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## Questions for God

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## Questions for God

When I was a sophomore in a Jesuit high school, one of the students (certainly not me!) asked the religion teacher "Can God make a rock so big that he can't lift it?" The question was not really about God, but served only as an attempt to challenge the teacher. Some of our genuine questions about God are best answered, not by asking a teacher, but God.

Does God care about our questions? If God were only a bigger version of us, of course it would be unreasonable to expect direct, personal dialogue in our relationship. But, God creates all that exists more easily than any one of us thinks a single thought. God is not limited to a certain number of "contact hours" with human beings. Every one of us is created precisely so that we might freely relate personally with God and God with us.

Nothing of honest concern to us in our relationship with God is unimportant. In our loving concern for a particular individual in our lives, we might expend a significant amount of emotional energy trying to find an answer to a question about whether or to what degree he or she cares about us. An insecure person will ask mutual friends for their opinions about whether or not a third party holds us in esteem. The only sure means to learn the truth is to speak directly with the one who is the focus of our attention. The Bible, spiritual books, teachings in churches, personal testimonies from people, all tell us that God loves us. But to obtain the certainty that our hearts require, we should ask God.

Even if we are usually direct in our dealings with people, we might not be accustomed to bringing questions to God, and to understanding the answers we receive. Lack of familiarity, rather than fear of rejection, will most often prevent us from asking questions of God.

We might think that we should bring only the most serious of questions to God, as if we were approaching the head of a major organization. But if the head of the major organization is our mother, father, or dearest friend, we ask whatever we want within our relationship of mutual love and respect. The criterion for questions of God is the same as for those closest to us: honesty.

God always replies, but our listening might not always be as honest as our asking. How we listen for the answers to our questions is as important as the wise and sometimes courageous decisions we make

to address God directly. In any dialogue, we hear according to our changing perceptions of not only words, tones of voice, gestures, and facial expressions, but inner resonances and movements of both inspiration and doubt. With God, we do not usually see or hear except with our inner senses. But peace is perceptible and also dependable as a positive indicator of an answer that satisfies at the deepest level of our awareness. We take delight when a thought or idea gives us the clarity we sought, and serves as another inner movement that reveals to consciousness the answers we seek from God.

We can also re-phrase questions that do not receive immediate answers, just as we do with people. God fully understands our intentions and thoughts, but when our interior senses give us no indications, and no clarifying inspirations come to us, we can re-frame our questions. We do so not to enable God to comprehend our present concern, but for our own better understanding of the issue that affects us. Not receiving an answer is as real a part of dialogue with God as would be that of a trusted friend telling us that our question in its present formulation has a hidden, and negatively skewed, presupposition attached – much like the sophomore asking about God’s power to move a rock. If we listen not only for answers, but attend to our interior senses as they reveal the attitude of trust (or the opposite) from which our questions arise, we will ultimately find the right questions, and then receive the answers we need.

“God, I have a question . . .”