

## How To Ask Great Questions

From The Navigators Ministry

Questioning is a powerful method of stimulating thought. So the more you plan and evaluate the questions you ask in a Bible study group, the greater will be your effectiveness as a leader.

One of the main reasons for asking questions is to help people understand biblical principles. Our questions can help them grasp the basic issue a particular verse or passage is addressing.

Once the group has identified this biblical principle, you can ask a follow-up question that ties in this principle to a specific situation. This can be a real-life situation or a hypothetical one, but it should help the group realize how the principle can be practically applied. Then they can see more clearly how the Scriptures can actually change our lives.

When you ask a question, look around the group until someone answers it. Then you can ask “What did others of you find?” or “What did someone else discover?” Again, look around the whole group, watching for anyone who wants to speak instead of pointing out a specific individual.

To begin with, the group members will probably look directly at you as they give their replies. But if you patiently persist with good guiding questions, the members will begin responding to the group instead of to the leader. Thus, true discussion will begin. Rather than being leader-centered, they will become group-centered. The best way to learn these methods is to write out your discussion questions beforehand.

### Common Errors

Try to avoid doing these things:

1. *Not making the questions sound conversational.* Even though you prepare and write out your questions beforehand, speak them in a conversational tone. And use your own natural vocabulary.
2. *Being afraid of silence after ask a question.* Don't be impatient or nervous. Give everyone time to think.
3. *Limiting yourself to asking questions.* The leader is also a participant in the group. Share freely your answers and observations but don't dominate the discussion.
4. *Combining two questions in one.* Ask one question at a time.
5. *Not explaining what you want the group to do.* You're in charge. Don't hesitate to step in from time to time to influence the direction of the discussion, to end the discussion on time, to call on someone to pray, and so on.
6. *Trying to maintain too much control.* If the discussion “takes off,” don't worry about it as long as the group doesn't wander too far from the Scriptures.
7. *Asking a question which can be answered “yes” or “no.”* This type of question hinders discussion.
8. *Asking questions that are too complex.* State each question simply and clearly.
9. *Emphasizing your own viewpoint or application.* Don't expect everyone to be deeply impressed with the same things in Scripture that deeply impressed you.

### Discussion Checklist

Here are questions to ask yourself after each group discussion:

1. Was I familiar enough with the material to feel free in leading the discussion?
2. Did everyone take part in the discussion? Or was it a lecture (with me doing most of the talking), or a conversation among only two or three of us?
3. Did we keep to the subject without wandering?
4. Did I frequently summarize the main ideas that were brought up by the group?
5. Did the discussion lead to further understanding the truths the group members discovered in their personal study?
6. Did we discuss adequately how we can apply what we learned to our lives?
7. Did the discussion end on time?

## What questions stimulate the best discussion?

Type of question:	Examples:	Answers:	Value in promoting discussion:
Leading	Of course you all agree, don't you? Surely you don't think that do you?	Yes No	None. These questions rarely stimulate active thought or discussion.
Limiting	What are the three great truths in this passage? Do you agree with that?	What they think you think. Yes or no	Little. Everyone realizes you're thinking of a specific answer. Instead of stimulating discussion, you start a mind-reading contest. Some. It insists on a decision. But it should be followed by an open or wide-open question to stimulate further discussion.
Open	Who is this all about? Where did this happen? When was this? Why was it? What was the outcome? How did it happen?	People Places Times Reasons. Results Methods Processes, etc.	Much. They stimulate discovery, understanding, or application, depending on how you word the questions. The key words are who, where, when, way, what, and how. (Other examples, Who does this apply to? What does it mean? Why is it important? How can we learn from it?)
Wide-open	What do others of you think? What other thoughts does anyone have? What does someone else think about that?	Other viewpoints	Very much. They usually stimulate maximum thought and discussion.