

These are actual Classified Ads:

FREE YORKSHIRE TERRIER. 8 years old. Hateful little thing. BITES!

FREE PUPPIES: ½ Cocker Spaniel, ½ sneaky neighbor's dog.

FREE PUPPIES: Mother, AKC German Shepherd. Father, Super Dog – able to leap tall fences in a single bound.

NORDIC TRACK: \$300. Hardly used, call Chubby.

JOINING A NUDIST COLONY! Must sell washer and dryer: Only \$300.

WEDDING DRESS FOR SALE. Worn once by mistake. Call Stephanie.

Ok, first some background on this fascinating and foundational text of John's gospel. We are told that John the Baptist was standing with two of HIS disciples. Ancient schools of teachers were sometimes competitive; only rarely were teachers so impressed with another teacher as to refer their students to them. But John refers his own disciples to Jesus, whom he calls the Lamb of God. There are various possible backgrounds for the title: sacrificial lambs, Passover lambs, and being like a lamb in Isa 53:7, which is the lamb led to the slaughter, thus foreshadowing Jesus' death. At the time this was written Passover was sometimes viewed as sacrificial, so Jesus could be the Passover lamb, and also a sacrifice. As well, unique to John's gospel is the TIMING of the slaughter of the lambs for the Passover feast. According to John's timing, Jesus' death occurs at the same time as the lambs are being slaughtered for the Passover.

Jesus then turns and asks the 2 disciples of John who are following Him: "What are you looking for?" Remember, this is the gospel that begins with the opening words of the Book of Genesis: "IN THE BEGINNING" And this question, echoes back to the dialogue in Genesis between Creator and creature that occurs after Adam and Eve have sinned: "Where are you?" calls God to a hiding Adam and Eve (Gen 3:9). The disciples then ask this Incarnate Son of God: "Rabbi, where are you staying?" The word translated as 'staying' is the Greek word, *meno*, that is loaded with significance. It can mean 'remain,' 'dwell,' or 'abide.' Just a few verses earlier, we read how the Baptist had seen the Spirit descend on Jesus like a dove, and *remain* on Him when Jesus was baptized. The Spirit abided continually in Jesus and the disciples wanted to know where such a Spirit-indwelt man made His usual dwelling. Later, in the Gospel, Jesus would describe the life of His disciples as abiding in Him just as a branch remains, or dwells in, a vine. (15:5). The word *meno* at all these levels connotes what is the usual and ordinary state. And as they would come to understand, Jesus' usual and ordinary state was to be in communion with His Heavenly Father. He REMAINED in Him. He invites them to COME AND SEE this reality – and to experience it as His disciples – and in themselves. (help from CULTURAL BACKGROUNDS Study Bible, p. 1821, and WEAVINGS, Jan/Feb 2004, John Mogabgab, p 2-3, and "Small Talk" by Gerrit Scott Dawson, p. 21-22 of same issue of WEAVINGS)

Second, WHAT ARE YOU LOOKING FOR? WHOM DO YOU SEEK? Becomes the foundational question of this entire gospel. This question initiates Jesus' public ministry. It will also begin the passion, death and resurrection when in Gethsemane, we read "Jesus, knowing all that was to befall Him, came forward and said to them (the soldiers who had come to arrest Him), "Whom do you seek?" (18:4) And finally, at the very beginning of the resurrection appearances, as Mary stands weeping outside the empty tomb, Jesus' first words are: "Woman, why are you weeping? Whom do you seek?" (20:15) The beginning of His public life,

the entrance into His passion, the first of His resurrection appearances – each of these crucial events opens with this question about search and desire. All probe for longing and yearning. This is where it all begins. (help from Michael J. Buckley, SJ, WHAT DO YOU SEEK? P 14-17)

So we now must ask ourselves: What are we looking for? This question must be addressed to anyone who comes to Jesus, the first thing that must be clear. And it is not information that Jesus needs. In a very few verses of this story, Jesus will indicate that He can read hearts and size up the character of Simon and the straightforward innocence of Nathaniel (1:42-47). He already knows what is in our hearts. A vast arc of desire stretches between heaven and earth – across human existence – a long sweep of mutual longing between Creator and creature that constitutes the innermost dynamic of human life. The question is not for Jesus – it is for us. It is for all who would come to follow Him – IF they would follow Him. What ARE we looking for?

This question brings our discipleship back to us, and calls us to attend to our experience and how our life is unfolding. We are carried by the question to see what IS IT that draws us, what actually has value for us, what has made us decide on this direction rather than another. The question then guides us to a more profound awareness of ourselves, and to understand ourselves in our desires; to know who we are – and what we are trying to become.

WHY? Because our meaning only emerges as we come to be conscious of what we most deeply desire. Only our desires can give us the courage to follow Jesus. For only here – beneath and deeper than immediate appetite – do we come to grace and true freedom that Paul would come to celebrate as “God’s love that has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit which has been given to us.” (Rom 5:5) It is our desire, our love, that Jesus has initially awakened in all who would follow Him. And if we continue to pursue this deepest desire – it will gather strength in the years to come in companionship with God and others – and a further flowering of the human community. Jesus probes our desire at the very beginning of the Gospel – What is it you love? Who are you? The question of Jesus attempts to bring to the surface the desires that are actually governing our lives. It reaches out into hope for the joy that gives everything we touch expectation and meaning.

This love and this desire constitute the basic human question. It underlies everything that informs and drives our lives. This question can emerge at any place or time in our lives. As in this passage, it can begin with a casual walk. It can emerge from any action that suddenly catches us up in shame or in wander, in expectation or fear or love, or in the most pedestrian moments of an ordinary day. The journey inward to search out what we are looking for is a very long one. As Dag Hammarskjöld was wise to write: “The longest journey is the journey inward.” (adapted from Michael J. Buckley, SJ, WHAT DO YOU SEEK, p. 17—19)

Third, two quotes about love that illustrate our attempts to answer this question of “What do you want?” in the concrete. St. Augustine, who had at least 3 concubines, and who fathered a son out of wedlock before ever becoming a Christian, once wrote: “To fall in love with God is the greatest romance; to seek Him the greatest adventure; to find Him, the greatest human achievement.” Our love for God is often first recognized in our love for others – and in their love for us. That’s why marriage is such a holy state – because it is a wonderful path to God.

And lastly, from Pedro Arrupe, who was the head of the Jesuits in the 1970’s and 80’s:

NOTHING IS MORE PRACTICAL than finding God,

That is, than FALLING IN LOVE

In a quite absolute, final way.

What you are in love with

What seizes your imagination

Will affect everything

It will decide

What will get you out of bed

In the morning.

What you do with your evenings,

What you read, who you know,

What breaks your heart

And what amazes you with joy and gratitude.

Fall in love, stay in love, and it will decide everything.

WHAT ARE YOU LOOKING FOR? For God, for love. It's truly all that there is. And the ONE that we seek, seeks us all the more. Our desire for Him will never outpace HIS desire for us. Onward we push even as we are pulled. How blessed we are to be so loved. Let the Church say AMEN.