

What Do You Want?

John 1:38

If you have a Bible or have one on your phone, go ahead and open it up to the Gospel of John, chapter one, verse 35. John 1:35.

And while you do that, I'm going to pray. **PRAY.**

I'm going to read verses 35 to 38:

The next day John was there again with two of his disciples. When he saw Jesus passing by, he said, "Look, the Lamb of God!" When the two disciples heard him say this, they followed Jesus. Turning around, Jesus saw them following and asked, "What do you want?"

"What do you want?"

What do you *want*?

These are the very first words of Jesus in the Gospel of John. Of all the words that Jesus spoke during his lifetime, John chose these 4 words of Jesus to open his Gospel.

"What do you want?"

How are we supposed to hear this question?

You could see these words as sort of flippant or insignificant.

Jesus is walking along and these two random men start following him, and so he turns to them and understandably asks, "What do you want?"

You might even be able to read into the question a tone of frustration, like, "Why are you two guys creepin' me? What do you want?!" (And it has to be said like a NYC cab driver.)

But I'm guessing you'd probably agree with me that the apostle John would not choose to make the very first words of Jesus in his Gospel a question asked flippantly or out of frustration.

These are Jesus's very *first words*, and so you know they're going to be significant.

"WHAT DO YOU WANT?"

I find it really fascinating that Jesus asks these two men, "What do you *want*?"

Not, "What do you think?" Not, "What do you believe?"

Jesus didn't ask them about their understanding of the Torah or their religious or political views on a certain topic.

He didn't quiz them or stalk their Facebook profile to find out if they were conservative or liberal, woke or ignorant, tolerant or fundamentalist.

In fact, he didn't ask them what they *thought* about anything.

Instead, he said, "What do you *want*?"

In the post-Enlightenment West, we've been trained to believe that people are primarily thinkers - that we're kind of like brains on a stick or something.

We've been taught to believe that our thinking controls our living. Our thinking determines our actions. Our thinking decides how we live and treat other people.

After all, Descartes declared, "I think, therefore I am."

But is this really true? I have one illustration to prove that this is definitely not true.

I've begun to notice that as I get older - I just turned 41 - when New Years Day rolls around or another birthday passes, I often make resolutions that usually have something to do with my diet or exercise or losing 10 pounds.

And here's the thing: I *know* that ice cream is bad for my cholesterol levels. I *know* that pizza has way too many carbs and way too much fat for me to lose weight. I *know* that an extra serving of lasagna is not going to move me towards my weight loss goals.

And lately I *know* that staying up late watching the NBA playoffs on the West Coast is going to make it impossible for me to get up early the next day and go for a run.

I *know* all of these things...

But the problem is not my *knowing*. The problem is my *doing*.

There's something else going on. There's something besides my thinking that is determining my actions.

We're people full of desires and wants and passions and dreams. We're lovers. We're feelers. We have habits. We have patterns of behavior.

We *want* things, even when we *know* those things aren't good for us.

One author put it this way: "**Jesus asks, 'What do you want?' This is the most incisive, piercing question Jesus can ask of us precisely because we are what we want. Our wants and longings and desires are at the core of our identity, the wellspring from which our actions and behavior flow.**"

James K. A. Smith

We are what we want.

So we're back to Jesus's question, "What do you want?"

If you're like me, the question is kind of scary.

You see, on one level I *know* the right answer. I *know* what I'm **supposed** to say.

But on another level, ummm...?

If we had some way to look into our souls - to really see what our heart aches for...

If there was some kind of screen on our forehead with a ticker running across it - a readout of all of our thoughts and daydreams - a ticker that would reveal our true desires...

What would we find? What is that thing we most desire? What is that thing that drives us? What is that thing in life - in this world that we... and I'll use this word very intentionally, that we worship?

We may say our first love and our allegiance is to Jesus and following his way of living, but, in reality, our hearts can be set on other things - we can worship other priorities, dreams, and goals.

Maybe we're driven by a desire to succeed - to find our significance in what we accomplish professionally.

If we can just secure a good job and a successful career with all of the financial and social privileges that come along with it - then we'll know we've made something of ourselves.

