



Will God Hold Us Responsible for the Questions We Don't Ask? | BY BONNIE DWYER

That thought haunts Rod Crossman, our cover artist this issue. His blog-posted ponderings on the question led us to ask him to share his abstract paintings with us. Now his original question haunts me, too.

Certainly there are passages in Scripture that echo Crossman's question. James 4:17, for instance, says "Anyone, then, who knows the good he ought to do and doesn't do it, sins." Sin can be a matter of neglect.

However, the phrase begins, "Anyone who knows"—so the obvious strategy is not to know, right? Not to ask questions? Then we can't be responsible, can we? The problems with that strategy are being played out within the world of American politics as judges attempt to hold the Bush administration accountable for questions not asked about numerous issues, and the president's ratings sink over a war in which more questions were not asked. The answer reshapes itself into another question—do we harm ourselves and others by the questions we don't ask?

Recently, in a conversation with friends, I tried out the idea of liabilities being connected to questions not asked. The discussion found traction when we applied it to Adventism's corporate culture, and our fixation with having all the answers. Have we hurt ourselves and others by the questions not asked? In the 1980s, did thinking of ourselves as being above questions mislead us in our corporate relationship with employees and equal wages, for instance? Did we neglect to ask questions of ourselves about our moral responsibilities?

What About the Books Not Read?

Ponder the thought of questions not asked as you read this issue. Let it haunt you as think about things like globalization, your share of the earth's resources, inclusiveness. At that point, you may, like me, also be thinking of the books not read that might help with the questions not asked. And would that possibly include the Bible?

In his book *The Last Word: Beyond the Bible Wars to a New Understanding of the Authority of Scripture*, N.T. Wright reminded me, "the Bible continues to be both a central way in which God addresses his people and a central way in which his people respond." Beyond just devotion, Wright says discipleship requires reading. "Reading and studying scripture has been seen as central to how we are to grow in the love of God; how we come to understand God and his truth more fully; and how we can develop the moral muscle to live in accordance with the gospel of Jesus even when everything seems to be pulling the other way."

Now that I've shared the guilt-inducing discussion about questions not asked, let me also comment about the joy of finding new thoughts in new books, the serendipity of an idea well-written. Staring at me as I write are several books just waiting to answer questions: Kent Hansen's newest book on prayer, *Cleansing Fire, Healing Streams*, catches my eye. Next is Lourdes E. Morales-Gudmundsson's tome, *I Forgive You, But*, which Doug Morgan plugged in the *Adventist Peace Messenger*, another must-read.

Speaking of his new book *I Love the Lord, But . . .* Columbia Union College student Sylvester Paulasir says, "The writing process gave me a chance to ask questions and attempt to answer them on issues like sinfulness, pride, lack of trust, reverence, and others." He concluded, "My spirituality has taken shape because of this book."

My question for Sylvester would be whether he found his spirituality in the writing or the asking of questions. ■