

rB Three Hard Questions | Rod Brace

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WARNING: This is not your typical "that a boy - you go girl" half-dozen steps to getting anything you want and accomplishing nothing much different kind of article. Sorry, but this is a call you out piece of advice that few will follow and many will float on by in their familiar way. I'll pause a second or two to let the uninterested go to the next article.

Now that we are down to the hearty souls who really care about life and living and figuring out what makes it tick and how to make it better -- I welcome you. You've made a fine choice, because what follows are three very powerful questions that if asked intently and frequently, your life will be very different.

These are powerful questions because powerful questions have become so rare these days. Somewhere between asking your Mom why bugs taste like pickles and asking your Dad for the car keys -- you, me, we all -- stop asking questions. We move from that comfy cocoon of there are no silly questions to emerging as the glorious butterfly of knowledge proclaiming to all who know better -- that we indeed know it all.

Questions fall prey to answers because answers often prohibit questions. As adults, we are satisfied with knowing a little about a lot and not really spending much time thinking about any of it. Asking questions, particularly of ourselves, becomes childish to most and dangerous to many. We don't really care to know what we really think about a topic, we merely want to be sure that we know what to say to the politically correct, deeply immersed, products of culture that judge our every word. Fact is: we are scared to death of deep, far reaching questions, because questions force us to change.

A question asked and then pondered for several days, has the ability to strip the old and flaking paint from the deep insides of our mind in corners of thought that we just as soon forget. A question left to ruminate opens doors long left locked from the inside only to find new perspectives and challenges that leave us better and not worse. Questions must be generously applied to find the newly polished surface of hope, change and insightful living.

So, what are these three life altering questions that I bet at this moment you kind of, sort of, hope don't apply to you?

Question #1: In what area of your life are you less than honest with others?

This question takes time to resolve as you sort through all of the people that you care about and even those who you have cared less than a little about. It is the process of searching our interactions and words to determine who has received from us a less than genuine picture of whom we really are. Not who we try to be -- but the deep down real thing called me.

Perhaps we have convinced ourselves that we treat every one with dignity and respect but flash backs of less than appropriate thoughts and comments clang in our memory. We may

momentarily believe that we honor our spouse and cherish our children, but do we really? On those gloriously insightful days we are convinced that we are excellent employees giving it our every ounce of determination and energy, but what about those days where we simply float by keeping a lazy look-out toward the passing hours?

Ask yourself: Are there siblings to forgive? Are there friends to whom an apology is owed? Are there neighbors to meet? Are there children that need to be reminded of how much you love them? Ask yourself, really ask yourself -- where am I less than honest with others?

Question #2: In what area of your life are you less than honest with yourself?

The heart beats a wee bit faster on "close to home" questions like this. We begin to squirm in our chair. Distractions are much desired moments of relief. Those thoughts are common -- very common. Those thoughts are all symptoms of not being honest with that inner voice who shares our name. We don't like being called out. We don't like having to answer for something as simple and ironic as not being inwardly honest.

But, it is an important question. It is the core engine of change. If we are honest we know that we are not as perfect as the character we play on the stage of life. We know that we are judgmental and prejudice and superficial and greedy and selfish and ungrateful. We know it, yet we try to conceal it like some silly little game of hide-and-seek with someone who can see our every move.

When we contemplate who we have become in pursuit of something we never really wanted to be -- we come face to face with the real problem -- the pride of being dishonest with ourselves. We are not as good of a spouse, parent, employee, friend . . . the list is long and painfully accurate. Look yourself in the heart and ask where am I being less than honest with myself?

Question #3: In what area of your life are you less than honest with God?

This question is the hardest by far, yet we will make it feel like the easiest. We sheepishly grin and agree that "God knows my heart. He knows I'm not perfect. He forgives me and loves me just the way I am." True. True and true. But that wasn't the question. In what areas of your life -- marriage, spiritual growth, fears, and possessions -- are you not willing to come face-to-face with the God that does indeed love you more than you will ever realize, and be humbly and unabashedly honest with Him to admit your pride, admit your worries, and admit your temptations?

When we are not honest with God, we prevent His sacred movement in our life. When we do not totally give over to His desire for every aspect of our life, we do not fully experience His love. When we refuse to honestly approach God and instead, live under our own unpredictable, overwhelmed semblance of control -- we fail to experience life to its fullest. We fail to live. We fail to serve others in our relationships. We fail to see forgiveness and blessing bestowed upon our own life. We fail to grow in depth of insight and spiritual

understanding. We choose not to thrive in exchange for the prideful contentment of doing it our own way.

It is likely that most people will emerge from living twelve months from now pretty much in the same place that they are today. Their lives will continue to be defined by the magnitude of their possessions or the stature of their position. Introspection will be lost to shallow manipulation of thoughts and words to make their prideful spirit happy. Their relationships will not grow deeper. Their understanding of who they can become will be lost on doing what they think others value. Their relationship with the God who created and loves them will sink as shallow as the thoughts that fill their mind.

They will continue to live in a world in which they have all the answers -- while the life they truly desire hides deep within three questions. Ask yourself.

"And this is my prayer: that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight, so that you may be able to discern what is best and may be pure and blameless until the day of Christ, filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ -- to the glory and praise of God." -Philippians 1: 9-11