

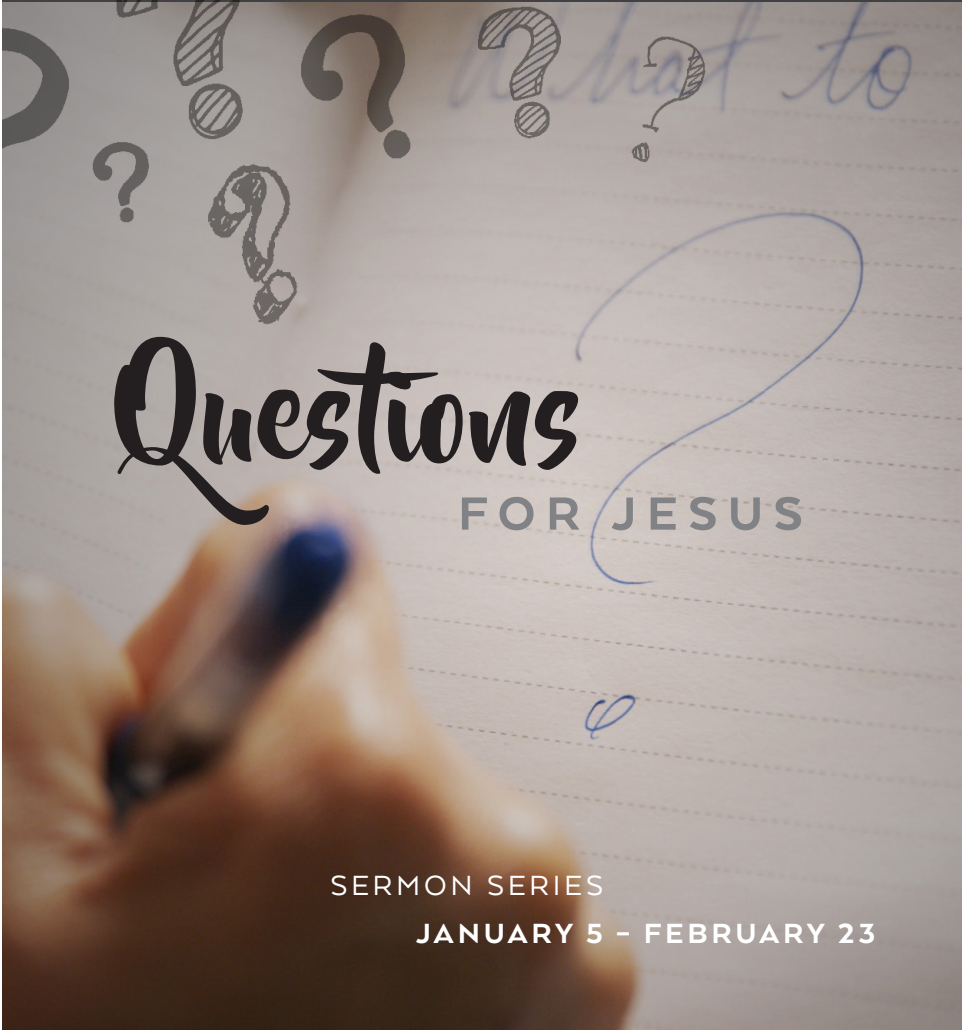
GLENKIRK CHURCH



WEEKLY DEVOTIONS

The DEVO

DEC 30, 2019 - JAN 3, 2020



Questions

FOR JESUS

SERMON SERIES

JANUARY 5 - FEBRUARY 23

MONDAY

John 1:43-46; Micah 5:2; Luke 24:13-27

“Can anything good come out of Nazareth?”

—Nathanael to Philip (1:46 NKJV)

Some are asking this same question today in different forms:

- Can anything good come in the New Year 2020?
- Can anything good come out of Glenkirk Church?
- Can anything good come out of my life?
- Can anything good come out of this situation?
- Can anything good come out of my son's/daughter's life?

People questioned when Jesus was crucified on a cross. The two men walking to Emmaus right after it happened shook their heads and confided to a stranger: “We thought He was the One. We were almost sure of it. I guess not.” Guess again (see Luke 24:21).

The thing about God is that He specializes in impossibilities.

- *“What is impossible with man is possible with God.”* (Luke 18:27)
- *“With God all things are possible.”* (Matthew 19:26)
- *“For with God nothing shall be impossible.”* (Luke 1:37 NKJV)
- *“Sovereign LORD, ...nothing is too hard for You”* (Jeremiah 32:17)
- *“Is there anything too hard for the LORD?”* (Genesis 18:14)

Could anything good come out of Bethlehem? Micah prophesied, “Yes, it will. For out of you, not the least of the towns of Judah, the Messiah will be born” (see Micah 5:2 & Matthew 2:6). Paul says, “Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us” (Ephesians 3:20 NKJV).

