



## THE GREAT QUESTIONS

Asking yourself these deeper questions opens up new ways of being in the world. It brings in a breath of fresh air. It makes life more joyful. The real trick to life is not to be in the know, but to be in the mystery.

FRED ALAN WOLF

## What IS a Great Question? Why should we bother? What makes it Great?

Let's say a spaceship lands next to you on the coffee table (does size matter?) and inside is *The Universal Book of Everything*. And you get to ask one question. What is that question?

This may seem a little silly, but it's worth the effort. Take a minute and think. What would that question be? It can be anything. Go ahead and write it down in a journal.

Now let's say The Book is feeling a little underutilized these days, and you get a bonus question. Think of something that you are just plain curious about. It can be wondering if Elvis is still alive, or where you left your car keys. Something that simply tickles your fancy. Write that down, too.

And by now The Book is feeling a little depleted, and it got to be *The Universal Book of Everything* by asking questions of everyone and getting real answers. So, the question for you (the answer to which will be added in The Book) is:

What is the One Thing you know for sure?

### Great Questions—The Can Opener of Consciousness

Aside from the few like Fred Alan Wolf (who we quoted on the opening page), when do we ever get encouraged to ask questions? And yet, most of those grand discoveries and revelations

that our society cherishes came from asking questions. Those things, those *answers*, that we study in school came from *questions*. Questions are the precursor, or first cause, in every branch of human knowledge. The Indian sage Ramana Maharshi told his students the path to Enlightenment was summed up in: “Who am I?” The physicist Niels Bohr asked, “How can an electron move from A to B, and never go in between?”

These questions open us up to what we previously didn’t know. And they’re really the only way to get there—to the other side of the unknown.

Why ask a Great Question? Asking a Great Question is an invitation to an adventure, a journey of discovery. It’s thrilling to set out on a new adventure; there’s the bliss of freedom, the freedom to explore new territory.

So why don’t we ask these questions? Because asking questions opens the door to chaos, to the unknown and unpredictable. The minute you ask a question you truly don’t know the answer to, you open yourself up to a field of all possibilities. Are you willing to receive an answer you may not like or agree with? What if it makes you uncomfortable, or carries you outside the zone of safety and security you’ve built for yourself? What if the answer isn’t what you want to hear!?

It doesn’t take muscles; it takes bravery to ask a question.

Now let’s consider what makes a question Great. A Great Question doesn’t have to come from a philosophy book, or be about Life’s Big Issues. A Great Question for you might be, “What would happen if I decided to go back to college and get a degree in a new field?” or “Should I listen to that voice that keeps telling me to go to California or China?” or “Is it possible to discover what is inside a neutrino?” Asking any of these questions and thousands of others could change the direction of your life. That’s what a Great Question is: one that can change the direction of your life.

So, once again, why don’t we ask them? Most people would rather stay in the safety of the known than go looking for trouble. Even if they crash right into a question, more than



*Where do we come from?  
What should we do?  
And where are we going?*

—Miceal Ledwith

*The difference between me at five and me now is that at five I didn’t have much invested emotionally in the Universe being a certain way. Being “wrong” never was a concern. It was all learning. Now I keep reminding myself: In science there is no such thing as a failed experiment. Learning that what I was testing simply does not work is actually a success.*

—WILL

When I watch my daughter playing with whatever toy or gadget she has at the moment, I can see the pure joy in her face as she's trying to figure it out. She doesn't get discouraged; she just keeps on trying until she gets what she wants. Once she gets it, it's on to the next challenge, the next question.

I watched her this morning trying to figure out how to open the latch on the cupboard. It took a while, but she kept at it until she worked it out. Once she got the latch, the next joy was: Let's open the door! As the door opened, her face lit up with excitement. Look what's inside! What's that? There on the shelf? It was a true journey of discovery, full of joy at every step.

What I asked myself, and what I would ask you, is: What's *your* latch? What do *you* desire to know today?

—BETSY

likely they will run away from it, stick their head in the sand or quickly get busy doing something else.

For most of us, it takes a serious crisis to bring on the Great Questions: a life-threatening illness, the death of someone close, failure of a business or a marriage, a repeated, even addictive behavior pattern you just can't seem to shake, or loneliness that seems unendurable for one more day. At times like those, Great Questions come boiling up from the depths of our being like hot lava. These questions are not intellectual exercises, but cries of the soul. "Why me? Why him? What have I done wrong? After this, is life truly worth living? How could God allow this to happen?"

