

Great Questions

#1 – “Where are You?”

June 24, 2018

If a friend of yours calls you and wants to directions to get to you, one of the first things you need to find out, in order to help them, is where they are at. And so a logical question would be “*Where are you?*” That way you can determine what set of directions to give them.

Similarly, that’s the very first question recorded that God asked man, “*Where are you*” and for very similar reasons.

This morning is the very first sermon in a new series entitled, **Great Questions**. For the next 10 weeks we’re going to be digging deeper into 10 questions that are recorded for us in the Bible. We’ll look at 5 questions God asked and end with 5 questions Jesus asked.

What we need to understand right off the bat, as a baseline, is that when God or Jesus asks a question it’s not because they are trying to discover information that they don’t already know. God is all knowing. It’s always for us to discover something that we don’t already know or need to think deeper on.

God’s very first question comes from **Genesis 3:9 (NIV)** *But the Lord God called to the man, “Where are you?”* Now, that’s not the very first question asked in the Bible. Can anyone tell me what the very first question recorded in the Bible is: It’s Satan asking Eve a question that’s intended to sow doubt in Eve’s mind about the character of God.

I want to begin reading our text this morning in Genesis 2:25 so please take out your Bibles and turn to Genesis 3.

Genesis 2:25 (NIV) *Adam and his wife were both naked, and they felt no shame*

Now make a mental note of that, because you’ll see why that’s recorded there in just a minute.

Read **Genesis 3:1-13**

Do you see perhaps why **Genesis 2:25** is in our Bible and how quickly it all changed. Prior to sin Adam and Eve were naked and it didn’t matter. There was nothing in their nakedness that seemed shameful. But as soon as they sinned their eyes were opened up and suddenly they felt the need to cover up their nakedness. What happened was exactly what Satan had promised would happen. He said that if they ate of the forbidden fruit that their eyes would be opened and *they will be like God, knowing good and evil*. The sad reality is that this seemed like a really good thing to them at the time but once they experienced it for themselves it was perhaps the largest disappointment in all of history. You see previous to this there was no evil for them to have to deal with. Everything was wonderful between them and God. He would apparently come in the Garden and speak with them. There was nothing to fear from the animal kingdom and everything was richly provided for them in the garden. Adam and Eve had this wonderful loving relationship. But once they sinned suddenly their nakedness appeared dirty and they felt the need to hide by covering themselves from each others eyes but even more so attempt to hide from God’s eyes.

Of course you cannot hide yourself from God. David, in Psalm 139 makes that abundantly clear. **(vs. 7-12)** When David wrote that Psalm the inability to be under God’s constant watch seemed wonderful to him. I doubt he would have felt the same way if he’d composed this psalm write after he’d committed adultery with Bathsheba and had her husband murdered. When we commit sin we certainly don’t want God seeing or being aware of what we’re doing and yet the reality is that He’s constantly aware of our actions and even our thoughts and the intents of our hearts.

Back to Genesis. Adam and Eve have committed the one sin God specifically instructed them to not do. So, they attempt to cover themselves up and hide from God. Good luck with that.

So, when God comes walking through the Garden, as He's often done before, and He calls out to Adam, *"Where are you?"* is it because God can't locate him? (like in a game of hide and seek). No, if you go back to our very first point, God asks questions for our benefit not His. God is giving Adam the opportunity to think about his actions and come clean. That's what the concept of confession is.

1 John 1:9 (NIV) *If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.*

The word translated into English means *"to agree with someone's word"*. Confession is not telling God about sins in your life that He didn't know about. It's rather coming clean with God regarding sins He's already well aware of. So, in this dialogue with Adam here, God is graciously and lovingly letting Adam come clean about his sin.

People often have this misperception of God's reaction to man's sin. They believe that God was very angry with Adam and Eve and came down with fury and condemned their actions, brought all these curses on them and Satan and then kicked them out of the Garden, locked the doors and threw away the keys so that mankind would never experience that again. That's such a huge misrepresentation of God. If you read the text carefully, God is certainly disappointed, but you see His graciousness in all of this to Adam and Eve in dealing with their sin and you even see God's plan to of restoration that was implemented when Jesus came and died on the cross. In speaking to Satan, God uttered the very first prophecy in the Bible.

Genesis 3:15 (NIV) *And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel.*

God is putting Satan on notice that there is a plan already in place to restore the original intent of creation. To restore the rich fellowship Adam and Eve originally enjoyed with God. To bring back a way of living where there will be no more guilt or shame. What we see hear is disappointment but also the love and grace of God toward mankind.

