

Asking the Right Questions
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A professor at a university tells his English classes: "I cannot possibly teach you even a small portion of what there is to learn in this field, but I think that I shall achieve my goal if I can teach you to ask the right questions."

Teaching people to ask the wrong questions has from time immemorial been a device for distracting people's attention from the truth. It has taken a very serious form in our present society, particularly with regard to questions of personal freedom and morality. We are told that these concepts must be "re-examined in the light of today." The traditional concepts are out-of-date. How have we arrived at this kind of reasoning? By the way we state the question.

In the midst of countless debates on current issues from public violence to drug abuse and sexual behavior, we invariably hear the questions introduced by:

"What's wrong with....?"

"Haven't I a right to....?"

When do we hear anyone say:

"What is good about doing this?" "What is right about doing this?"

We are encouraged to assume that because it is hard to prove an act wrong, it must be right. We are further encouraged to confuse "right" with "rights." The fathers of our Constitution used the word "rights" to express the privileges of personal freedom which should make it possible for all citizens to this country to live together without harming or oppressing each other. It is true that we have not lived up to this ideal; but that in no way destroys the value of the ideal.

What has caused us to change the concept of "right" to mean "anything we want to do"?

What has caused us to convert our "wants" into "rights"?

What has given us the idea that the moral concepts of "right" and "wrong" are things we can change to suit ourselves?

The answer is that we have taught ourselves to ask the wrong questions. If we restate the questions and ask ourselves,

"Am I degrading the image of God within myself when I do this?"

“Can I invite the Holy Spirit to dwell in me at the same time that I defile my body with harmful substances and poison my mind with ugly thoughts?”

“Could I at this moment look upon the countenance of God without shame?”

What would our answers be to these current questions then?