

Questions

(Question Levels)



Questions are powerful. How did Jesus use questions and how can we follow his example of asking them when we interact with others?

Scripture

Jesus is recorded asking 307 different questions in the gospels. Contrast this with the number of times Jesus gave a direct answer – only 3 times out of the 183 questions he is recorded as being asked! Jesus seemed to be more into questions than answers.

“What do you think?”, “What do you want?”, “Does this offend you?”, “Why are you so afraid?”, “What are you thinking in your hearts?” These are all questions Jesus asked.

Read through the two stories below and note the questions Jesus asks and the impact they have on people.

Luke 10:25–37 (The Parable of the Good Samaritan)

Luke 20:1–8 (The authority of Jesus is questioned)

How do you see Jesus using stories in these passages?

What impact did Jesus’ questions have on people?

Story

Back in the 1940s, Edwin Land was on vacation with his 3-year-old daughter. He snapped a photograph of her, using a standard camera. But she wanted to see the results right away, not understanding that the film must be sent off for processing.

She asked, “Why do we have to wait for the picture?” After hearing his daughter’s *why* question, Land wondered, what if you could develop film inside the camera? Then he spent a long time figuring out how—in effect, how to bring the darkroom into the camera.

That one *why* question inspired Land to develop the Polaroid instant camera. This classic piece of technology all started with a child’s simple question.

[Taken from www.americanexpress.com/en-us/business/trends-and-insights/articles/the-power-of-asking-the-right-questions/]

What do you think of this story about the power of questions?

Do you have any stories about the power of questions?

Shape

The following **Question Levels** diagram can help us think about how to ask questions that open up deepening levels of conversation.

Factual – Often we ask questions at a factual level and that is great, particularly as we start a relationship. ‘Where do you live?’, ‘What did you do today?’, ‘What do you do for work?’ However, if our relationships stay here they can remain a bit superficial. More significantly, if we want to have a relationship where we can share the deep things in our lives, particularly our walk with God, then it needs to go beyond factual.



Personal – Asking questions that are a bit more personal can help us to get to know people better, develop deeper relationships and show care and interest. ‘How are your relationships with your family?’, ‘What do you love to do for fun?’, ‘What are your dreams for the future?’

Emotional – Asking questions about feelings can really help us to show love and care for people’s hearts and develop even deeper friendships. ‘Are you enjoying your job?’, ‘How are you feeling about the future?’, ‘Are you worried about what might happen?’, ‘You look happy, are you?’

Spiritual – These questions are about someone’s beliefs and spiritual experiences and are about as deep a conversation as you can have with another person. Asking such questions can help us show deep love and concern for someone’s deepest inner being (soul) and can lead to life transforming conversations. ‘Have you ever had any spiritual experiences?’, ‘What do you believe about God?’, ‘How would you describe your journey with God and faith so far?’, ‘Did you blame God?’

Often people hold back from asking questions beyond factual ones because of fear of offending people or that people won’t want to answer. However, people are often more willing to talk about things than we realise. A useful phrase to reassure people that they don’t have to answer questions if they don’t want to is ‘Just so we’re sure, the normal rules of conversation apply here– I can ask you anything and you never have to answer a single one.’

Moving from the **Factual** to the **Spiritual** is key to developing good, deepening relationships with people. It is also the case that if people who do not yet know Christ are keen to answer and engage with spiritual questions then they may be People of Peace, open to hearing the gospel.

So What?

The following exercise can be helpful for overcoming any fear of offending people by asking them a question they don't want to answer:

Pair up with someone from your Missional Community and write down 10 questions that you would like to ask them. They will also write a list of questions they want to ask you. You can make some of them **factual**, but major on **personal**, **emotional** and **spiritual** questions. Here's one to get you started: 'What single living person has most impacted your life and how?'

Once you have done this, swap lists, read them through and answer one question each. You may be surprised at what questions your partner chooses to answer.

If there is time, take your list to another person and repeat the exercise.

Come back together as a whole Missional Community and encourage people to share about their experience. Did people just pick the easiest questions or were people more willing to go deeper than you thought?

Grow Further

Memory Verse:

James 1:19

'My dear brothers and sisters, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry'.

Other Bible passages:

- Matthew 5:46-47
- Matthew 9:1-8
- Matthew 16:13-20
- Luke 14:13-33

Other resources:

What Are Good Questions We Can Use to Start a Conversation About God?

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Tx9QFbNz1a8>