

# **Questions of Faith Series 5 Study Guide**

**VHS #2590; DVD #2599**

Questions of Faith V  
Study Guide

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Certain basic questions of belief and meaning come to us over and over in our lives. Sometimes we think we've got them answered. Other times we think we've gone beyond them. But the world and circumstances of our lives change. And so, in every generation, we struggle to find new meaning that fits what we now know. In this series a variety of contemporary thinkers reflect on such issues. We hope that what they say will provoke responses in you and will help in your struggle with the questions.

--From the opening narration

# **INTRODUCTION AND SUGGESTIONS**

## What The Series Is Like

Contemporary Protestant, Roman Catholic and Jewish thinkers (a complete list with brief biographical information appears on pages 8-11 of this guide) were asked to respond, on camera, to a series of questions. The responses were then edited to create a montage of reflections on that question

## How This Guide Is Organized

This guide is arranged so that you can copy parts of it for handouts:

### A. For Handing Out Before Viewing

On page 6-7 the programs are listed, with the questions to which participants responded.

On pages 8-10 are brief biographical sketches of the people who appear in this series. Viewers may find that having a bit of information about the participants in advance is helpful.

### B. For Handing Out After Viewing

Pages 11-22 contain material to aid discussion. Each double-page spread contains material for a single program. It is strongly suggested that these pages be distributed only after the group has viewed the program in question, so as not to limit viewer reaction. For each program, there is an outline to assist in recalling who said what.

## A Suggested Procedure for the Sessions

1. View the tape all the way through. Discuss.
2. Or view the tape twice, stopping the second time for discussion or reflection when the responses show the subject has shifted. Many groups that have used the earlier *Questions of Faith* series say they found taking time for a second viewing to be very helpful. Some groups even spent their next session on a second viewing and further discussion.
3. Either way you may want, after the program has been viewed, to hand out the outline for the program you have just viewed.
  - a. The outline is provided to help keep straight who said which things.
  - b. The questions to stimulate reflection or discussion are suggestions only. Use them if they're helpful. People discovered while using the first *Questions of Faith* series that they didn't need a half-dozen questions to stimulate discussion. They also discovered that a very helpful way to begin is simply to ask members to share what struck them most.

### A Word About Preparation and Equipment

For a smooth and effective showing, these steps are recommended:

1. Preview each program.
2. Adjust the VCR and the TV set for sharp picture and clear sound in advance.
3. Cue up the tape in advance so the opening titles appear when you turn on the machine.
4. Adjust the room light for comfortable viewing.
5. Rearrange seating for discussion if necessary and if possible, after viewing. A circle or oval so members can make eye contact is ideal.

## **THE PROGRAMS**

**NOTE:** These two pages may be copied and distributed in advance to help in preparation for viewing.

To get at aspects of the title question, additional questions were asked. The responses generally reveal which questions had been asked. The questions will give you a quick preview of each session.

The Bible references will help in locating passages referred to by participants and other relevant scripture. You may want to read these passages before viewing.

### **WHAT KIND OF POWER DOES GOD HAVE?**

How do you understand God's?

What does your faith say to you about how to use power?

Biblical References: Isaiah 40:28-30; Romans 8:28; Philippians 2:3-8

### **WHOSE MONEY IS IT?**

Why is it hard for us to talk about our money?

What does your faith have to do with your money?

How can we be faithful in a consumer society?

Biblical References: Matthew 6:19-33; Luke 16:1-9; Luke 18:18-27; I Timothy 6:6-19

### **CAN FAITH WIPE OUT FEAR?**

What is fear?

What are you afraid of?

Does your faith help you with your fears?

Biblical References: Isaiah 41:10; II Timothy 1:7; I John 4:18.

### **HOW DO YOU PRAY?**

What's difficult about prayer?

Does prayer change God?

Biblical References: Lamentations 3:1-24; Matthew 6:7-15; Romans 8:26.

## **HOW CAN WE LOVE PRACTICALLY ANYBODY?**

What is love?

Do we love ourselves as we should?

Have you experienced hate?

How do you love someone who hates you or whom you hate?

Biblical References: Leviticus 19:18; Psalms 109; Matthew 5:38-48; Matthew 22:35-40; John 3:16-21; I John 4:7-12

## **WHAT'S HOLINESS ALL ABOUT?**

What's a sacrament?

What makes someone or something holy?

Is being holy entirely serious?

What's the value of laughter?

Biblical References: Exodus 3:1-6; Mark 1:4-12; Luke 22:14-20.