But when Jesus calls us take up a cross - to give up that lucrative job...

...when he calls us to be generous and sacrificial with the resources and the money that we've earned and worked hard for...

It's often at that moment that our true wants and desires are exposed.

It always amazes me when I have students who feel called to be missionaries, whether with Chi Alpha or overseas.

It's often their parents - their *Christian* parents - who are most against it.

Sometimes we even want our kids to succeed and be well-off and financially secure more than we want them to follow Jesus's call on their lives.

As a missionary, the watching world may think I'm so godly - that I've made such sacrifices for the Kingdom - that I'm driven by this passion to reach students.

But deep down I want security and comfort. I want to drive a nice SUV. I want a well-manicured lawn, and pretty furniture in my house.

I'm driven by a desire for the typical middle-class American dream.

Maybe what some of us most desire is a certain kind of relationship.

We just know that if we had someone who loved us for who we are - someone who didn't have the flaws that our spouse has - someone who is less critical - if we had someone who helped us feel more attractive or beautiful...

I would feel complete. Life with all of its loneliness and pain would finally be bearable.

But when Jesus calls us to pass on the opportunity for a relationship because He knows this person or that person will eventually pull us away from our most important relationship of all - our relationship with Him!...

Once again He shows us what we most want - what we're most longing for - what we really worship.

Jesus asks us the question, "What do you want?" because it shines a light on our hearts - it reveals our true desires - it exposes what really motivates us.

That's exactly what's going on with these two disciples in our passage from John's Gospel.

In the time of Jesus, there was this genre of literature called apocalyptic literature. Basically it was like our fantasy or science fiction literature of today.

It had crazy and supernatural beasts. Wars. Natural disasters. Kind of like the Book of Revelation.

It was meant to give ordinary everyday events - like battles and empires and famines and floods - to give them spiritual significance by throwing back the curtain and revealing what was going on in the spiritual realm.

And throughout the apocalyptic literature of Jesus's day, there was a consistent figure - known as the "Lamb of God."

This "lamb" was no passive, gentle animal. Instead it was a ferocious, warrior lamb. I'm not kidding here.

It was a warrior lamb that overthrew the beast-like nations and restored Israel's independence.

This "warrior lamb" was the Messiah who would defeat the Roman empire and usher in Israel's nationalistic hopes.

In other words, it was a kind of code. You could be a Jew sitting next to some Roman soldiers talking about how "the lamb is coming," and they would scoff at you. But what you're really talking about is when Rome gets their butt kicked.

And so when John the Baptist says, "Look - the Lamb of God!" He's not thinking of a sacrificial lamb like we now know Jesus is - he's not thinking of sacrifice and death or crucifixion - he's talking about military victory over Rome. He's thinking armies and battles and the end of Rome.

And so these two disciples begin to follow Jesus because they're ready to sign up for this project. They're ready to overthrow Rome. They're ready to spill some blood.

When Jesus asks them, "What do you want?", the true answer would have been glory, power, fame, national dominance.

It's why the disciples will later argue about which of them is the greatest. They'll argue about who gets to sit at Jesus's right hand when he ascends to his throne. It's why Peter wants to stop Jesus from going to the cross. And it's why all of his disciples abandon Jesus when he's arrested and sentenced to die.

They've got it all wrong!

But here's the thing I love about Jesus: Even though he knows what's in the hearts of these two men... even though he knows what drives and motivates them...

He still turns around and asks them, "What do you want?"

They reply almost sheepishly, "Uh... where are you staying?"

And he replies, "Come and you will see."

Come and you will see.

Even though these two men come with all the wrong motives, Jesus still invites them on a journey of discovery.

Jesus knows what they don't at this point: that what they really want is not a "what" but a "who."

What they really want is not a "what" but a "who."

Ultimately, what these men really long for - even if they are unaware of it now - what they really long for is Jesus, himself.

If Jesus were to ask *you* that question tonight (this morning), how would you answer him?

What do you want?

*What do you **WANT?***

(PAUSE)

Maybe you're thinking, "I don't know."

