



# transforming questions

PARTICIPANT'S GUIDE



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Scripture citations refer to the New Revised Standard Version Bible, although any version is appropriate.



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Welcome to *Transforming Questions*! Whether you are new to the Christian faith or a longtime church member seeking a refresher, this is the place for you. Over the next few weeks, you will be invited to engage in faithful questioning with the companionship of a leader and in the midst of a community.

In this course, as you gather for table fellowship, teaching, and conversation, you will wrestle with some of the most basic questions of our faith: Who is Jesus? Does God answer prayer? Why do bad things happen? In the act of asking these questions, we hope you will see your faith transform, deepening and developing from something simple and superficial to something complicated and rich. And perhaps, in the act of asking questions, you might see yourself transformed, as the answers that you find, or the new questions that you discover, demand that you respond, changing not only what you think but also how you live. It's an exciting journey: full of twists and turns, ups and downs, as you wrestle anew with your faith.

This book is your companion to the *Transforming Questions* course, a kind of guidebook for the journey. In the pages that follow, you'll find an outline of each class session, which includes references to the Bible passages and quotations that you will hear each week. We hope this will allow you to listen, follow along, and perhaps return to read and reflect on what you've heard. We've also included space for you to take notes, jot down additional questions, or add your own reflections. At the end of each outline are the discussion questions that you will explore in your small groups.

So come, you who are seekers and you who are members, you who are old and you who are young, you who are questioning for the first time and you who are questioning for the thousandth time. Together may you find that you share the same questions; together may you discover, not easy answers, but the still, small voice of God speaking in your very midst.

Melody Wilson Shobe & Scott Gunn



# SESSION





# CAN WE QUESTION OUR FAITH?

## **OPENING PRAYER**

O God, by whom the meek are guided in judgment, and light rises up in darkness for the godly: Grant us, in all our doubts and uncertainties, the grace to ask what you would have us to do, that the Spirit of wisdom may save us from all false choices, and that in your light we may see light, and in your straight path may not stumble; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

*(The Book of Common Prayer, p. 832)*

## Confronting misconceptions

- ❖ Faith as opposite of doubt
- ❖ Faith as blind acceptance, without questioning

## Biblical witness of questioning and doubt

- ❖ Abraham and Sarah (Genesis 15:1-15)
- ❖ Moses (Exodus 3:4-15; 4:1-17)
- ❖ David/psalmist
  - Psalm 13:1-2
  - Psalm 22:1-2
  - Psalm 44:23-24
  - Psalm 121:1
  - Psalm 139:7
- ❖ Mary (Luke 1:26-38)
- ❖ Thomas (John 20:24-29)
- ❖ Paul (Acts 22:6-11)
- ❖ Even Jesus himself! (Matthew 27:45-50)

### NOTES

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## Questions as expression of faithfulness

- ❖ Questions as part of relationship
- ❖ Questions as a way to grow
- ❖ Questions as part of being a student (“disciple”)
- ❖ Questions as a form of learning (Catechism)

## The opposite extreme of “never question” is “question everything”

- ❖ Taking questioning too far
- ❖ Questions as weapons
- ❖ Questions as tests
- ❖ Questions for their own sake

## Faithful questioning by Jacob

- ❖ Genesis 32:22-31
- ❖ Proximity
- ❖ Hands-on
- ❖ Long term
- ❖ Possibly unanswered

### NOTES

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## So, how can we question faithfully?

- ❖ We ask questions in community.
- ❖ We ask questions of God.
- ❖ We ask questions, consulting a variety of sources.

## Small groups

- ❖ Read the story of Nicodemus (John 3:1-12; 19:38-42) as a group. Explore the following questions:
  - What kinds of questions is this person asking?
  - Does he receive answers to his question?
  - How does asking questions impact his faith and actions?
  - What in this person's story do you identify with?
  - How does this person's story challenge you?
- ❖ What questions do you bring to this class?
- ❖ Have you ever been reluctant to ask your questions of faith? Why or why not?
- ❖ What are you hoping to get from the next nine sessions?

### NOTES

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How can we  
**question**  
faithfully?

Who is Jesus?  
Does God answer prayer?  
Why do bad things happen?

This course invites faithful questioning for those new to the Christian faith and longtime members seeking a refresher.

*Transforming Questions* is meant to be explored in the midst of community and invites you to share and wrestle with God's Holy Word with others. This manual provides an outline of the course to make it easy to follow along—and revisit. It also gives space for notes and personal reflections.

Through asking questions, you begin a journey toward a stronger faith and a transformed life. Even the questions you ask likely will change into new and deeper questions as you grow to know Jesus and explore your faith.



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