



Quick Review: What is a “tough question”?

- A tough question is not one to which God does not know the answer. A tough question is one to which we might not want to know the answer. But if we dare to ask God the question, and if we dare to apply the answer... Life will never be the same.
- God wants us to bring our questions to Him, but too often we ask questions that do not really matter. *Let us ask the kinds of questions that build relationships with Him* – His heart’s desire.
- “Tough questions” are not ones that I ask you or that you ask yourself. They are questions to be directed straight to God. And it is God who provides the answers.
- He will not remain silent when we seek Him.

Tonight’s Theme: Encouragement

There are many who need encouragement right now. And if you don’t believe you need any at the moment, then your job tonight is to ask God to identify someone you can encourage and lend your strength to.

Do I Understand My Value (and Appreciate Who I Am in Christ)?

- One of the saddest victories the enemy can have is to convince us that we have no value. We’ve messed up too much! But look at the “Bible greats” – they all had huge flaws and had made serious mistakes. David, Noah, Moses, the whole lot of them. Yet God made glorious use of their lives.
- Many of us struggle with self-worth in this performance-oriented society. But one undeniable fact remains: Nothing cancels or reduces our value to God. Jesus would still take a bullet for each of us.
- Look at what God the Father said about Jesus in Matthew 3:17, “This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased.” The Message renders the verse this way: “This is my Son, chosen and marked by my love, delight of my life.” Now put the verse in context: how many life-changing sermons had Jesus preached up to this point? How many sick people had He healed? *Not one.*
- God spoke these words as a loving father speaks to a child, *not because of what Jesus had done but because of who He was.* He blessed Jesus out of unconditional love, not because of what God hoped Jesus would accomplish and certainly not because of what anyone else thought of Him. These words of affirmation marked the birth of Jesus’ earthly ministry, not the culmination of a lifetime of preaching. God loves us because we are His creation, not because of what we’ve done, what we might do, or what we didn’t do.
- We have value in God’s eyes because He created us with inherent value. Just as He placed the stars in the sky, so He placed in us value that will never and can never diminish.
- From John 14:11–14 (MSG), we find these incredible words straight from Jesus’ mouth: “The person who trusts me will not only do what I’m doing but even greater things, because I, on my way to the Father, *am giving you the same work to do that I’ve been doing. You can count on it*” (emphasis added). Who was Jesus talking about? These are bold words! So who did Jesus mean them for? You. He meant them for you. Be encouraged, that your value is priceless, far beyond what you or anyone else has given you credit for. That is what God says about you!

“God, What would my life be like if I believed I could do what You know I can?”

- The logic behind this question is that God knows the complete picture of what we are capable of accomplishing. He is, after all, our Creator. How would our lives be changed if we asked God to reveal to us what He already knows we can do, beyond a mathematical doubt?

- Imagine that God has 3 books about you: The first contains an exhaustive list of every single thing you possibly could accomplish in life. The second contains everything you have accomplished in life up to this point. And the third contains everything you've accomplished that you never thought you could, but you did!
- If you knew what God knows about you, how much harder would you try in the future since you're obviously capable of exceeding your own expectations? What goals have you given up on that you'd take another stab at, with more intensity and better planning? Remember the book that lists everything God knows you can do? The possibilities for your life are incredible at any age.
- Philippians 4:13 – “I can do ***all things through Christ*** who strengthens me.”

“God, Am I An Encourager?”

- Encouragement is the conscious sharing of your strength with someone else who needs it. And like love, usually you get it back in some form or another.
- There are so many forms of encouragement; we should never underestimate the raw power of a simple act of encouragement. Usually a small act of encouragement is all someone needs to keep on going. Be the one who helps someone along during their darkest hour.
- In Matthew chapter 25, Jesus reminded the disciples how they fed Him when He was hungry, clothed Him when He was naked, and even visited Him in prison. Jesus did not forget the work they had done for others and was already looking forward to rewarding them handsomely for their efforts.
- Matthew 10:41 – someone who welcomes a prophet will receive a prophet's reward! God alone sees the eternal impact of a simple word of encouragement, and one day He will reveal to us the impact we've had in the lives of others.
- Collectively and individually, we have taken a beating over the past 3 years. This house dearly needs encouragement. And we will continue moving forward, *without a doubt*.
- Bottom line: If you are struggling right now, be encouraged. Be strongly encouraged. And for all of us, this is a call to action – GO and encourage someone! Ask that question, “God, Am I An Encourager?” and let God use you to speak life into someone else. It may be that you will find encouragement by sharing what you have with others.

Discussion Questions

- Think of a time when you received encouragement, either to keep going during a difficulty or as inspiration to achieve something that was important to you. Who was it that encouraged you? What was the impact of that encouragement?
- Encouragement rarely costs us anything and yet has such an impact. What are some things we can do to increase our effectiveness in this area?
- The NIV renders Romans 15:2 this way: “Each of us should please our neighbors for their good, to build them up.” Whether or not we feel that we have a “gift” of encouragement, based on this passage do you believe we all nonetheless have the obligation to look for opportunities to encourage others?
- Do you feel that it is possible to encourage someone else without in some shape or form having that encouragement rebound to you?
- How do you believe the global pandemic made it more difficult to encourage others? As we struggle with the aftermath of it, what can the body of Christ do to bridge that gap and encourage each other to regain to the extent possible what has been lost?
- In some small way, would you be willing to commit to encouraging someone this week?

“So encourage each other and build each other up, just as you are already doing.”

1 Thessalonians 5:11 (NLT)