

Life GROUPS

Facilitating Meaningful Conversation

Facilitating meaningful conversation in a group brings people together as we learn from one another through sharing life experiences, talking about God's word, and encouraging one another. We desire to facilitate conversations leading people toward deeper community and faith in Christ.

You want each person in your group to personally encounter Christ as you come to the Scriptures. How do we do this? First, we create an open and safe environment. Secondly, we want to create meaningful conversation through the art of asking great questions and being a good listener.

Different Types of Questions:

CLOSED

- Imply a yes/no answer.
- Pointed questions with apparent answers.
- Inhibit group discussion.
- Fail to promote self-discovered learning or community.

An example would be, "Paul says we are to rejoice in everything, doesn't he?" There is little or no response from the group. When group leaders don't prepare, they tend to naturally ask closed or limiting questions.

It's not a good idea to use closed questions in our group time, is it?!

LIMITING:

- Limit the number of "correct" answers.
- It is necessary to uncover the truth of a passage or lesson.
- This discovery can lead to open-ended follow-up questions.

Limiting questions limits the number of "correct" answers to a particular question. While closed questions should have no place in your small group, limiting questions can if they are used skillfully. These questions cause the eyes of your group to look to their Bible. For example, "According to Psalm 56:3-4, what are we to do when we're afraid?" (Put our trust in God). The question is answered from the text and will not produce a hearty discussion but is necessary for uncovering the truth of this section of the lesson. This discovery can lead to open-ended follow-up questions – Such as "What does it look like to put our trust in God, or How do we do that?"

OPEN:

- Don't imply an answer.
- Create conversation.

Open questions don't imply an answer and are quite helpful for creating conversations. They cause a person to think and then contribute. An example of an open question would be, "What causes us to struggle in our relationship with God?" Or "What do you observe in this passage? What seems important?" Open questions encourage group participation. The answers can be broad and varied. Open questions are more challenging to prepare, but they help make for a lively conversation.

FOLLOW-UP:

- If people miss the main point of a question, ask a follow-up question.
- When someone contributes a great thought or point, ask them to elaborate.

Learning to ask follow-up questions is crucial to creating meaningful conversations. It requires excellent listening skills and knowing what direction you want to lead the conversation. When someone brings up a great thought or point that aligns with where you want the conversation to go, ask them to elaborate. This will help them dig deeper and develop the point while helping you, as a group leader, guide the conversation in the direction you want to go without talking.

In our group conversation, we need to pay attention to the type of questions we ask. Limiting questions can get the conversation going while helping us discover the truths in the lesson, but it will not sustain the conversation. Open-ended and follow-up questions will create meaningful conversation over time, producing community and growth in your group.

Four Results from Asking Great Questions

1. **Engagement:** Great questions make people think. When people think, they desire to share their thoughts.
2. **Direction:** Great questions help you direct and guide the conversation to a desired outcome.
3. **Growth:** Great questions cause group members to grow more spiritually together than they would have on their own.
4. **Community:** Great questions develop conversations leading to deeper community over time.