

4 Questions and Control

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Many years ago, Martin Luther was asked (as the story goes), “What was God doing before He created the earth?” He replied, “Creating a hell for those who ask that question!” It is well understood by many organizations including governments, military units, businesses, private corporations, religions and others, that the best way to control the masses is to control the quality and quantity of information dispensed. This has always been the case, and no doubt began in the family home as it was discovered that keeping children in the dark about certain things (where the candy is) promotes unity and control. It doesn’t matter if it’s in a business, at the home or within relationships; there exists specific information that is not always disclosed to others. This may be because it just doesn’t matter, or because it really does. Thus, the best way to control the masses is to control the information they receive (be it right or wrong). As the old cliché simply states: “what they don’t know won’t hurt them.” Often, the cost to correct the miss-information, instruction or direction outweighs the benefits of keeping the status quo.

In the early Church of Rome, *only* the Priests could read, interpret or give sermons on the scriptures. That gave them significant power over what was taught and believed. During the 1400’s and 1500’s in Europe and England, in order to maintain power over the masses, the priests, under the direction of the church, burned at the stake Christian scholars who translated the scriptures into English or German as well as the believers who dared to read them. The crime of possessing non-Latin New Testaments that could easily be read and interpreted by the lay member was punishable by death. The early Roman church had a vested interest in preserving the status quo: no one but the priest, who had been “trained for the ministry” could deliver the real meaning and message of the scriptures. This way no individual could form a doctrinal conclusion based upon his or her own reading and understanding.

It works the same way in politics. Political candidates promise “transparency” but when elected, they often try to hide anything that might threaten their power and position. They seek to control the media and the electorate masses by controlling or ‘spinning’ their particular version of the truth. However, because of the Internet, it’s much more difficult to hide information than it once was. The intellectual warehouse is open 24/7 and it is open to the public. Since most information can’t be hidden any longer, the central question that now plagues the truth seeker is: What and who should be believed?

Questions

Every question is important to the person asking, so consequently there are no 'dumb' questions. Questions that seem trite and redundant to one person may be of huge import to another, and if possible, they ought to be addressed when in the right venue. Teachers have been instructed that when a student asks a difficult question, they should answer the question that the student *should have asked*. This is also the politician’s first rule in his or her attempt to control and spin information.

Too often, when difficult questions are asked in a religious setting, the teacher's response is: "You don't need to know that right now" or, "That question is not important for your salvation" or, perhaps more discouragingly, "You just need to exercise a little bit more faith and not worry about that at this time." To the faithful and those with strong testimonies, these answers may be sufficient. The verbal deflections of ignoring questions may have worked in the past, but will not work anymore! Skirting around difficult questions cannot satisfy the inquiring mind today when all answers, right or wrong may easily be found with the stroke of a few keys or a tap on a screen. The deflections will not work without resentment, so parents and leaders need to be aware of the questions that students and family members are asking and be prepared with the answers that they are seeking.

The physical brain has been created with three very important internal traits. *First*, it must completely shut off for a few hours a day. *Second*, if there exists a question in the mind, it is driven to find an answer and will search until it finds one. *Third*, it can only think of one thing at a time. This is the way the mind of man is made and must operate, at least in mortality. God created humanity this way, purposely placing limits on the mind to help mankind seek answers to spiritual questions. The wonderful thing is, we have total control over this divine data processor. The *iPhone*, *iPad* and *iMind* all have a shut-off switch and a control button. If *an individual* doesn't want to think about something, they just have to think about something else. Everyone (excluding the mentally impaired) have control over all thought, making life a true probationary state where one's "words, works, and thoughts" may condemn them at the last day (Alma 12:14). When an important question arises, if the mind cannot find an answer in truth, then it will either make one up or continue to search until it finds a satisfactory answer (true or not) that the mind can understand and accept within its limited ability, knowledge and education. The great plan of salvation is connected to mortality. We all have an innate desire to seek for light and truth while living in this temporal, spiritual and mental probationary state, a state where all have control over their thoughts.

Unfortunately, when a person's relationship and belief in God is compromised by doubt and fear, they typically turn away from God for the answers to their questions. Instead of going to God in prayer seeking for faith, light, and truth, many instead rely on the informational internet god that is "without body, parts, or passions," one that is "everywhere but nowhere," that is so large that it can "fill the world" while at the same time, it is 'so small that it can fit in the palm of the hand.' The God of glory and intelligence; the God of light and eternal truth; the God from which Abraham sought and received his endowment of power, is often overshadowed by the god of this world, instantly viewed and seen in High Definition. The world has changed the name of the instantaneous source of supposed true information, from "God" to "Google" where religious concepts and truths about eternity are viewed with suspicion, suppression, and bigotry. Using these hand-held seerstones the godless humanistic propaganda is heralded as the only real path to life and reason.

With all this information (some true and some false) that is instantly available at the stroke of a key or screen, the questions of our youth must be answered in a way that will strengthen their testimony and faith. The answers must come from a source that they can trust if they are to combat the onslaught that they will face from those seeking to destroy LDS beliefs. Make no mistake, this

onslaught will come from all sides: friends, co-workers, and teachers, even from within the church and family.

The point is: if leaders, teachers, parents and grandparents are not answering the questions of the youth, they will find their answers on the Internet or from those who accept Internet answers. The best fortification is for our loved ones to understand the eternal truths that strengthen their faith and testimonies to such a degree, that the information presented by the “anti-Christ” will not affect them.

There was a poem published over 100 years ago called: “A Fence or an Ambulance” that illustrates this notion. The poem tells the tale of a path by a cliff that overlooks a beautiful panorama. Numerous people, while enjoying the view, would fall to their hurt. It is decided by the community to place an ambulance at the bottom of the cliff to be better prepared for the falls that inevitably occur rather than put a fence on the cliff to prevent people from falling in the first place. Their rationalization: it isn’t the fall that hurts them, but the sudden stop at the bottom.

A final stanza from the poem:

Then an old sage remarked, “It’s a marvel to me
That people give far more attention
To repairing results than to stopping the cause,
When they’d much better aim at prevention.
Let us stop at its source all this mischief,” cried he.
“Come, neighbors and friends let us rally:
If the cliff we will fence, we might almost dispense
With the ambulance down in the valley.”

The problem needs to be addressed. The intellectual warehouse is wide open. The questions have always been there, but information can no longer be controlled as before. Agency is a wonderful and terrible thing. The members of the church and especially the youth need to be prepared for the path that lies ahead, a path that all must walk to reach the tree of life. There is no spiritually safe detour. All must prepare for the path because the path that must be trod cannot be changed. This path, just as depicted in Lehi's dream, must and will lead through the mists of darkness, traverse along the river of filthy water, and around the great and spacious building where the inhabitants will mock and seek to destroy our faith. These ‘mists of darkness’ will include those questions that test faith and testimony, which only can be endured and overcome by grasping firmly and holding tightly to the iron rod. The instructions that will lead us through the dark mists of question and doubt have been given and all must prepare for that trek. As President Ezra Taft Benson stated: “It is better to prepare and prevent than it is to repair and repent.”(Ezra Taft Benson, New Era, January 1988).