If we could muster up the same kind of passion to ask ourselves a Great Question about our lives *now*, when there is no immediate crisis, who knows what could happen?

As Dr. Wolf said, asking a Great Question can open up new ways of being in the world. It can be a catalyst for transformation. Growing. Outgrowing. Moving on.

## The Joy of Questions

Remember when you were five years old and you kept asking, "Why?" Your parents may have thought, after a while, that you were doing it simply to drive them crazy, but you really wanted to know! What happened to that five-year-old?

Can you remember the five-year-old who was you? Can you feel what it was like? This is important, because when you were five, you loved being in the mystery. You loved wanting to figure things out. You loved the journey. Each day was filled with new discoveries and new questions.

So what is the difference between then and now?

*Good question!*

The fun and joy of life are in the journey. In our culture, we've been conditioned to look at "not knowing" as something unacceptable and bad; it's some kind of failure. In order to pass

the test, we have to know the answers. But even when it comes to factual knowledge about concrete things, what science *doesn't* know far exceeds what it *does*. Many of the greatest scientists have looked into the mystery of the universe and of life on our planet, and have frankly said, "We know very little. Mostly we have a lot of questions." This is certainly true of the outstanding thinkers we interviewed. In the words of author Terence McKenna, "As the bonfires of knowledge grow brighter, the more the darkness is revealed to our startled eyes."

It's even more difficult to come up with a clear-cut answer to "What is the meaning and purpose of my life?" The answer to Great Questions like this can only emerge from the journey of living. And we can only arrive at it by the road of not knowing—or maybe we should say, not-yet-knowing. If we always think we know the answer, how will we grow? What will we ever be open to learn?

A university professor visited Zen master Nan-in to inquire about Zen. But instead of listening to the master, the scholar kept going on and on about his own ideas.

After listening for some time, Nan-in served tea. He poured his visitor's cup full, and then kept on pouring. The tea flowed over the sides of the cup, filled the saucer, spilled onto the man's pants and onto the floor.

"Don't you see that the cup is full?" the professor exploded. "You can't get any more in!"

"Just so," replied Nan-in calmly. "And like this cup, you are full of your own ideas and opinions. How can I show you Zen unless you first empty your cup?"

Emptying the cup means making room for Great Questions. It means being open, reconditioning ourselves so that we can accept, for the time being, *not* knowing. Out of that a greater knowing will dawn.

I have found that I find a particular excitement in suddenly realizing I don't know the answer to something. It's like coming to the edge of a cliff in my mind.

In this space of "nothing" or not knowing, I get this intense feeling of anticipation. The reason I get excited is because I've come to the edge of what I know, and I realize that shortly an understanding will arrive in my head that will be staggering and will not have existed in me the moment before.

It will be this huge ah-ha. I learned recently that an ah-ha stimulates the pleasure center of the brain . . . Evidently I'm addicted to this feeling.

—MARK

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## IT'S OK NOT TO KNOW THE ANSWER



*Every age, every generation has its built-in assumptions—that the world is flat, that the world is round. There are hundreds of hidden assumptions, things we take for granted that may or may not be true. In the vast majority of cases, these conceptions about reality—which belong to the prevailing paradigm or worldview—aren't accurate. So if history's any guide, much that we take for granted about the world today simply isn't true.*

—John Hagelin, Ph.D.

A little while ago my sixteen-year-old niece sent me a long email. The gist of it was, “Life sucks. I see my dad coming home from work every day totally bummed out. I don’t want to get trapped in the rat race, but I don’t see any hope of avoiding it. Is this what life is about? What’s the point? I might as well just shoot myself and die.”

“Christina,” I wrote back, “you might not think this is a great response, but I’m proud of you. I can’t tell you that you are going to solve your dilemma and find The Answer. I know you want answers—but sometimes life doesn’t provide them right away. But you are asking the right questions, and that is important.”

—WILL

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## You're in Distinguished Company

People have been asking Great Questions for thousands of years. There have always been men and women who gazed at the stars and wondered at the vast mystery of it all, or who looked at the way people around them were living and thought, “Isn’t there more to life than this?”

The ancient Greek philosophers pondered and discussed the Great Questions. Some, like Socrates and Plato, asked, “What is Beauty? What is Goodness? What is Justice? What is the best way to govern a society? What people are fit to be rulers?”

