

If we wish to let this love blossom in our lives and be true to the one who calls us his friends, we must raise the kind of questions Jesus asked, challenge the *status quo* wherever justice is clearly lacking, and seek to make God's Kingdom present here and now, in ways both large and small. We do this not mainly by following laws and regulations written in a book, for we Christians are called to follow the living Word, Jesus Christ, Son of God made flesh.



**Be the
Word of God**



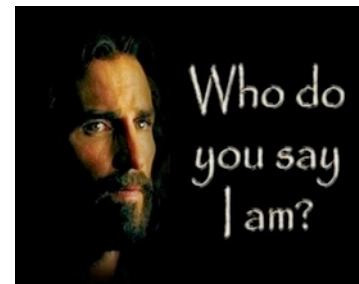
Questions to Consider

- Read one of the gospels, from beginning to end. What aspects of Jesus' life strike you most? What do you find most disturbing, most surprising? Why?
- How do you respond to this Jesus who left us no clear book of rules, but a series of awkward questions and the example of a challenging lifestyle?
- Jesus' earthly life ended in failure, with his death on a cross. What might we learn from this?
- Jesus asks of us mercy, not sacrifice. How does that fit into your own understanding of the Christian life?



Jesus Christ 'Who do you say that I am?'

That is probably the most critical question to be asked of a Christian, and how often do we really think about it.



We call ourselves Christians, we say that we follow Christ, but who is this Jesus Christ that we claim to follow on our journey through life. The words of the blind man, 'Lord that I may see' (Lk.18:41) need to become our words, to be the continual prayer of the Christian community.

For the Jesus Christ whom we follow is not the little baby born in Bethlehem, Jesus meek and mild; the baby has grown up, and challenges us daily to grow up too, and to 'see' in all truth the One we say we follow.

The Jesus we meet in the Bible is someone who does odd things and asks awkward questions, rather than just teaching about perfect behaviour. When we think of the stories the gospels tell about him, he does indeed pose awkward questions.

Jesus seems to have spent his time associating with the 'wrong' people, and appears rather disrespectful of tradition when it came to keeping the law.

Think of his long conversation with the Samaritan woman – an outcast (Jn 4:1-42), and of how upset the Pharisees and scribes were because he ate with tax collectors and publicly known sinners (Lk 6:30).



We also see him defending his disciples from the Pharisees' view that they broke the law by picking corn to eat on the Sabbath (Mt 12:1-8).

So who is this Jesus? One thing we know for sure from scripture is that he can never be put into a neat and tidy formula. In the gospels we learn much about his life, his teachings and his actions. We are introduced to him as the one who ate and drank with tax collectors and sinners, and the teacher who preached the Sermon on the Mount. He is the one who preached not sacrifice but mercy (Mt 9:11), and yet sacrificed everything for us. In Jesus we see what it means to live a life totally dedicated to God, and we see that this life of love and commitment, leads inevitably to the cross. The world is not able for this intensity of love.

The Jesus we meet in the gospels invites us to have the courage to ask ourselves whether in our lives we are living as Pharisees, or tax collectors, or sinners. There is probably something of each of these types in us individually and collectively.

But the life of Jesus is one of committed love, and this love is not simply love for the Father, but love for each one of us. Shockingly he calls us 'friends'. Indeed that is beautiful. It is Jesus' way of saying to us that he is committed to us, that he will never go away, whatever we do.



And because he is our friend, our faithful friend, he has the right to ask us awkward questions. These questions don't have to be asked verbally, for challenging questions are put to us each time we retell the story of the child born into poverty, forced immediately into being a refugee, and the end of that story, his death as a failure on the cross.

So who is he, this man who has called us 'not servants but friends' (John 15:15)? The answer to this question is to be found in the person the disciples encountered after the resurrection. This is the one who is asking us to follow him. Faith in the risen Christ is being able to say 'My Lord and my God'. Christ's deepest identity is recognized by our faith and it is established in the Father's love. Jesus Christ is the one God loves.

That is an enigmatic statement, and yet it says everything we need to know. Jesus Christ, Son of Mary, is also Son of God.

Jesus is the one whom God loves: 'This is my Son, the beloved, with him I am well pleased. (Mt 3:17).

In Jesus we share in this identity, so that we too are God's beloved children.

