

Tough Questions/Introduction
January 1, 2012 – Tim Perry

My name is Tim Perry. I'm pastor of Spiritual Discovery at Christ Community Church. I want to introduce you to a video blog that we're going to call "Tough Questions". Tough Questions is a part of Project 4:4. At Christ Community Church in the year 2012, we're going to be reading through the entire Bible. This Bible, in fact, called the Daily Bible arranged in chronological order.

As we read through the Bible, we're going to encounter a lot of difficult text. Things that raise major questions in our minds as we encounter them. Each week, I'm going to try to select a couple of important texts that we can talk about on this video blog. If you have questions, I'd like for you to chime in and interact with me on the web if you could.

For example, just here in the first week of Project 4:4, you're going to read through the first 39 pages of the Bible arranged in chronological order. The first 39 pages of the Bible actually cover about the first 19 chapters in the Book of Genesis. In the first 19 chapters of the Book of Genesis, a lot of really interesting events take place that raise a lot of really interesting questions if we look at them carefully. The creation, the fall and Adam and Eve into sin, Noah and the flood, the Tower of Babel, the call of Abraham into God's mission, the destruction of Sodom.

These kinds of passages beg questions as we read them. Questions like how do we know that creation of the heavens and the earth took place just like it says there in the Christian's Bible. There are so many other cultures that have lots of other interesting creation myths, how do we know that Christianity didn't just borrow its creation story from one of those secular myths?

Or what about the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah? Is God really a God of wrath? Is the Old Testament God the God of today? Why is he so hard on Sodom and Gomorrah? When we look around us today and we see examples of corruption – cities that are filled with sin that seem to go unpunished by God.

Questions are essential to our learning no matter how we slice it. Questions are a part of our natural inductive learning process that our minds go through as we take in information and try to sort out what it means. Questions are especially important when it comes to spiritual topics and finding our way spiritually with God. God gave us a mind so that our minds can be fully engaged in the process of discovering spiritual truth and relating to God.

Jesus, in fact, intentionally used a strategy of questions in his training of the twelve. At one point, if you remember, Jesus is training the twelve by debriefing an experience where he had taught many of the parables to the disciples. They come to him and they ask him this question, "Jesus, how can we understand what these parables mean if you don't explain them to us?" Jesus says, "The secret of the kingdom has been given to you, but to those on the outside, everything is said in

parables so that ever seeing, they may never perceive and ever hearing, they may never understand. Otherwise, they might turn and be forgiven.”

Jesus is here using a provocative learning style to get the disciples to ask questions – to engage their minds so that their pursuit of spiritual truth is something that they would own and embrace fully.

Well, what kinds of questions then are important for us to ask? What will we be talking about? There are questions that just come from the passage itself. We may not know enough information of the history or times when those events took place so we need to explore that some. Maybe there are questions that will call into question our worldview or what we assume that we’ve always known. We will read a passage in the Bible and it will seem to shake our understanding of things. Questions can also be big barriers to trusting God and our practical faith in Him. So it’s essential that we ask questions. Ultimately, questions are the key to engaging the story of God’s Word with the story of our lives. If we never question our faith, it remains untested.

When I was an engineering student, we would often go to the lab and look at samples of material that things would be constructed of – whether it was a bridge or some kind of component in an engine of an automobile. Then in our test, we would subject that sample of that material to an incredible pressure to see how far it could be squeezed or stretched before it failed.

Questions are like that in our Christian faith and in our spiritual pursuit as well. If we don’t take the time to ask really pressing questions of what we believe and what we think we believe, then we may be basing our faith on things that are virtually untested. As a Christian, if our faith is never tested, it’s like we’re building with materials that we don’t know how strong they are. We don’t know where their failure points are going to be. If we learn to question the Bible, we’ll discover that our faith actually gets stronger in the process because the Bible is the kind of book that can withstand the pressure of our questions.

Maybe we’re not there yet spiritually. Maybe we’re still seeking and we’re not yet convinced of Christianity. Well, then asking tough questions is all the more important. God isn’t asking you to just ignore your intellectual issues with the Bible in order to place your faith in its message. Honest inquiry builds honest faith.

My hope no matter what your starting point in coming to Project 4:4 is that you’ll keep coming back to God’s Word and that you’ll keep feeding your curiosity as you read. I hope that these videos will help you do that. I’ll be posting one or two tough questions each week. I’ll do my best to summarize a great question that comes out of the reading for that week and bring you a three or four minute video summary of them.

You can find “Tough Question” videos either on the home page of Christ Community’s website and you can go to the CCC blog on our website as well. If my

comments stimulate further comments or questions on your part, I would love to hear those so that we could interact. Just hit the “comment” button and let me know what you’re thinking.

I hope you’ll join us on this great adventure this year and I hope we’ll have a great time asking and answering tough questions together. Thank you very much.