Religious teachers, mystics and spiritual masters like Buddha, Lao Tse, Jesus, Muhammad, St. Francis, Meister Eckhardt, Apollonius of Tyana and many more, in all the world’s traditions, have asked Great Questions.

People with scientific minds have always asked questions. How does it work? What’s inside? Are things really the way they seem? Where does the universe come from? Is the Earth the

center of the solar system? Are there laws and patterns that underlie what happens in daily life? What's the connection between my body and my mind?

For the great scientists of history, these questions elicit a passion to *understand* that goes way beyond curiosity. They're not just curious—they need to know!

When Albert Einstein was a boy, he asked himself: "What happens if I'm riding my bicycle at the speed of light and I switch on my bike light—will it come on?" He nearly drove himself crazy asking himself that for ten years, but out of that resolute pursuit came the relativity theory. This is a great example of asking a question and hanging with it for years, in the unknown, until he came up with a completely different view of reality.

## Paradigm Busting

One of the great things about science is its assumption that what it thinks it knows today will probably be proven wrong tomorrow. The theories of yesterday have served as platforms to climb higher, as Sir Isaac Newton meant when he said, "If I have been privileged to see farther than others, it's because I stood on the shoulders of giants."

It's only by asking questions, challenging the assumptions and the "truths" taken for granted at any given time, that science progresses. What if that turned out to be true about our personal lives, our individual growth and progress?

Guess what? It is true. When you break free of your assumptions about yourself, you will grow more than you ever thought possible.

You can never come  
to a conclusion about life.  
Life is an eternal thing just as  
we are an eternal thing.  
We have to start searching for  
more meaning of what we are.  
Well, the meaning of what  
we are has yet to be  
discovered by us.

—Ramtha

## Bring It on Home

I stand in front of my mirror every morning and try to ask myself a Great Question.

“What is it that I don’t know, that I want to know?”

This morning it was, “I want to know if I’m truly capable of feeling unconditional love.”

This is not just an abstract idea for me. Unconditional love is on my agenda—it’s how I want to be, at least for my husband and my daughter—but if I’m honest with myself, I’m not sure I’ve ever truly felt it.

—BETSY

Pondering the Great Questions is a wonderful way to spend “quality time” with your mind. When was the last time you took your mind on a wild ride of mystery? Tried to get to the other side of Infinity?

Asking questions also has enormous practical value. It’s the gateway to change.

For instance: Ever ask yourself, as Joe Dispenza asks, “Why do we keep recreating the same reality? Why do we keep having the same relationships? Why do we keep getting the same jobs over and over again? In this infinite sea of potentials that exist around us, how come we keep recreating the same realities?”

Or as Einstein put it, one of the definitions of insanity is to do the same things over and over and expect a different result.

That’s where asking Great Questions comes in. They are *Great* because they open us up to a greater reality, a greater vista and greater options. And they come in the form of *Questions* because they come from the other side of the Known. And to get there is to change.

## Ponder These for a While . . .

*A note about “Ponder These”:* Some of these questions many of us can answer easily. But the trick is to not just look at the obvious, but to look at the unobvious—the subconsciousness. The place we don’t look very often, if ever. When you consider the questions here, remember to look all the way inside yourself. Think about things that you may have picked up when you were young. Like fear, for instance: Does a fear of dogs permeate throughout your consciousness in other ways? Take some time. There’s no one at the back of the room with a stopwatch!

- Remember your first three questions from the beginning of the chapter? What are they now?
- A spaceship lands next to you, and inside is *The Universal Book of Everything*. You get a bonus question, a just-for-fun question. What is it?
- And the bonus bonus: Are we back where we started? Or have we moved on?

Remind yourself of these questions as you read this book. They are bound to evolve as you evolve. That’s the fun part! Keep a journal so you can watch your own evolution and remember.

**All great things are achieved in a light heart!**

—*Ramtha*

20 QUESTIONS  
ASKING QUESTIONS  
CONTROL  
DESTINY



What are the odds?

1:100,000

What are the odds of  
meeting someone  
with exactly  
the same  
DNA as you?

1:100,000

Who's to blame?

What are those  
genes doing?

Are there something  
not supposed to be  
there would of happened?

What are you going to do with it?



Why is  
anything  
happening?

Do I have a special  
talent?

Will it go on after my body dies?  
Where will it go?

What is coming?