

Lesson 5 – The Art of Asking Questions

GETTING STARTED

The art of asking questions invites you to directly engage with another person and to create an environment for meaningful conversation.

Philippians 2:3-5

Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory but in lowliness of mind let each esteem the other better than themselves.

Look not every man on his own things but every man also on the things of others.

Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus.

God has equipped us all with a bridge that moves us from listening to asking questions and fully engaging with the person that we're building a relationship with. It's called curiosity.

Curiosity is not the same as gathering information. Curiosity is a different way of discovering. When you're curious you're no longer in the role of an expert. Instead you're exploring the world with others, not imposing your world on theirs.

Curiosity focuses our attention on the other person and not on ourselves. Proverbs 18:5 says that wise men and women are always learning, always listening for fresh insights.

A natural, mutual inquiry will follow a path that includes 4 categories:

1. **History** - questions about your past. It's instinctive to ask questions like "Hey Where are you from? Where did you grow up?" "Well I couldn't help but notice....or I'm just wondering....or so where are you from? What did you like most about living there?"
2. **Transitions** – "Where are you now?" You can think of these questions as "let's get caught up" questions. "What's going on with you? How are your kids doing?"
3. **Principal questions** - These questions can lead you to a much deeper connection with people. It's the "How did you get there?" question. Examples could be "How did you get to the place where you are in your life?" "How did you get into your line of work?" "Who do you rely on for spiritual or life advice?" "How did you get where you are?"
4. **Goals** - "Where are you going?" questions. These questions are forward-looking and forward-asking. "How do you want things to be?"

You don't get to these types of questions until the first three have already been discovered.

Good questions build connections. Asking appropriate questions invites interactions.

Good questions invite people to look in the mirror. They invite people to wrestle with what they believe and to search for solid, dependable proven answers.

Asking questions requires humility and vulnerability and it does not have to be intimidating. Think of it as assessing my ignorance and allowing my curiosity to lead me. I don't have all the answers so I can feel free to assess my ignorance and humbly ask a question.

Asking questions creates a safe climate for building trust and mutual respect. Asking questions has a far greater motivational influence than offering more information. You will be more successful at motivating someone by asking them questions and having them to look inside themselves for the answers.

Let's look quickly at the characteristics of good questions.

Good questions are combined with good listening.

There are 5 characteristics of good questions:

1. Good questions originate from curiosity and a genuine interest in the other person.
2. Good questions are open-ended. Use classic openers as Who? What? Why? and How? How did that make you feel?
3. Good questions are concise. Which means short. End at the question mark then LISTEN!
4. Good questions don't come out of nowhere. They connect with what's being discussed and they move the conversation forward.
5. Good questions help people feel safe and understood.

To create good questions, here are a few things you should avoid:

Don't primarily use yes or no questions. Use Open-ended questions which requires someone to think and talk more.

Don't ask leading or cornering questions.

Don't correct a person's response to your question with the right answer.

Don't ask and then answer your own questions.

Don't fill the silence.

We're at our best when we align our hearts and our motives with the greatest question asker ever - the Lord Jesus Christ.

It's going to open up conversations, spiritual conversations and help us to make disciples.