

Questions Christ Asks of His Followers
Reflection March 7, 2021
Helen Hawkins

1. Can you drink the cup that I am going to drink? (Mt 20:22)
2. But who do you say that I am? (Mt 16:15)
3. Do you also want to leave? (Jn 6:67)
4. Do you believe now? (Jn 16:31)
5. So you could not keep watch with me for one hour? (Mt 26:40)
6. Will you lay down your life for me? (Jn 13:38)
7. Are you betraying the Son of Man with a kiss? (Lk 22:48)

The common thread with these questions is recognizing that they can occur in a moment of decision and that decision will affect the life a person in a real and personal way. It is my prayer that I would say yes to each of these questions.

With that in mind, I began thinking about several times that I knew of such a moment in the life of myself or the life of someone else. In a split second, a decision was made to respond and to respond correctly. The question that has always played in my mind is why and how we can make the correct decision when suddenly faced with the reality of what that could cost us.

When my son Michael as about 15 or 16 he read an article that described how one could survive an attack by a large dog. The article stated that when you see the dog coming toward you place your right arm up near your neck. When the dog lunges at your throat use your left arm to wrap around the dog's back at which time use both arms with a scissor action pushing the dogs throat and neck away from you and pulling the dog's back toward you. This action could easily break the dog's back. Michael thought that this was the greatest piece of information ever. He played the scenario over and over in his mind. Then one day as he was walking to a friend's house a large dog came around the corner and Michael was able to protect himself. He did not break the dog's back, but the dog was hurt enough to limp away.

My nephew J.P. was a troubled kid and grew up into a criminal who has spent some years in prison for burglary and other crimes that druggies get into. The last I have heard of him, he was in Delta, relatively clean but still a drifter. The best way to think of J.P. is to remember Sylvester Stallone. J.P. looked like a younger version of the actor. J.P. knew it and emulated Stallone. The summer J.P. was 17, my sister sent him to stay with Dan and me with the hope that if he could stay away from his friends and access to drugs, he could be saved. Our home was a summer mecca for cousins, so we often had several kids in and out in during the summers. During that summer we must have been having a family party of some kind for there

were quite a few little kids and adults. J.P. and I were sitting out on the deck visiting. One of the toddlers was standing in front of us. J.P.'s shoes were untied so when he got up out of his chair, his feet got tangled in the shoestrings. It was obvious that he was going to fall on the child but as he was falling, he reached out his arms and grabbed the child to his chest and twisted his body around so that he would fall on his back, thereby protecting the toddler.

The third example is the story we all know of the Columbine School Shooting when the shooter shot a girl who refused to say that she did not believe in Jesus. Her split-second decision to remain faithful to Christ cost her, her life. Later I told my daughter and friend of ours that I hoped that I would have the same kind of courage. Both my daughter and our friend expressed dismay at such a thought as they were concerned about my safety.

A moment of decision came for me when I had been studying the religion of Baha'i with my friend Debbie Doherty. I was quite taken by the beliefs of this religion and was well into becoming a Baha'i until the moment came that I would have to believe that Christ is just one of several manifestations of God who came to Earth. Moses, Abraham, Buddha, Mohammad and Baha'u'llah being the others. The moment was not one of rational reflection but a sudden brick wall. There simply was no way I could do that.

The common thread between these stories and the questions is the suddenness that a decision is made.

In Michael's case: He was prepared. When the dog attacked, he was ready.

In J.P.'s case: Despite being a seriously flawed young man, he was by nature a kind person who instinctively risked his own body for the sake of a child.

In the case of the girl of the Columbine Shooting: She remained true to her love for Christ.

In my case: I realized that I was going to have to figure out what my next move was going to be. For I knew that I was not going to be following Baha'u'llah.

In all cases, I hope that the answer I would give to each of Christ's questions is yes. Perhaps, like my son Michael, the best way to ensure answering yes, is to prepare our hearts and souls for a time that we may be called to give an answer. To meditate on these questions has been a good beginning.