### **Suggestions to Aid Discussion**

1. View actively (for example, look for conflicting views or note questions that occur to you while viewing).
2. During discussion, the leader need not be alarmed if there are pauses in the discussion. Wait 30 seconds before saying something to stimulate a response.
3. Look for ways to include less talkative group members, but remember that members should be allowed to participate at the level that is comfortable for them.
4. A useful activity might be to review (before viewing the tape) the questions dealt with in the program and briefly share some of your thoughts.

## **BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCHES**

**Malcolm Boyd** is the author of 23 books, including *Are you Running with me Jesus?* and *Guy Priest*. Formerly a fellow at Yale, a civil rights and peace activist, a Hollywood producer, and a playwright, Boyd is currently on the staff at St. Augustine by the Sea in Santa Monica, California.

**Rita Nakashima Brock** holds an endowed chair in the Humanities at Hamline University in St. Paul, Minnesota. Ordained in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), she has taught theology at Pacific Lutheran University and travels and lectures widely on feminist concerns. In addition to publishing numerous essays, Dr. Brock is the author of *Journeys by Heart: A Christology Power*.

**Walter Brueggemann** is Professor of Old Testament at Columbia Theological Seminary in Decatur, Georgia. Dr. Brueggemann has devoted his professional career to the exploration of the prophetic imagination and the power of Biblical stories to transfer our lives. He is the author of several books, including *The Prophetic Imagination* and *Finally Comes the Past*.

**Emanuel Cleaver** is the first African-American mayor of Kansas City. He is also pastor of St. James-Paseo United Methodist Church and for years has deftly balanced political and pastoral responsibility. Recognized for going to the streets of his city to maintain peace during the Los Angeles riots, he has initiated cooperation among civic and religious leaders of many races, cultures and faiths.

**John Cobb** is perhaps best known as a major interpreter of process theology, and has recently become prominent in the American Protestant community as an advocate for the integration of ecology, theology and economics. Long committed to Christian involvement in the ecological crisis, his latest book is *Sustainability*

**Ron DelBene** has been teaching people how to pray since 1963. An Episcopal priest and best-selling author, he helps individuals and groups develop spiritual disciplines, bringing theology, education, psychology and counseling to bear on religious experience. With his wife, he directs the Hermitage, a non-profit corporation devoted to spiritual growth.

**Richard Foster** is the professor of Spiritual Formation at Azusa Pacific University in California. The author of the best-selling book, *Celebration of Discipline*, he was raised in the Quaker tradition. Dr. Foster is also the founder of Renovare, an organization promoting spiritual renewal in the Church. Dr. Foster's most recent book is *Payer: Finding the Heart's True Home*.

**Adele Gonzales** is known for her sense of humor and her teaching in spirituality. A professional lay minister in the Roman Catholic Church, she has worked with prisoners and migrant workers, taught religious studies, served as a hospital chaplain, and now coordinates lay ministry programs in the Miami area. A native of Cuba, she is in demand nationwide as a speaker and leader of workshops on the Bible and spiritual formation.

**Susan Harriss** is a writer, educator and Episcopal priest. Her extensive experiences in Christianity form the basis of her book, *Jaime's Way*, a collection of devotional stories for families. Rev. Harriss is presently the Chaplain of the Cathedral School of St. John the Divine in New York City where she continues her writing and teaching.

**Alan Jones** is Dean of Grace Cathedral in San Francisco, California, and former director of the Center for Christian Spirituality at the General Theological Seminary in New York. A well-known speaker and retreat leader, he is author of *From a Broken Web: Separation, Sexism, and the Self*.

**Sallie McFague** Carpenter Professor of Theology at Vanderbilt Divinity School, is well known for her work on religious language—ways we can talk about God and the world. *Models of God* (1987) received the Award of Excellence from the American Academy of Religion. Her most recent book, *The Body Of God*, is an ecological theology, which has been acclaimed as breakthrough work on the relation between the earth crisis and our ideas about God.

**Roy Menninger** is chairman and CEO of the Menninger Foundation, a nationally-recognized center for treatment, research and professional education in psychiatry.

**Thomas Moore**, the author of *Care of the Soul* lived for 12 years as a monk in a Catholic religious order and is currently a psychotherapist and writer. His latest book is *Soulmates*.

**Chaim Potok** is the best-selling author of such classics As *The Chosen*, *My Name is Asher Lev* and *Wanderings*, a historical narrative of the history of the Jewish people. Ordained a rabbi, Potok's most recent novel is *The Gift of Asher Lev*.