What do we do if we take a good long look into our hearts and we discover that we don't really like what we see?

What if the question, “What do you want?”, exposes all of the false gods we worship - all of the lesser gods we desire - and we realize just how broken and self-centered we are?

I want to make one suggestion for us tonight (this morning) if you want to change: **fake it.**

Or better yet, fake it until you make it.

A couple of years ago my wife showed me this fantastic TED talk by social psychologist Amy Cuddy.

She and her colleagues have done numerous studies about how posture affects our brains, our hormones, and even our success in life, in our careers, and even in our relationships.

That’s right, I said posture.

In one study, they had men and women assume a power position for just two minutes before undergoing a stressful job interview. (By power position I mean a physical posture that communicates to other people a sense of strength and even dominance. A position that says you’re the alpha dog in the room. Some examples might be having your hands on your hips like Wonder Woman, or leaning on a table with your arms straightened, or putting your arms over your head.)

And they found that by doing one of these power positions for just two minutes, peoples’ testosterone levels increased by more than 20%, and their cortisol levels (or stress hormones) dropped by more than 15%.

In other words, by physically positioning yourself with a more confident posture, your brain actually feels more confident and powerful.

This is how she put it: “Our bodies change our minds, and our minds change our behavior, and our behavior changes our outcomes. You can fake it until you make it.”

You can fake it until you make it. You can fake being confident and in time you will actually become more confident.

I’m going to make a bit of a leap here - but I’m pretty convinced that what I’m about to say is true.

If you want your heart to change - if you want your answer to Jesus’s question, “What do you want?” - if you want the true desires of your heart to be the things of God’s Kingdom - then fake it until you make it.

Assume a posture - a posture of your heart and mind and will and body - that will allow you to become that kind of person.

And the posture that most changes our hearts - the posture that creates in us a desire for the things of God...

...It's worship.

The late Eugene Peterson - you know, the guy who wrote the Bible - he put it this way: **It is far easier to act our way into feelings than to feel our way into actions.**

When you begin a new exercise regimen, it may not be very fun. When I started training for my first marathon 15 years ago, the thought of running 26.2 miles was overwhelming. Shoot, the thought of running 10 miles was overwhelming.

But the more I trained, the more I began to want to run. The more I ran, the more I desired to run. I needed to run. I didn't feel right unless I ran every day.

I get it. You don't always feel like coming to church on Saturday night (Sunday morning). Shoot, I don't always feel like going to church on the weekend, either. Sometimes it's just boring.

Maybe I don't like the songs that Claude picked (sorry Claude). Or maybe Pastor Roland seemed a little off his game. Shoot, maybe you're bored out of your mind right now.

But if you chose to consistently - week in and week out - to sing Kingdom songs of worship and commitment and thanksgiving to Jesus, you're going to start to develop a heart of commitment and thankfulness and worship to him. It's just who you'll become.

It's just like the offering: by giving a tithe or offering when our culture says you're a fool for giving away what belongs to you, even when you don't feel like you have anything to give, the grip of greed and consumerism will slowly loosen and you'll develop a heart of generosity.

Jesus will re-shape your heart.

When we lift our hands in worship and surrender...

...when we belt out songs of love for Jesus - even when you have a terrible voice like mine...

...Even if we don't feel the words our lips are singing...

Fake it. Fake it with boldness. Fake it loudly.

And you know what? Over time the words you sing will actually become the song of your heart.

Worship is our Kingdom training regimen.

Worship is what will change our answer to the question, "What do you want?"

Worship will change us until our real answer to that question is, "I want what you want, Jesus. I want You."

(Invite the worship team up.)

What these musicians do every week - week in and week out - it's essential for the formation of our souls. It's Kingdom training for our hearts.

Maybe some of you would feel called to be a part of this essential ministry and serve and pastor our church family in this way. Maybe you'd be willing to join these men and women and be spiritual trainers and coaches for our church.

But I'm going to close by asking the question one more time: "What do you want?"

If you don't like the answer, then worship. Worship with your mouth, your mind, your body.

Fake it if you have to. Fake it until you make it.

But worship.