So, when God asks Adam where he is, he's giving Adam the opportunity to confess what he's done. He's giving Adam the opportunity to own up to what he did. And the same is true for everyone of us. In order for us to have a restored relationship with God, we've first got to admit our sin and our need for a Savior. Taking us back to the very beginning of this sermon – in order for a friend to give you accurate directions on how to get to them, they've first got to know where you're starting from. In order for us to have a restored relationship with God, we've first got to admit where we've gone and God is ready and willing to forgive you of your sins and restore you back into a restored relationship with Himself. It's what He longs to do.

So, God asks Adam where He is and Adam responds, *"I heard you in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid."* **11 And God said, "Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree that I commanded you not to eat from?"** Genesis 3:10-11 (NIV)

You see both God and Satan knew that one of the immediate results of sin was that they would be introduced to the world of guilt. And again, God already knew the answer to His question. He's still walking Adam through the practice of self-examination and confession. Unfortunately, neither Adam nor Eve does very well in this regard. Adam blames God for giving him this woman and blames the woman for giving him the fruit. Eve blames the serpent. And the blame game continues strong today. We human beings aren't very good are coming clean when we've messed up. We tend to look for scapegoats to blame. Adam would have been much better off to have just said, *"Yes I did eat from that forbidden fruit. I have no one to blame but myself."* But that's not what happened and my guess is you've also played the blame game – I know I have way too many times. Blame is our way of dealing with guilt rather than taking responsibility for our own actions.

You see God's graciousness once again at the end of this story when, before He removes them from the Garden and sends them out into the world, He makes appropriate garments for them to wear that would provide the necessary coverings of protection for them. Up until now they were constantly under God's

protection and provision and hadn't needed to cover themselves. But they were now venturing out into a fallen world and would need to protect and provide for themselves.

I want to close this sermon by asking you the very same question God asked Adam. "*Where are you?*" Where are you in your relationship with God. This past week were there things you did or thought that you'd rather have God not notice or see? If that's true, I've got good news. According to 1 John 1:9, that I referred to earlier, if you come back to God and confess your sins to Him, He's ready and willing and eager to forgive your sins and move forward in your relationship with Him. He never sits in condemnation on His children (see **Romans 8:1**). God is committed to working with you to continually restore and continue to build on and deepen your relationship with Him.

If you've never accepted Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior then confession and forgiveness is not available to you. There is no forgiveness of your sins without accepting Christ's sacrifice for your sins on the cross. If that's you, then your sins are continually building a wall of separation between you and God. And as a pure and holy and sinless God, He cannot build a personal relationship with someone stained by sin. But there's great news for you. You can come right now as we sing our next song, leave your seat and come up to the front and admit that you're a sinner in need of a Savior, just like everyone else. That you realize you don't have the power to change your life and you're ready to accept forgiveness offered through Jesus Christ and to be filled with God's indwelling presence through the Holy Spirit which empowers you to live life sin free and focus your heart and mind and will on pleasing God for the rest of your life – each and every day. So, if that's your desire, then please come to the front as we all stand and sing Just As I Am.

Most of you know this classic hymn but may not know the story behind it. It was written by Charlotte Elliot of Brighton, England. It was written out of personal agony, for you see Charlotte became an invalid at a very early age. While her mind was sharp, her body was not helpful and she constantly felt useless to the Lord because of her seeming inability to offer any kind of meaningful service to the Lord. At age 45, her brother was beginning a school and they were having a fundraiser event for it. Lots of people had worked very hard in preparing for this event, but Charlotte continued to feel extremely frustrated with her inability to help. The night before she wrestled with depression all night unable to sleep. Finally in the morning she wrote down the words to this song, as a type of personal theology statement that asks us to come just as we are to Him. We don't have to clean up our act in order to come to Him. Instead he asks us to simply realize how much we need Him in our life. We need to realize that we can't "clean up our act" on our own strength and we desperately need His help. When we accept Jesus Christ's sacrifice for our sins, God sends His Holy Spirit, His indwelling presence, to live inside of each of us and to enable us to overcome the various things that keep us chained up and prevent us from living to full life God designed for us to live.

So, if you'd like to respond to God's question of "Where Are You?" by drawing closer to Him, we invite you to come forward as we stand and sing – "Just As I Am".

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Why does God ask question?

Who asks the first question in the Bible and what's its purpose?

What's the significance of Genesis 2:25?

What happened when Adam and Eve sinned?

Was Satan right in his promise of what would happen when they ate the forbidden fruit?

Is it possible to hide anything from God?
Are you trying to hide anything from God?

How would you describe God's reaction to Adam and Eve's sin?

What does it mean to confess our sins to God?

What's the purpose behind confession?

Why does God ask Adam where he is?

How do Adam and Eve respond to God questioning if they've sinned?
In what ways do you engage in this type of behavior?

What's the significance of Genesis 3:15?

Where are you in your relationship with God? (in a couple of words)

Where do you wish you were in your relationship with God?

What practical steps will you take to get there?

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