**Tex Sample** has become known for challenging mainline churches to break out of the middle class ghetto and join the Christ who lives among the poor and the marginalized. His latest book is *Hard Living People and Maintain Christians*. He teaches Church and Society at St. Paul School of Theology in Kansas City.

**Robert Schuller** is the popular preacher of *The House of Power*, television's longest running church service. He is known by many throughout the world for his telecasts originating from the Crystal Cathedral in California. Dr. Schuller is the best-selling author of over 30 books and the recent focus of a biography, *Goliath*.

**Peggy Steinfels** is editor of *Commonweal Magazine*, a review of public affairs, religion, literature and the arts. She is a Roman Catholic layperson and lives in New York City.

**Gardner Taylor** has been called by *Time* magazine “the Dean of the nation's Black preachers.” He is pastor emeritus of the Concord Baptist Church of Christ in Brooklyn.

**Cassandra Thomas** is known for speaking out on issues of sexual violence. Her television appearances include the *Today Show*, ABC's *Nightline* and *20/20*. A social psychologist, she has directed the rape crisis program at the Houston Area Women's Center since 1987.

**Rhodes Thompson** has been a missionary in Japan, a pastor and seminary professor. Wanting to expand the idea of stewardship beyond church financial campaigns, he is author of *Stewards Shaped by Grace*.

**Terry Waite** was the Anglican Envoy to the Archbishop of Canterbury when he was taken hostage in 1987 while on a mission to secure the release of hostages in Lebanon. Spending over four years in captivity, Mr. Waite details those dark days in his book, *Taken on Trust*, a moving memoir of despair, isolation and ultimately, hope.

**Janet Wolf** is an ordained minister in The United Methodist Church and pastor of Hobson United Methodist Church in Nashville, Tennessee. Known for her ability to tell a story, her skill in leading Bible study, and her preaching, she is an advocate for the poor, the homeless and the dispossessed. She set up the hunger advocacy organizations in Nashville and the state of Tennessee.

**Johnny Ray Youngblood**, the pastor of St. Paul Community Baptist Church in Brooklyn, has transformed one of the most depressed areas into one that is valid, committed and thriving.

## WHAT KIND OF POWER DOES GOD HAVE?

(To be handed out after the group has viewed the program).

### OUTLINE

As a discussion aid, listed below are the persons who speak in this program, in order of appearance, with a few key words to assist in recalling their thoughts.

- Keller            It's this empowering energy to live and to live it abundantly
- Brueggemann I think on a good day God has power to do this stuff but God has a lot of off days...
- Harriss            ... maybe God doesn't control as much as we think.
- Potok             If God is all-powerful, why is he not then all-benevolent? That's the serious question.
- Taylor            ...an insult to God to say that God caused this lad's death. There's something loose in the universe...
- Cobb              ...there's no way to bring about a great deal of good without also bringing about a great deal of evil.
- Brock             ...Christians have never decided whether they believe that God is love or that God is power.
- McFague         ...very important that we are careful how we speak about God because we are going to think of ourselves in the same way.
- Sample            ...God is the one who can take on anything and not be overcome by it...it's the power of ...of being able to endure an effect.
- Wolf              God's power is the power that is present in the midst of the worst the world has to offer.
- Youngblood     ...power is also in empowering people who feel that they are powerless.
- Cleaver          ..the theological side of power is that it can be used only, only to help others.
- Sample            My first reaction when I get disturbed is, I want to knock somebody down. And I don't believe that's redemptive activity.
- Cobb              ...my power is the power to open up other people's choices...give them greater power.
- McFague         We are talking about how change takes place...I think it's what is at the bottom of the power issue.

Thomas        But who I'm sexual with really is my business...when someone comes in and takes that...I don't have any control over anything.

Potok         ...to repair God by repairing his world...it is our task to link with it together in the process of perfecting, improving, enhancing the life that we have...

Wolf          ...I'm going on anyhow.

### **QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION OR DISCUSSION?**

1. What comment touched you most deeply?
2. What images of power are most compelling for you?

## WHOSE MONEY IS IT?

(To be handed out after the group has viewed this program.)

### OUTLINE

As a discussion aid, listed below are the persons who speak in this program, in order of appearance, with a few key words to assist in recalling their thoughts.

