



ASKING GOOD QUESTIONS

A Quick Guide to Small Groups





Summary

Asking good questions is one of the greatest skills you can develop as a leader to influence your small group.



Small Group Commitment #4
Be Authentic



Five Minute Read



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Have you ever watched a trial in a movie where the attorney asked a series of well-crafted questions to lead the jury straight to the conclusion that they wanted? Typically, these questions are straightforward and simple. They aren't complicated. But in the courtroom, they cut to the heart of the issue. *Just answer the question, sir!*

Asking good questions is one of the most important skills and powerful tools that every Small Group Leader needs to develop. Ultimately, this skill will allow you to facilitate well and lead people to spiritual growth.

Let's start by considering the goal of asking good questions.

Jesus asked good questions to create awareness. Jesus wanted people to see His Father and recognize themselves honestly. Good questions draw our eyes upward and force us to look inward.

Small groups have the opportunity to create a safe space for Biblical change. This is more than a group of people pretending to be disciples because they attend the same church or belong to a Christian culture. This is more than outward conformity or behavior modification. As leaders, this is why it is so important to create a space where people can be honest. Asking good questions is a pathway to cultivating this reality.

If we want to move beyond Christian clichés and “church speak”, we have to be courageous and sincere as we guide our group.

To move in a direction of transparency and authenticity, we have to be willing to share our honest hearts and ask questions that solicit something more than knowledge. Nothing shuts down a group discussion like a person who has an answer for everything. Conforming our lives to Christ is not about rearranging our untidy lives, but Biblical change that flows out of a relationship with Him.



Theological Truth

Jesus was a master of asking good questions. Although Jesus was asked 183 questions, He only gave a direct answer to three questions. Instead of giving quick answers, Jesus asked questions. The gospels record 307 questions in response to the questions asked of Him. Why would Jesus answer questions with questions? Certainly, He had answers. Yet, He chose to influence others by asking questions instead of providing well-crafted answers. Asking questions has the power to influence people as it draws out the condition of their heart and forces people to think about their lives. Answers are quickly forgotten. Good questions have a habit of sticking with you.

Throughout His ministry, Jesus modeled the power of asking good questions as He interacted with others. These questions often produced both God-awareness and self-awareness. When Jesus encountered the woman at the well, His personal transparency in His need for water, followed by loving questions, caused this woman to proclaim her freedom and joy, “*Come see a man who knows everything about me!*”

Asking good questions is not a gift you are born with, it's a skill that you can develop. Here's what questions do:

1. Questions help people think for themselves and that creates ownership.
2. Questions encourage people to problem-solve and get excited about what they are learning.
3. Questions allow you to naturally guide the conversation without controlling the discussion.

Here are four ways you can grow in asking good questions:

Good questions start with your heart.

Asking questions can come across like an inquisition if not asked humbly and from a heart of authenticity. Are you curious about the other person or trying to make a point? If you ask a rhetorical question, you might come across as overbearing, sarcastic or self-righteous. But if you're intentional with a posture of humility and curiosity, you can help others discover their next step. Be careful to not cause people to feel set up with your question. Start by being honest about yourself and this will help you model authenticity.

“ Try framing a question with personal transparency. *I remember when I was struggling with a season of depression. I found this time really hard to sense God's presence. I had doubts on several levels. Have you found it difficult to feel connected to God? Tell us more about your experience.*

Good questions encourage action.

Develop the skill of asking open-ended questions that lead to discovery, authenticity and action. As a leader, it's not up to you to tell someone how to respond in different circumstances. But by asking good questions, you can help others to think differently about their circumstances and envision specific action steps to change their circumstances. When it comes to encouraging action, don't rely on knowledge-based discussions alone. Instead, ask questions that engage people's emotions and can motivate action. To do this, it's helpful to develop a heart of curiosity by asking both "what" and "why" questions.

“ Move beyond typical Bible study questions like, *So, what does verse 7 mean to you?* Instead, ask *Why is this important to us? How should we apply these truths today? What does this tell us about God and how should we respond in light of that truth? How will this passage impact you this week?*

Good questions are discovery-based.

Rather than seeking "good group discussion", which is still important, ask questions that probe the heart. Asking heart questions enables the group to experience authenticity and allows the Spirit to soften hearts. It's through these kinds of conversations where we can connect and relate to one another on a deeper level. Good questions are discovery-based. They are motivated by a genuine desire to understand and connect with others. When you ask a good question, you're attempting to find something you don't already know.

“ Looking in Genesis, we clearly see Joseph experiencing God's sovereignty, but can you imagine how disheartening this must have been? *Can you picture Joseph's life like a roller coaster? Have you ever had a time in your life when your world was turned upside down and you felt like Joseph?* If someone responds with a simple answer like, *well I just trusted God when life was hard.* This is your cue to ask, *how did you trust God, or what did it look like to trust God? Do you have any examples of this?*

Good questions are conversational.

Small Group Leaders are facilitators, not teachers. The difference is that facilitation isn't about transmitting information, it's about creating conversations. Great facilitators also make difficult topics safe to discuss. Breakout is a unique opportunity to press further into what was shared as a large group. As a safe space, you want to create an environment where people are not guarded or calculated in what they say.

“ If a prayer request or comment is made about how someone is going through a difficult situation, rather than saying, *this is an opportunity for you to trust God* and seal it with a favorite verse; the better question to ask is, *what do you think God is doing in your life through this situation? What does it look like for you to trust God? What do you need to do differently to rely on God?*



Ideas to Consider

What would your group look like if your conversations weren't deliberately guarded, but people were courageously transparent?

What if we asked better questions to draw out the hearts of our people?

What if we had wisdom to follow up with a second heart-revealing question and stopped trying to solve problems?

What if, like Jesus, we listened and didn't try to give simple answers?



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