



Discussion Questions for Week 1: “You’ll have to be reborn if you truly want to see what’s real”

1. What insights did you gain from the message this past Sunday? What was most helpful for you? What did you find uncomfortable?
2. Read John 3: 1-21. As a member of the ruling council (the Sanhedrin), Nicodemus is a very powerful leader. Jesus seems to escalate the conversation and make it uncomfortable. How willing are you to challenge people with power when you see injustice? Share about a time when you have done this. Share about a time when you failed to do so and explain why. Are there any situations at the moment where you feel you need to have an uncomfortable conversation?
3. Read John 3: 9-11. Jesus seems to suggest that despite (or perhaps because of) his credentials, Nicodemus does not see or understand the truth. In what ways does power and privilege blind us to what is real? Share a time when you have changed your mind or woken up to a new understanding. What previously kept you from this perception? In what ways do you have power and privilege today? How might this be impairing your understanding?
4. Read John 3:6-8. In what ways is mystery and uncertainty uncomfortable? How can uncertainty help us grow in our relationship with Jesus?
5. Read John 3:3 and John 3: 16-17. What does “born again” and “Jesus saves” mean to you? In what way may these terms have resulted in an exclusive concept of God’s love? What might be a more imaginative and generous way to view them?
6. The speaker on Sunday suggested that the word “save” (*sozo* in the original Greek) is associated with a journey to healing and wholeness. How might this view of salvation change the way we relate to people around us? How might it change how we view the needs of society as a whole? How might this change how we live—the goal of our spirituality journey? In what ways might this change be uncomfortable?

Practice for this week

Pick one thing from this week’s message and reflections that made you feel most uncomfortable. Take just 5 minutes to meditate on it in silence. Sit quietly somewhere alone, close your eyes and feel the discomfort. Don’t try to repel the discomfort. Invite God to bring light into the discomfort to help you see and feel more clearly. Try to identify specifically what is the source of discomfort. Why does it make you feel uncomfortable? What is this discomfort telling you? How might it be challenging you to positive change? Do this each day this week for 5 minutes, as it may take time to reach some clarity. Each time as you finish, invite God’s Spirit to open your eyes to new perspectives that day.

Discussion Questions for Week 2: "Fools, snakes, and whitewashed tombs"

1. What stood out to you from the message this past Sunday? Did anything seem particularly relevant to your current circumstances? Did anything make you feel uncomfortable?
2. The speaker on Sunday suggested uncomfortable conversations can help us to grow. Can you think of a time when you avoided an uncomfortable conversation, and later regretted that decision? What do you think you lost as a result? What held you back from having the conversation?
3. Read Matthew 22:15-22. What does Jesus' response—"Give back to Caesar what is Caesar's, and to God what is God's"—mean to you? In what ways does Jesus address the payment of taxes, and in what ways does he address the motives of the Pharisees? What can we learn from this exchange about responding to contentious issues?
4. Read Matthew 22:23-33. In this instance, we are not told anything about the intentions of those questioning Jesus. But what can we learn about them from the way they present their question? What lessons from this conversation that we can apply to our own?
5. Read Matthew 22:34-46. How does the primacy of love relate to difficult conversations? Jesus' question to the Pharisees implies that the Messiah will defeat his "enemies" not through warfare (like David) but through the power of love. How do the Pharisees respond to this radical view of the Messiah?
6. Is there a relationship or situation in which you need to have an uncomfortable conversation? Spend some time praying for one another.

Practice for this week

Can you think of a time in your life when you had a difficult or uncomfortable conversation that led to personal growth? Think about how you felt before, during, and after this conversation. What did you gain as a result of this conversation? Did you lose anything? What lessons can you draw from this past experience that you can apply to current or future interactions? Make this prayer your own this week:

*May the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable to You, O God,
my rock and my redeemer. (Psalm 19:14)*

Discussion Questions for Week 3:

"Follow me into self-denial, suffering and death" ...and other warm invitations from Jesus

1. What insights did you gain from the message this past Sunday? What was most helpful for you? What did you find uncomfortable?
2. Read Matthew 16:13-20. The scene is set in Caesarea Philippi, a center of Roman and Herodian power. Why do you think Jesus waits until he is in this location to ask his disciples who they think he is?
3. When Simon (Peter) says, "You are the Messiah," what does that mean to you? How would you respond to Jesus' question if you were asked today? Who do you think Jesus is?
4. Why do you think Jesus tells his disciples not to tell anyone he is the Messiah?
5. Read Matthew 16:21-28. The speaker on Sunday suggested that when Jesus says his disciples must "deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me" he is calling them to follow the way of love and let go of fear. Do you agree with this? If not, how would you interpret Jesus' statement?
6. This second encounter between Peter and Jesus is very different to the first. Jesus seems as willing to challenge Peter as to encourage him. What could you learn from this difference as it applies to your own uncomfortable conversations?
7. Describe a time when you've had to upset people in order to remain true to your convictions? Why were you so determined to remain true? Why were people upset? How did the communication go? What would you do differently (if anything) next time?

Practice for this week:

Fear is always at work in our uncomfortable conversations. It can hold us back from even having a conversation, and can make us more hostile or defensive when we do have them. The same is true of everyone else in those conversations!

This week try to increase your awareness of when fear is at work in you. Take a few minutes at the beginning of each day to look ahead to any difficult encounters you envisage. Notice your emotions as you anticipate, and try to locate the source of any fear or anxiety. Don't judge yourself – just be aware. Invite God's love, and let go of your fear. Imagine the other person being fearful too, and allow yourself to have compassion on them. As you go through the day, make a conscious effort to notice your own fear in the encounters you have (both expected and unexpected ones). Instead of following your fear, focus on love. Remind yourself that you are inherently loved, and have nothing to lose because that cannot change. See the other person in the same way: someone who is afraid but is really inherently loved. Allow compassion for yourself and the other to well up, and in that flow of love, speak your truth with honesty and conviction.

Discussion Questions for Week 4: "What is truth?"

1. What stood out to you from the message this past Sunday? Did anything feel particularly relevant to your current circumstances? Did anything make you feel uncomfortable?
2. Read John 18:28 – 19:16. What is your overall opinion of the Roman governor Pontius Pilate? How would you describe his attitude towards Jesus?
3. What do you think Pilate means and what do you think Jesus means by the following terms:
 - King
 - Power
 - Truth
4. What do you think prevented Pilate from hearing the truth in this situation?
5. The speaker on Sunday suggested this conversation raised a number of questions for our own "uncomfortable" conversations:
 - Are we looking for truth
 - ...if it is disruptive?
 - ...if it is from unexpected sources?
 - Are we willing to let go
 - ...of control?
 - ...of cynicism?
 - Can we embrace
 - ...not having all the answers?
 - ...making mistakes?

Which of these questions most resonates with you? What holds you back from hearing truth?

6. Are there any difficult or uncomfortable conversations you are having or need to have currently? Spend some time praying for one another.

Practice for this week

As you go through the week, pay attention to any moments of tension in your day-to-day conversations. When you notice any tension, try and slow down and ask yourself why you are feeling the way you do. Are you still really listening to the other person? Are you having difficulty because of the topic or the person? Are you seeking control, feeling cynical, or afraid of being wrong? At the end of the day, reflect back on your conversations and your feelings about them. Pray the Spirit of Truth would guide you into all truth (John 16:13).