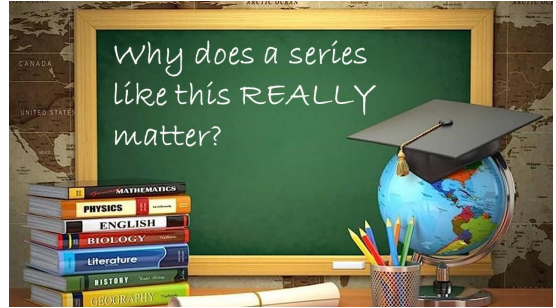


It's Up to You 2023 (Week 1): Why a Series Like This Matters So Much

Yesterday's Sermon - In 10 Sentences or Less



1. We spent the first week of our summer Q&A series delving into the deeper, more substantial whys that underlie such an endeavor.
2. First, we want to value questions as much as answers.
3. The life of faith is, of course, a life of many questions: in the verbiage of the apostle Paul, we currently live in a what feels like a riddle, we see dimly, we don't know as much as we might think we know, etc. (1 Cor. 13.12, 2 Cor. 5.7).
4. According to the video mentioned below from On Being, focused on this topic, we must live and honor our questions, for the quality of the questions we're willing to ask will determine the quality of the answers we receive.
5. As the old Jewish rabbinic maxim goes, "Ask one good question, get three good answers."
6. Second, in order to value questions, we need to be a safe space, and the doctoral research of Rev. Gillian Weighton would suggest that most Americans have few or none to discuss hard issues, vocalize their doubts, express open-ended wonder, etc.
7. The apostle Paul spells out the difference between safe and unsafe Christian spaces in Galatians 5.13-15: we either bite, devour, and totally consume one another, or instead must be slaves to one another in love.
8. According to Christian psychologists Henry Cloud and John Townsend in their book, "Safe People" (which you can explore more below), unsafe people are religious superficially while safe people are deeply spiritual, unsafe people are defensive while safe people are open, unsafe people are self-righteous while safe people are humble, and unsafe people tend to stay the same while safe people are marked by growth.
9. Third, this being a safe space for differences and questions is directly tied to Christian mission, because our unity as Christian disciples is meant to validate the uniqueness of Jesus Himself (John 17.21, 23).
10. One of the questions we'll be covering this summer is why the American church is in such steep decline, but the ground covered in this sermon gives you a preview of at least one informed answer: American Christianity is in freefall because it is so divided, splinters so easily, and is marked internally by distrust among its varied denominations and groups.

A Prayer for the Week

Adapted from Worship Offerings (United Church of Christ):

God, call us to live together, despite our different backgrounds, ideas, preferences, and biases, and to find our common ground in Christ. Help us build each other up and serve each other in love. May we live together in peace and unity so that the watching world will be convinced of the grace and truth revealed in Jesus, amen.

Exploring More

- Here's the On Being video (5 minutes long) on "living the questions": [Krista Tippett: Living the Questions](#)
- Intrigued by the contrast between safe and unsafe people? Check out this summary drawn from Cloud and Townsend's book: [Inspired: Distinguishing between safe and unsafe people](#)
- Or this short summary of unsafe people: [Pneuma](#)
- As a PCUSA church, we're well positioned to a safe space for good questions, if we're willing to live by some of our core principles: 1) our view that the church, its beliefs, and its practices are "reformed, and always reformed," and 2) "God alone is Lord of the conscience." We've talked about these before - you can explore these sermons and related resources on this page, scroll down to weeks 5 and 6: [Sermon Series "Identity Check - KirkWood Presbyterian Church](#)
- Here's that free seminar from our Presbytery on the church being a vaccine for loneliness in American post-pandemic: [Responding to the Pandemic](#)