- Cleaver      Brokenness is the root of all evil.
- Wolf          ...unwillingness to deal with the issue of money is an unwillingness also to hear God's claim on our lives...
- Foster        ...you cannot serve money, but learn to use it.
- Youngblood   It's like a hammer. It's not the hammer that's destructive.
- Moore        ...if we recognize the power of money...then we're free to be more responsible with it.
- DelBene      ...we live in a culture that says, you know, you don't have identity unless you have money.
- Keller        Whatever you put most of your energy into is what you worship.
- Cobb          ...the people say "well, if you can enhance economic growth we'll vote for you."
- Gonzales     ...how stupid can we be...when we let, you know, our consumer society dictate what I need to do to be somebody...
- Wolf          ...this piece of chocolate cake called to me...
- Keller        ...one is more or less faithful, never absolutely faithful and rarely absolutely idolatrous.
- Cobb          ...many of our churches have not helped us to really personally think through the question of what our values are.
- Youngblood   ...we're working hard on the stewardship of the 90 percent.
- Thompson    A member of a church I served died and had made me, co-joint tenant of a savings account he had.
- Jones        ...if you don't circulate it and give it way, you're stuck with it.
- Taylor        ...God gives us, not only according to our needs, but according to our capacity to deal with heat he gives us.

Thompson ...Lord, out of all this that you've put into my hands, how little do I need for myself?"

Sample ...you don't want to get too romantic about how wonderful it is to be without money.

Wolf ...we know that property comes from the way we live.

Jones ...we're gonna go, be in for tremendous upheavals in this country about our resources.

Sample If you don't give money away, something very bad happens.

### **QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION OR DISCUSSION**

1. What comment touched you most deeply?
2. What's our responsibility to the poor, the homeless and the dispossessed?

## CAN FAITH WIPE OUT FEAR?

(To be handed out after the group has viewed this program.)

### OUTLINE

As a discussion aid, listed below are the persons who speak in this program, in order of appearance, with a few key words to assist in recalling their thoughts.

- Wolf           ...fear paralyzes me...it is only God's presence that gets me through that stuff.
- Taylor         ...I can't stand the thought of her leaving me. But equally, I can scarcely stand the thought of leaving her.
- Waite          I was afraid when I faced mock execution.
- DelBene       My greatest fear had been to succeed.
- Schuller       ...reporter said to this businessman...I'm authorized to pay you for your testimony...my god, that scared me.
- Waite         ..another great fear was when I was chronically ill.
- Boyd          ...the night I was having to decide whether I'd join the Freedom ride...
- Taylor         I have apprehensions about the society...I'm troubled about this continuing matter of race in this country.
- Cobb          ...become preoccupied with what's happening to our planet...
- Cleaver        ...fear that separates people and separates us also, frankly, from God...check from father.
- Sample        ...being unfaithful to the deepest things in my life.
- Keller         ...everytime I just go ahead and plunge in and face my fear...I'm kind of amazed at how well it works...
- Youngblood    I'm afraid of letting fear have the last word...fear is really, to me, faith moving in the opposite direction.
- Boyd          ...worked with fear in some practical ways...in the darkness I would go up into the attic and down into the basement...

Thomas        After my assault...I was afraid of being involved in a relationship...whatever the fear is, you have to meet it head on.

Wolf            ...I keep hearing. "Fear not."

### **QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION OR DISCUSSION**

1.    What comment touched you most deeply?
2.    What are you afraid of?
3.    How does your faith help you work through your fears?

## HOW DO YOU PRAY?

(To be handed out after the group has viewed this program.)

### OUTLINE

As a discussion aid, listed below are the persons who speak in this program, in order of appearance, with a few key words to assist in recalling their thoughts.

- Menninger ...my prayers have a pattern. I'm always asking for help.
- Youngblood We have a tendency to use prayer kind of like a helicopter.
- DelBene ...for me prayer is not something I do...prayer is something we become.
- Cleaver ...how 'bout your prayer trail? And I think that in these days that is a question that we don't ask enough.
- Steinfelds ...one of my favorite places to pray is on the subway...
- Jones ...prayer is ...getting myself out of the way...
- Foster ...what I saw was, I didn't value prayer.
- Sample ...what I tend to do is sometimes pray with a pen...
- Keller ...it's really important to uncross my legs and feel ground under my feet...to breathe and to understand that God is Spirit...
- DelBene ...simple way to be attentive to God's presence, known as "the breath prayer."
- Thomas O.K. Lord, crazy folks out here...you better drive.
- Gonzales ..."pray as you can, and not as you can't"
- Wolf ...discipline for me means persistently putting myself in God's way...
- Foster ...[prayer] is about that hilarious, holy, enjoyable relationship with God.
- Sample ...my experience is that when I've told God off for a while, I start listening better.
- Thomas ...one of the most electrifying moments was when we told her to tell God off.
- Gonzales ...I have to let go of my agenda
- Cleaver ...there is a such a thing as God has not answered my prayer in the manner that I wanted.

