they received the word with all eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily to see if these things were so." Even Paul was questioned. There was something noble about the fact that these Bereans were willing to search and examine. This was not a "no questions asked" atmosphere, but one of "examine and search." Pursuing answers is noble.

If, as we often say, truth has nothing to fear, then we ought not to be afraid of questions. If those questions reveal that either we do not have the truth or that we do not know the truth well enough, then let the questions admonish us to get our heads back in the game and get educated on both the correct answers and solid ways to provide answers. This is hard work. If we need to change because we have been wrong, then be willing to learn and change. Being educated Christians who are willing to engage questions and concerns is not for the lazy. The last thing we want to do is create an anti-intellectual atmosphere that blocks off attempts at finding answers. People can see through that facade and will likely reject what's being offered.

I'm not saying that truth is not real or that we ought not to take our stands. What we ought not to do is be ignorant as to why we believe what we do, then tell others just to accept it and be quiet. "Because that's what we've always done" or "the preacher said so" are terrible replies. Answers given in a vacuum of ignorance will backfire, and quashing questions with some kind of "just accept it" retort discourages proper, reasonable thinking. God has given us minds to think things out and through. We, of all people, need to be encouraging deeper thought and reason. The sphere of the mind belongs to God and we need to honor Him by encouraging reason, logic, and sound thinking. As has been said, God does not want us to check our brains at the door when we become Christians. Quite the opposite.

Here are some suggestions:

Allow and encourage questions. Not allowing for questions discourages thoughtful truth-seeking. We want people to develop and maintain their own faith, not just blindly accept what others say. Not allowing for questions likely means that we aren't asking good questions or don't know the answers well ourselves.

Listen to questions, doubts, and concerns. We all have questions. We need to listen well so we can know how to respond well (cf. Col 4:6). We will lose people when they perceive we aren't hearing the questions and concerns.

Answer with compassion, love, and honesty. Never just turn a questioner away or act as though the person deserves no answers. Be compassionate as they seek truth. Show love in response. Be honest with the answers. If you don't know, admit it, then pursue the answers.

Seek truth together. We are all to be seekers (Matt 7:12). This encourages everyone involved. Why not join in the study? Why not seek answers together? Why not show where to go to find answers?

Be thankful for questions, for they give great opportunity for study and reflection. Encouraging them is critical to spiritual growth and maturity of truth-seekers. Pursue truth in love and honesty.

Prayer Requests & Announcements

- Ross, Debbie, and Rachel will be in Des Moines this week
- April's medicine is being adjusted to help with dizziness
- Ray is recovering from hip replacement surgery
- Ray & Ginger, as Ray deals with Alzheimer's Symptoms
- Larry, Leukemia Diagnosis
- Sabin's, friends of Brenda Empey
- Jaella Kreh during her pregnancy
- Scott Boucher (Sparks NV) continues in Hospice Care
- Keep April in your prayers as she deals with health issues
- The Christians in the Philippines

Worship Assignments

Today

Song Leader – Tom Mitchell

Lord's Table – Ben Palmer

Wednesday

Song Leader – David Porter

Invitation – Chad Mitchell

Blackfoot Church of Christ
370 North Shilling Ave.
Blackfoot, Idaho 83221

Meeting Times:

Sunday Morning Classes 10:00AM
Sunday Morning Worship 11:00AM
Wednesday Evening 7:30PM



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