

*the One with all the questions:  
What Do You Want?  
John 1: 29-42*

One Friday recently, our daughter Rachel was loading up a friend's car to drive to a weekend job at Camp Spalding. She noticed her keys were missing but assumed they were still in her room and, because she was running late, she just left. But when she returned on Sunday her keys were nowhere to be found. This was a big deal! If she lost them it would mean a total of several hundreds of dollars in fines, not to mention the supreme hassle! She sent me an email to describe her search:

I tore the room apart. Literally. This involved emptying every single drawer and moving every piece of furniture out into the hall, which I'm sure my hall mates loved. I checked and double checked the car, the lost and found, everywhere. I was furious with myself and refused to spend my newly earned pay check on some stupid keys. I resolved that I was going to find those keys, by golly, so finally I put on a jacket and started scouring the parking lot. Two rows from the back, encased in three days' worth of ice underneath a pick-up truck... were my keys.

I know that shepherd and the woman [in Luke 15] were pretty happy about finding what they had misplaced. But considering how, without those keys, I couldn't eat, get into my room, and would be out at least \$200, I'm pretty sure I gave their rejoicing a run for its money.

There are lots of things I love about that kid. One of them is this: once she sets her mind on something, she is like a dog with a bone. She was on a quest and wasn't about to give up until she found what she was looking for.

So... what are you looking for? What are you after? Really? It is one of the most important questions of life...as Jesus reminds us this morning.

[Read John 1: 29-42]

In the very last prophecy in the very last book of the Old Testament, Malachi, God promises this: "I will send you the prophet Elijah before that great and dreadful day of the LORD comes." You remember Elijah... the man who took on 400 prophets of Baal on the top of Mt. Carmel. Well, Malachi promises that one day, God will send another prophet like Elijah to usher in the day of the Lord.

Four hundred silent years pass, and then God keeps His word. Who was that new Elijah? John the Baptist. Every gospel starts with an account of John at the Jordan River, preaching and baptizing. He was always very clear about his role. He told the people that he was preparing the way for someone far greater than he; someone whose dirty sandals he would not even be worthy to untie. John's message wasn't exactly "seeker-friendly." But he was such a refreshing gust of truth that people flocked to hear him and be baptized for the repentance of their sins. He even had disciples—followers—who lived with him and ate with him in the wilderness, submitted to his authority and followed his teachings.

Well, one day, everything John had promised came true. While he was at the river doing his thing, Jesus showed up and John shouted, "Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!" The next day, the same thing happened. "This is the one we have been waiting for! This is the Son of God!" For hundreds of years the Jews had been waiting for this moment. Now the Messiah had come. "Look, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!"

Apparently John's disciples believed him. Because we read, "When the two disciples heard him say this, they followed Jesus." One was Andrew; the other was probably John. They had been following John the Baptist. Now, they leave him behind, and start following Jesus. You know... that's not easy for preachers. I read this week about a pastor of a big church who left the ministry. Not for the usual reasons... not because of a sex scandal or because he had stolen money from the church. No, he left the ministry because he realized his pride was out of control. It had become more about him and not about Jesus. It is a battle that every preacher fights... to keep pointing at Jesus and away from self.

That's what John does here. It's a pretty remarkable moment. "There He is! Finally! Stop following me. Follow him!" And his disciples obey. Jesus is walking away, and they start walking after him. And suddenly Jesus pauses, turns around, and asks a simple question: "What do you want?" The Greek says, "What are you seeking?" What are you looking for? What are you after?

It's a great question, isn't it? We've been talking about the power of great questions to transform lives. Have you been asking them in your own Good News sharing? What is your name? (Who are you; I want to know.) How are you... really? (Tell me what is going on in your life.) What's wrong? (I sense something is disturbing you. I can't fix it, but I know someone who can.)

Now comes a yet deeper question. This one requires work on the part of your listener: "What do you want? What are you looking for? What are you seeking in life? What are you after?" If Jesus asked you that question, what would your answer be?

Jesus asks these two new followers, "What do you want?" And they offer a most interesting response. "Where are you staying?" Does that seem odd to you? It's

not as weird as you might think. At that time, disciples often lived with their rabbi. He was responsible for all their accommodations and their food. And for a couple of guys who had been living with John the Baptist, this might have seemed like a really good question to a potential rabbi. Do you remember how John lived? He was a wild man: He lived in the wilderness, slept on the ground, wore camel skin, didn't drink alcohol, never cut his hair. He wasn't exactly a party animal. And his diet... do you remember what John lived on? These: grasshoppers. Only they were big old honkin' locusts; crunchy, juicy ones. But he sweetened them with this. Honey.

Hey, maybe Andrew and John wanted to know a little bit more about what their living arrangements would be before they jumped into this! Maybe they'd had enough of sleeping on the ground and munching on grasshoppers and honey! Maybe that was more "roughing it" than they had bargained for!

