

# WHAT SAY YOU?

Touching Lives with Dr. James Merritt

### Series Summary

When you think about it, life revolves around making decisions and answering questions. Some decisions are minor, and some decisions are major. Some questions can be answered quickly and easily and regardless of what answer you give, it won't have much of an impact on your life. But there are three questions that we are all forced to answer, and three decisions we are all forced to make that not only have the greatest impact on the time we have on this earth but any impact we are going to have once we leave it. In this series I am calling "What Say You?" we are going to look at those three great questions and we're going to dive into what God's Word says are the three correct answers.

## What Lord Am I Going To Love?

What Say You? | Week 1 | Matthew 22:34-40

#### **INTRODUCTION**

The first question we are going to tackle in this series is, "What Lord am I going to love?" I freely admit that this question carries an assumption that I believe is true. We all worship and love something or someone above everything else. Whoever or wherever that is, is your lord. That lord may be your ego, your money, your family, your job, power, influence, pleasure, happiness, and even your own life. This first question I believe is the fundamental question that determines the answer to the other two questions. So let's dive in.

#### **KEY POINTS**

#### 1. We Are To Love The Lord Supremely

What does it really mean to love the Lord supremely? How do I express that love to God and how do I show that love to God? I'll tell you what it means because God himself has told us what it means. "In fact, this is love for God: to keep his commands..." (I John 5:3).

When you love God with all of your heart, you obey God with all of your life. I heard one man say it this way, "If you are going to throw God the bone of your love, you make sure you have on it the meat of obedience."

That is how God wants us to relate to him - to love him and to obey him and to obey him because we love him. Let me put it this way. To love God is to obey God. We obey God because we love God.

#### 2. We Are To Love Others Selflessly

This commandment outlined in today's key passage actually has two dimensions. There is a vertical dimension, but there is also a horizontal dimension. Vertically, we are to love God, but when we vertically love God supremely, we will horizontally love others selflessly.

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Jesus continues, "And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself" (Matthew 22:39). To be honest this is an overwhelming commandment. It is harder to keep this one in my opinion sometimes than to keep the first one. Someone once said, "To love the whole world for me is no chore. My only real problem is my neighbor next door."

If you are like me, you have lived next door to a neighbor that not only was hard to love but you wished would move. But Jesus said that loving your neighbor is such a great commandment, the only commandment that is greater is the command to love God. Therefore, we ought to strive to love others selflessly if we want to obey God and show Him the love He deserves.

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## **QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER**

- 1. Who or what would you say is the lord you love most right now?
- 2. Are you currently living a life of obedience to Christ, or have you been disobedient and rebelling against God's Word and His plan for your life?
- 3. What is one way you can love another person selflessly this week?

## What Life Am I Going To Live?

What Say You? | Week 2 | John 10:10

#### **INTRODUCTION**

What did Jesus mean by "the abundant life" in today's key verse? I know what He didn't mean. It is not a life that is found in stuff, money, possessions, or financial security. When Jesus called the disciples to follow Him, every one of them left everything behind. Even though He promised them an abundant life, He never offered them financial security, physical comfort, a retirement plan, health insurance, and certainly no health and wealth gospel. He didn't even promise them a long life because many of them died early. Here is what He meant. The abundant life (the only life worth living) is a life lived in, through, and for Jesus. In this message, we are going to learn from these disciples as we think about how to live the only life worth living.

#### **KEY POINTS**

**1. I Want To Live My Life Enjoying The Presence Of Jesus** Think about what these disciples had done every single day of their lives for three years. They enjoyed the presence of Jesus almost without a break – 365 days a year, 24/7 for 3 years, they walked with Jesus, talked with Jesus, and laid down beside him at night. They sat at His feet during the day. They listened to His teachings, watched His actions, and followed His footsteps.

We can do the very same thing, every day of the year, and every day of every year, until we leave this life and enter into eternal life, which simply means then being in the full presence of God faceto-face for all eternity.

You see, because of Jesus, everywhere you go you always go with God. Can you tell me anything that is greater in life than knowing that you always go with God and God always goes with you? Knowing that when you open up His Word, He is going to speak to you? Knowing that when you open up your mouth, He is going to listen to you? You may not always be with the people that you love the most, but the One who loves you the most and loves you more than anybody else will always be with you.

## What Life Am I Going To Live?

What Say You? | Week 2 | John 10:10

# 2. I Want To Live My Life Trusting The Provision Of Jesus

Jesus called very different men to be his disciples. They came from different backgrounds, different walks of life, different professions, different interests, and different ambitions. Every disciple had one thing in common, though, when they met Jesus and when Jesus asked them to follow Him. They left everything. They left their jobs. They left the only way they had to make a living and left the only way they had to feed their families.

Yet, we never read about the disciples missing a meal or going hungry. They always had a place to sleep, and they never lacked clothing. The only thing they did have was the calling of Jesus on their life and with it the assumption that He would meet their needs. For the next three years, though they maybe didn't realize it at the time and probably took it for granted, they learned that wherever Jesus leads, He meets the needs. Wherever Jesus guides, He provides!