- Keller ...it gets very manipulative of ourselves really, to think that we can tell God what to do.
- Cobb When I pray I open myself in such a way that God can do something in my life that God could not have done if I had not prayed.
- Wolf “not any of my children...every single human being in the world is as precious to me as this child is to you.”
- Youngblood I cannot understand how anybody survives without being in communication with the creator.

### **QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION OR DISCUSSION**

1. What comment touched you most deeply?
2. What's difficult about prayer for you?

## HOW CAN WE LOVE PRACTICALLY ANYBODY?

(To be handed out after the group has viewed this program.)

### OUTLINE

As a discussion aid, listed below are the persons who speak in this program, in order of appearance, with a few key words to assist in recalling their thoughts.

- Menninger     “love” get’s used for everything from God and country and motherhood to pom-pom girls and hotdogs.
- DelBene        ...to experience my space intersecting in a gentle way with someone else’s space is a freedom and is an honor and a respect.
- Keller          it’s radical acts of intimacy across the divides...
- Foster          ...loving heart of God that welcomes me just the way I am and not the way I should be.
- Moore          Just think of how much we do in this world to understand ourselves. What if we dropped that?
- Menninger     ...if people cannot develop a mature sense of self-love...we cannot love anybody else.
- Taylor          ...cannot...come to love our neighbor until we have learned to love ourselves worthily.
- Boyd            ...grew up in a homophobic culture and my self-esteem was about that high...
- Jones            ...hatred is self-hatred.
- Moore          ...everything I do has hate in it.
- Gonzales        ...I live in the Miami area and we are famous for violence.

Cleaver ...the best way to defeat an enemy is to make him or her your friend.

Wolf ...I have seen the deepest and most violent hate residing in church folks...

Foster ...we learn to hang out with God. We don't try to change.

Thomas I could hate him right now and say, "Lord I'm trying...you have to work in me..."

Wolf ...make room for love [God's love]...it's God's love that will transform things.

### **QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION OR DISCUSSION**

1. What comment touched you most deeply?
2. What is love for you?
3. Have you experienced hate?

## WHAT'S HOLINESS ALL ABOUT?

(To be handed out after the group has viewed this program.)

### OUTLINE

As a discussion aid, listed below are the persons who speak in this program, in order of appearance, with a few key words to assist in recalling their thoughts.

- DelBene      sacraments...outward sign of an inner reality...And it's a celebrative act.
- Taylor        ...being low church Baptist...seeks to express in some ritualized form, a diving reality. I have to be very careful about this matter of sacraments.
- Gonzales     ...it's anything that celebrates the action and the presence of God with us and among us.
- Keller        ...that's only possible for me now when the community I'm sacramental with is somehow involved in the real feeding of real bodies...
- Jones         ...ours is not a disembodied, private, individual religion.
- Cobb         ...the way in which we find God in whatever places we find God.
- Moore        ...the birth of my daughter...music has a sacramental quality.
- Keller        ...a sacrament is the way in which holiness takes form within our midst.
- Waite        ...In my prison cell...I would sit in the building in my imagination and sit with the congregation and celebrate the communion service.
- Foster        ...the only place God can bless us is right where we are...
- Wolf         ...to be holy is to be a part of revealing something about God's presence and power in the world.
- Keller        a student of mine...lost her leg...the real holiness was emanating from her.
- Jones        ...the really holy person...they see through me...to be seen through and to beloved at the same time is very, very powerful healing and joyful experience.
- Foster        Could you just knock it off? And quit trying to be so blasted religious?
- DelBene     ...listening to you is like trying to get a drink of water from a fire hydrant.

Wolf ...the issue is not that I got it right, but that God's good grace uses us anyway.

Foster ...what God had done was to give this man, who'd gone through a lot of sorrow and trials in his life, was to give him a gracious experience of holy laughter...

### **QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION OR DISCUSSION**

1. What comment touched you most deeply?
2. What sacramental moments can you recall?
3. Have you known a holy person?
4. Is there holiness in hilarity?