

# RISING GENERATIONS

## THE UPPER ROOM

### Let Me Ask You A Question

Matt Croasmun

I was so disappointed—and embarrassed. I had set my heart on going to a particular school, and I had just found out that I hadn't gotten in from a student at that school: "Well, you must have thought about what you would do if you didn't get in; not many people do." Of course I had thought about it. Not only was my heart set on this school, but I also was convinced that Jesus was leading me there. I wasn't just disappointed; I was confused. How could Jesus lead me in a direction and then dump me on the doorstep?

In my experience, life is full of these sorts of puzzles. And following Jesus doesn't mean fewer puzzles. In fact, sometimes trying to follow Jesus adds more puzzles. And I don't think Jesus' disciples would disagree with me.

Jesus spent a lot of time leading his disciples into puzzling situations. He often spoke in ways that were hard to understand. He lived a way of life that often just didn't make sense. And he loved to teach by telling little puzzling stories—parables.

On one occasion, Jesus told a story about his puzzles—a parable about parables (Mark 4:1-20). On its face, this story is about farming: a farmer scatters seed all over the place—on rocks, in the midst of weeds, on the road. But a few of the seeds fall on good soil, and those seeds grow and bear fruit. The disciples don't get it.

Perplexed, they stick around after the crowds depart to ask Jesus about the parable. Before he explains, Jesus tells them, "The secret of the kingdom of God has been given to you" (Mark 4:11, NIV). I'm sure the disciples didn't feel as if they were in on that secret. They are confused and are coming to Jesus with nothing but questions.

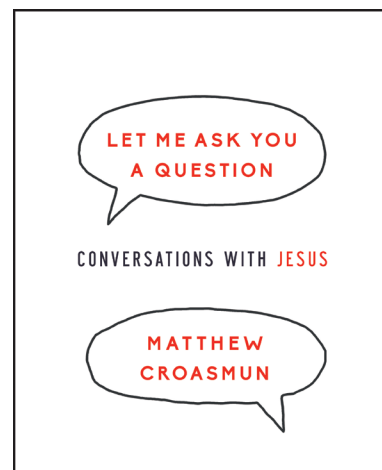
But maybe that is the secret of the kingdom of God, the secret of a life of following Jesus: sticking around to ask questions. Sometimes we will be confused. Often life won't make sense. But every puzzle presents an opportunity, like a little seed taking root in our lives—an opportunity to enter into honest conversation with Jesus.

In my disappointment about not getting into that school, those conversations made the difference. I was honest with Jesus about my disappointment; I didn't pretend to have the answers. But rather than shouting my questions into the void, I brought them to Jesus. This pivotal moment in my relationship with Jesus launched a new season of my life, one in which I've seen abundant fruit—maybe even 30, 60, and 100-fold, just as Jesus promised.

## Dig Deeper

If the secret of the Kingdom is honest conversation with Jesus, then maybe what we need are conversation-starters. Why not give one of these a try:

- **Ask your questions.** Start with whatever isn't making sense in your life: your disappointments, puzzles, and worries. Dare to bring these honestly into conversation with Jesus. Listen and respond to what Jesus has to say.
- **Answer Jesus' questions.** Jesus asks a lot of questions in the Bible. (Actually, I've written a book about this: *Let Me Ask You A Question: Conversations with Jesus*.) Maybe start your conversation with Jesus by answering a question he asks in the gospels: "Why do you worry?" (Matthew 6:28) "What do you want me to do for you?" (Mark 10:51) or "Who are you looking for?" (John 20:15). Dare to be honest, and see where the conversation goes.



However we begin, often what we say to Jesus matters less than the fact that we are bringing our questions to Jesus. It's not about finding the right words; it's a matter of staying in the conversation.