Directly and honestly, I am not promising anybody that Jesus will always give you everything you want. As a matter of fact, I hope He doesn't. I'm really glad He didn't give me everything I wanted. But just as the shepherd is completely responsible for feeding sheep and leading sheep, Jesus has promised He will supply all of our needs. All He asks from us is that we trust Him to do that.

#### 3. I Want To Live My Life Fulfilling The Purpose Of Jesus

Following Jesus often comes with sacrifice. The disciples are proof of that. If you read the Bible, you'll learn that all of the disciples died relatively young and almost all of them died relatively a violent death. However, we are here today talking about those disciples and studying their teaching and their lives because they had life and they had it abundantly. They fulfilled the purpose that God had for them. If you want to know the truth – the only thing that gives life real value is a purpose that is greater than and will outlive your life.

# What Life Am I Going To Live?

What Say You? | Week 2 | John 10:10

## **QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER**

- 1. How do you experience and enjoy the presence of Jesus each day?
- 2. When was a time God provided for you as you were following Him?
- 3. What would you say is the purpose God has given you for your life? Are you living out that purpose right now? And if not, what is holding you back from fulfilling that purpose?



## What Legacy Am I Going To Leave?

What Say You? | Week 3 | 2 Timothy 4:6-8

#### **INTRODUCTION**

Every day of your life is just like money – you spend it. You can't save it and you can't store it. You have to spend it and you either spend it wisely or foolishly and the way we spend the days of our life will determine the legacy that we leave. So how would you like to leave a legacy? You want to be able to look back on your life and say at the end of the day, you have no remorse, no regret, no retreat, right? You want to hear one day from the God that created you, "Well done good and faithful servant." Well, for those things to happen, we must determine to do three things.

#### **KEY POINTS**

#### 1. Be Faithful To The Fight

Both the words "fought" and "fight" come from the same Greek word, "agon," which gives us our English word "agony." It literally means "conflict." I know a lot of people that don't like conflict, but if you become a follower of Jesus, you have no choice. You become a spiritual soldier in God's army.

You don't realize it, but the moment you decide to answer that first question by saying, "I'm going to love the Lord," you just got drafted into an army and you just got pulled into a fight. The moment you follow Jesus, you just made three enemies – the world around you, the flesh inside of you, and the devil before you. Satan, sin, and self are going to fight you at every turn. The world will try to control you. The flesh will try to corrupt you. Satan will condemn you.

That is why when you give your life to Jesus you don't just become a saint; you become a soldier. And therefore, you must be faithful to the fight.

#### 2. Be Faithful To The Faith

Our beliefs and our faith are under attack. No matter where we go, there is opposition against what we believe to be true. That's why it's so important that we are strong and faithful in our faith so that we cannot be easily persuaded to abandon our beliefs.

Nowhere is the faith that we are talking about being challenged more than in the world of education. A study conducted by Harvard University and George Mason University found that fiftytwo percent of college professors regard the Bible as "an ancient book of fables, legends, history, and moral precepts."

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What Say You? | Week 3 | 2 Timothy 4:6-8

This number increased to seventy-three percent when professors at elite universities were surveyed. Furthermore, the percentage of atheists and agnostic professors in America is three times greater than that of the general population.

I want to be faithful to the truth of God and to the God of truth. I know there are people today who are saying, "I want to be on the right side of history." I believe if you are on the right side of God and truth, history will take care of itself. Woodrow Wilson once said, "I'd rather lose in a cause that will someday win than win in a cause that will someday lose." I want to die being faithful to the truth of God and the God of truth.

#### 3. Be Faithful To The Finish

God has given each one of us our own race. I'm not running your race and you are not running my race, but we are each running our own race. We aren't running against each other; we are just running against ourselves. Notice something else. Paul didn't say "I have won the race." He just said, "I have run the race." In this race, every finisher is a winner.

God is not concerned with how fast you run, but how far you run. It is not how you start the race; it is how you finish the race that counts. Did you ever run track in high school or see someone run track? If you did, here is my question, "Did you ever hear of anybody winning the 95-yard dash?" No, and you never will. You may run the fastest 99 yards, but if you don't finish that last yard you lose.

I have pastored a lot of 95-yard Christians. I call them "used to" Christians. They used to be committed to the church. They used to serve in the church and give to the church, read their Bible, and share their faith. They used to be involved, but eventually, they quit running.

You know life is not a sprint; it is a marathon. Have you ever noticed something about people who have run marathons? I am going to admit I don't t know of any physical feat that impresses me more than those people who have run marathons. When someone tells me they have run a marathon I have never asked them, "What was your time?" or "How fast did you run it?" I don't even ask, "Did you win it?" Do you know what impresses me? That they finished it. That should be our mindset when it comes to running the race God has given each of us – to finish the race and be faithful to the finish.

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## What Legacy Am I Going To Leave?

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## **QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER**

- 1. When was a time you felt under attack and had to fight back with your faith?
- 2. Has your faith ever been questioned? If so, how did you respond?
- 3. Have you ever quit running your race, or even just been tempted to quit running? What is one verse of Scripture you can hold onto that will help you persevere when you want to give up?

