

Article for 32963

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“Why?!?”

Anyone who has parented or grand parented, or even baby-sat has undoubtedly encountered the simple question which is always on the lips of the very young ... “Why?!” Our grandchild came to visit us a few months ago and asked this question so many times that we finally decided our best defense was a good offense. So, one night during a barrage of her “whys,” one of us interrupted to ask her a question. We asked, “Why are you always asking us ‘why’?” I guess we should have anticipated her response. With a thoughtful blink and a tip of the head, she responded, “I don’t know. Why?”

Fortunately for parents and grandparents whose ability to answer endless “why” questions grows strained, school and maturity eventually arrive to channel kids’ curiosity. And then the whole field of inquiry expands. Growth, learning, and absorption into life’s activities raise so many new questions: How can I best succeed in my work? Who loves me for just who I am? Where will I be able to find the right niche in life for me? What does the life I am leading amount to? When will my trouble (or pain, or concern, or fear) end?

Life can be full of such puzzling questions. Some say, in fact, that we each have one or two lifelong questions-questions that we never quite succeed in answering satisfactorily for ourselves. Maybe we could understand the desperation of troubled young people, or the crisis of meaning that can hit at mid-life, or even the depression that sometimes comes in late years, as painfully related to important, unanswered questions.

Years ago we were watching composer Leonard Bernstein’s televised lectures on music theory and he spoke about debates which had raged over the great “unanswered questions” of music. There is a mystery about music. Yet Bernstein said he personally had come to the point that he no longer cared what this question was, or how to ask it. He simply knew that his answer was, “Yes!”

Fascinating notion, isn’t it... to know an answer with certainty, but be unsure of the question? It strikes us that there’s maturity in Bernstein’s admission. Perhaps the quality of faith maturity in our lives is demonstrated by a similar admission. You see, just because we are faithful people does not mean we automatically eliminate all important questions from life. Few of us can claim that. It’s simply that as faithful people, the Answer becomes so much more compelling than the questions. If faith in God is the Answer we affirm, tough questions lose their power to frighten and confound us. We can offer a confident, resounding “Yes” to the beautiful, puzzling gift of life, because of God’s presence in it.