We cannot do better than follow Philip's advice to Nathanael. Philip said, **“Come and see”** (John 1:46).

QUESTION

Where are you tempted to say, “Can anything good happen here/there?”
Come to Jesus with your questions, and look for His answers.

PRAYERS FOR KEN ZELL AND INTERVARSITY MINISTRY

Pray for Ken Zell and the ministry of InterVarsity. The vision in Greater Los Angeles is to establish witnessing communities on all 70 college campuses so that all students in GLA would have an opportunity to encounter Jesus during their time in college. Choose one campus that is on your heart and pray for God's witness to be strengthened there.

TUESDAY

John 1:47-51; Psalm 139

“How do you know me?” – Nathanael to Jesus (John 1:48)

Philip invites his good friend Nathanael to meet Jesus who comes from Nazareth. Because of His origins, Nathanael is skeptical. Nevertheless, because of his friendship with Philip, Nathanael goes to see for himself. Jesus greets Nathanael: *“Here truly is an Israelite in whom there is no deceit”* (1:47).

Nathanael is stunned. “How do You know this? You act like You can read my mail, but you don’t even know my address. How can You know me?” Jesus replies: “I do know your address. Before you were under the fig tree, I saw you” (see 1:48).

Nathanael processes this: “Wait a minute. What happened under the fig tree was between me and God. Wait a minute. You must be who Philip suspected You are. You are the Holy One of Israel—the Messiah we are expecting” *“Rabbi, You are the Son of God, You are the king of Israel”* (1:49).

All of a sudden, Nathanael is reading Jesus’ mail. We have a disciple in the making. But how does God know Nathanael? And does God know us like that? Hebrews 4:13 says, *“Nothing in all creation is hidden from*

God’s sight. Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of Him to whom we must give account.”

Psalm 139 tells us even more about God knowing us: *“You have searched me, LORD, and know me. You know when I sit and when I rise; You perceive my thoughts from afar”* (vv. 1-2). *“Before a word is on my tongue You, LORD, know it completely. You hem me in behind and before, and You lay Your hand upon me”* (vv. 4-5). *“Search me, God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there be any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting”* (vv. 23-24).

Sometimes trials come into our lives that make us wonder if we are included in God’s kingdom like other people we know. Often God shows up at such times, like He did for Nathanael.

QUESTION

When in your life has God surprised you? When has God showed up when you least expected Him?

PRAYERS FOR KEN ZELL AND INTERVARSITY MINISTRY

Pray for the 40 InterVarsity staff and interns who minister throughout the region. Ask God to give them strength, wisdom, and boldness in their leadership on campus.

WEDNESDAY

John 17:3; 1 Corinthians 8:1-3; Galatians 4:8-9

“Now this is eternal life: that they know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom You have sent.” —Jesus to His disciples (John 17:3)

The Greek word *epignosko* means “to know by experience.” To know God is a most amazing thing. And a big part of knowing God is knowing that He knows us. This is what Nathanael experienced. Jesus knew all about Nathanael. Jesus knew Nathanael through and through, and still He loved him. That knowledge is almost too much. It is life-changing.

Who else in the Scriptures had this experience? Moses, when the LORD asked him, “Who made your mouth?” (see Exodus 4:11). Jeremiah, when the LORD claimed to know him before He formed the prophet “in the womb” (Jeremiah 1:4). Both instances came, when each claimed they could not be God’s spokesperson. Moses said, “I don’t speak well.” God told Jeremiah, “Do not say, ‘I am too young’” (Jeremiah 1:7). And there were others.

There was Paul. God knew Paul better than Paul knew Paul. Paul met Jesus on the road to Damascus. If we had an experience like that it would change us, too. First, there was a blinding light and the voice, “*Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?*” (Acts 9:4). Then, later in Damascus, Ananias spoke the words Jesus told him to say to Paul, “*Jesus has chosen you to go to the outsiders (Gentiles).*” (Acts 9:15) Still later, Barnabas took Paul “under his wing” to introduce him to the church in Jerusalem, and later

to the church at Antioch of Syria. Paul knew he was known by God even before he knew God. And that knowledge of being known by God was central in Paul’s life.

Paul wrote to the Corinthians, “*Whoever loves God is known by God*” (1 Corinthians 8:3). He wrote to the Galatians, “*But now that you know God—or rather are known by God*” (Galatians 4:9). And Paul considered “*everything a loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus*” his Lord (Philippians 3:8).

QUESTIONS

Do you know that Jesus knows you and loves you? How do you know this?

PRAYERS FOR KEN ZELL AND INTERVARSITY MINISTRY

Pray for God to raise up volunteers and churches who will partner with InterVarsity to establish chapters on the 40+ campuses in the Greater Los Angeles region that are currently unreached.