One of the dads who is going on our Mexico trip is not much of an outdoorsy-type. He's never been to Mexico before and was trying to figure out how rustic it was going to be. We asked him, "Have you ever camped before?" He replied, "I've stayed at the Holiday Inn Express. Does that count?" He was teasing, but maybe Andrew and John weren't. "What do you want?" Jesus asks. "Well, for starters, we'd like to sleep in a bed and eat some meat for a change. So, where is it that you live again? Mind if we take a peek at our accommodations before we commit?" Of course, their answer might mean something else. "What do you want," Jesus asks. "Well, we want to get to know you. We'd like to hang out with you. Could we come over to your house?" That would make sense, wouldn't it? If you were going to attach yourself to a new rabbi, it wouldn't hurt to get to know him, right? And maybe, these guys had a mixed agenda. God knows, we do! Maybe they were a little selfish. Maybe they wanted to know what Jesus could do for them. And maybe they really did want to get to know him better; find out more about who he was and what he stood for. We are all disciples with mixed agendas!

So how did Jesus respond? "Come and see for yourself!" Notice the grace of that? Whatever their motives were—mixed though they might be—Jesus says, "Come on. See for yourself. Give it a try." So they went and spent the day with him. And I'll bet Jesus helped them begin to figure out the answer to his question: What do you want?

If you are willing to learn to share the Good News of Jesus with your friends, this question is one of the greatest questions you can ask: "What do you want? What are you after in this life? What are you seeking? What are you pursuing? And when you get it... then what?"

The teenager is seeking acceptance, a date to Tolo, making the team, getting into college. The twenty-something is seeking a job or graduate school or a mate. A thirty-something wants to raise a family or make a mark in his company. The forty year old wants to rise to the top of the heap and be somebody; or maybe she

wants to regain the passion in a marriage that is 15 years stale. The fifty year old wants to be successful. The sixty year old wants to be significant. The seventy year old wants the retirement she dreamed of. The eighty year old wants to remain productive and vibrant in health and mind. The ninety year old wants her family to flourish... and to remember her. What do you want with your life?

I asked an unchurched friend that question this week: "What do you want in this life?" He thought for a moment and said, "Joy. Peace. Happiness. A good marriage." And then he thought a while longer and said, "What I really want, I cannot have." What do you want? We asked a worker at our house this week. He had been a contracting big shot... making tons of money. But the recession slammed him. He lost everything. He told us, "I am so much happier than I used to be. I have fewer clients but take better care of them; I get to know them. I am poor... and I am happy." What do you want?

And spiritually... what do you want spiritually? What are you seeking in church? Are you seeking forgiveness? Are you seeking purpose? Do you want something more than career and wealth and toys can provide? Do you want a community that will love you and hold you accountable? Do you want a place where you can give and serve and be a part of something greater than yourself? What do you want?

Or do you want a place where you can network? Or a place where you can sponge off of programs that benefit your family and never give a dime and never serve and never feel the slightest embarrassment about it? Do you want your name on a membership roll because you think it provides spiritual cover for you? What do you want here?

Kids... what do you want in Mexico? To do good? Help a family in need? Hang with your friends? Grow spiritually? Get away from your parents? What are you seeking across the border?

Socrates said, "The unexamined life is not worth living." Jesus asked potential disciples, "What do you want? What are you seeking?" All of us want something. Some of us know what it is. Some of us are in a fog, but know we haven't found it yet. All of us have mixed motives... some of what we want is noble, some is downright selfish. If Jesus were to ask you that question right now—"What do you want"—how would you respond?

You know, Jesus answered his own question. Do you remember? The question was, "What are you seeking?" Do you remember his answer? "Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all the rest will be added to you as well." If you seek a relationship with Jesus—if you make it your highest priority to be with him and get to know him and learn to recognize his voice and have the courage to obey it—if you seek these things, Jesus promises, all the other stuff that you need to live, God will provide.

Seek God—seek an intimate relationship with Jesus—and all the rest will come along. In fact, the Bible gives that same answer over and over again: Jeremiah says, “You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all of your heart.” In the Proverbs God says, “...those who seek me find me.” The prophet Amos speaks for God and says, “Seek me and live.” Do you want to really live?

When you think about it, maybe Andrew and John’s response was perfect. “What do you want?” Jesus asks. “What we want is to be with you, Jesus. Wherever you are, that’s where we want to be. Whatever you are doing, that’s what we want to do. We want our lives to count for something, and we can’t imagine a better way to make that happen... than to find out where you are and join you there. So, Jesus, lead the way home.”

It’s a great question—a great question for Christians in this room, a great question for your unsaved friend at the coffee shop. What do you want from this life? Well?

Are you putting these questions to use? Good News is no good if you don’t share it. Have you had the guts, yet, to ask God who he wants you to speak to? Have you had the courage to ask some great questions: Who are you? How are you? What’s wrong? And now, add this one to the mix... What do you want? I guarantee; it will take you to a deeper place with your friend. And maybe it will open a door. Try it this week, and I would love an email from you telling me how these questions are working for you. I would love to hear your story and, if you will let me, to share it.

## Sermon Questions

- **REFLECT & APPLY TOGETHER:** Share your thoughts. Don’t teach! Listen and reflect on God’s word together; grapple with what God is calling us to do and be through this passage.

- **PRAY TOGETHER:** Tell the Lord one thing you are thankful for, and lay one concern before the Lord.

- **DIG DEEPER**

1. John’s disciples abandoned him and followed Jesus. How do you think he felt about that?
2. What do you make of Jesus’ question to the disciples, “What do you want?” Does the Greek interpretation, “What are you seeking?” help? How is this an important evangelism question for others?
3. What do you make of the disciples’ response, “Where are you staying?” How does THAT speak to the importance of relationship in evangelism?
4. If you had to answer Jesus question for yourself, what would you say?