THURSDAY

Luke 9:23-25; Genesis 5:22-24; Jeremiah 12

In three minutes Nathanael met Jesus and realized Jesus knew him from the inside out (1 Samuel 16:7; Hebrews 4:11). Then Nathanael began to know Jesus by experience (John 17:3). Nathanael's heart was ready to receive and respond to Jesus' invitation to follow Him, which Nathanael did. He walked with Jesus for three years alongside other disciples.

Others have walked with God, too. Jeremiah was not only known by God (Jeremiah 12:1); he walked with God for more than 30 years. His story is written in his books—Jeremiah and Lamentations—and highlighted in Eugene Peterson's *Run with the Horses*. God was there alongside Jeremiah, hearing his complaints and offering words of encouragement and wisdom all along the way, as He does with us as well.

Moses walked with God for over 40 years. God helped him lead the people of Israel to the Promised Land, even though he himself did not accompany them into it. God helped Moses when his authority was challenged. *"Enoch walked faithfully with God for 300 years"* (Genesis 5:22). People have been walking with God since the beginning of recorded history.

We can think that people who walk with God have special powers, but anybody can do it—regular people like you and me. We are tempted to

think that Elijah was out of the ordinary, but James 5:17 says he *"was a human being, even as we are."* Peter walked with Jesus right alongside Nathanael, and Peter had "foot-in-mouth disease."

Jesus invites us to walk with Him and outlines the requirements for doing so: *"If anyone wants to come after Me, let him deny himself, and follow Me. For everyone who wants to save his life will lose it, but if he loses his life for My sake, he will find it. For what does it profit a man to gain the whole world, but lose his own soul?"* (Luke 9:23-25).

In a recent sermon, our pastor said: "We can be sure Jesus will walk with us." He also said: "God is light—His nature is to reveal His truth." (Tim Peck)

QUESTIONS

How is it going—your walk with Jesus? We are in this together.

PRAYERS FOR KEN ZELL AND INTERVARSITY MINISTRY

Pray for God's protection and blessing upon Ken's family (Ana Liza, Jackson, Carter, and Kennedy). Pray especially for his son Jackson who is a freshman at Cal Poly Pomona. Pray for growth in his faith as he journeys with Jesus in this new season.

FRIDAY

John 21:1-3; 2 Chronicles 33:10-16; Matthew 20:1-16

“Afterward Jesus appeared again to His disciples, by the Sea of Galilee. It happened this way: Simon Peter, Thomas, Nathanael from Cana in Galilee, the sons of Zebedee, and two other disciples were together. “I’m going out to fish,” Simon told them, and they said, “We’ll go with you.” (John 21:1-3)

Nathanael was with Jesus in the first chapter and in the last chapter of John’s gospel. As John closes his gospel, Nathanael is still Jesus’ disciple/follower.

Nathanael’s question at the start of John’s gospel was: *“How can You know me?”* But what did Jesus mean when He said in the Sermon on the Mount to His disciples and the people gathered around, *“Then I will tell them plainly, I never knew you. Away from Me, you evil doers!”* (Matthew 7:23). How could Jesus not have known somebody/anybody? There must not have been any chemistry there. None of the Trinity was at home in their hearts (John 14:23).

Nevertheless, we dare not give up on anybody. The story of Manasseh, the worst king in Judah, is a case in point. In 2 Chronicles 33:10-16, we read the story of how he refused and rejected God until he was hooked in the nose and carted off to a Babylonian prison, having had his eyes poked out. In that exceedingly desperate situation, he called out to God. God heard his cry and *“brought him back to Jerusalem and to his king-*

dom” (33:13), where Manasseh *“restored the altar of the LORD and sacrificed fellowship offerings and thank offerings on it”* (33:16).

This reminds one of the Parable of the Day Laborers (Matthew 20:1-10). Nathanael is like the laborer who worked all through the day. Manasseh is like the one who worked only at the end of the day. In Jesus’ parable, each worker received the same wages regardless of how long they worked.

This also illustrates the principle of Ecclesiastes 7:8: *“The end of a matter is better than its beginning,”* and the principle of Ezekiel 33:11-20 where God says how a person ends his life is what matters to Him.

God will help us to finish well (Jude v. 24).

QUESTIONS

Have you ever felt like giving up on God? Have you ever felt like giving up on people? Or yourself? God didn’t give up on Manasseh. He will not give up on us.

PRAYERS FOR KEN ZELL AND INTERVARSITY MINISTRY

Pray for God’s work in Ken’s life and his leadership as he steps into a greater role of responsibility. Pray for grace and wisdom as he seeks a broader vision and develops the staff in the region to be more effective and spirit-led leaders.

Sources

- Eugene H. Peterson. *Run with the Horses: The Quest for Life at Its Best*. Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2019.
- Tim Peck. “The Truth about Our Confidence.” Sermon on November 24, 2019, #11 in the Series on First John. <https://www.glenkirkchurch.org/sermon/november-24-2019-the-truth-about-our-confidence/>

