

Small Group Leaders: The Art of Asking Questions

XP3

One of the most important things small group leaders need to master is the art of asking questions. It is important in your youth ministry to **create a small group culture that encourages questions, which paves the way for deeper understanding of God's word.**

Advantages of Asking Great Questions:

- Allows the student to talk and the leader to listen.
- Great questions lead to self discovery.
- Faith ownership needs great questions to be asked.
- Answering a question out loud teaches students how to think for themselves.

How To Ask A Student A Great Question:

1. *Think through the series of questions ahead of time.* XP3 Students has supplied a list of questions or a talk summary beforehand so you at least know what direction to take the students.
2. *Ask questions that are understandable and use everyday language.* Try to be as clear and simple as possible. Phrase the same thing in a couple different ways. Because teenagers think differently, at times a single truth ought to be expressed in multiple ways.
3. *Use your imagination.* By using your imagination to craft and improve your questions, allow students to tap into their imagination to generate answers.
4. *Maintain eye contact.* It's more personal and encouraging. Don't stare at the question sheet, stare at the students.
5. *Don't settle for the correct answers.* Attempt to get a lot of feedback about the question. Typically there will be a hand full of students who will always answer the question and others who will never answer the question. When someone gives you a quick answer, press them to make sure they really believe what they just said. Ask them, "Ok, I hear what you're saying, but what does that really mean?"
6. *Tension is good.* It is okay if you are dealing with touchy stuff that creates awkward moments. This means you are digging deep and talking about what is really going on. If a student doesn't feel the need to learn, he or she won't. Tension pushes students to seek answers.

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7. *Practice saying "I Don't Know?"*. Say it again: I don't know. Students ask tough questions and they tend to stump us a lot. A lot of our students are amazingly smart. They may be asking questions you are just starting to ask. You don't know everything, so don't worry about hiding when you don't know the answers. But be intentional about trying to find the answers or seeking insight from others (including other students in your group).
8. *Be positive*. Demonstrating positivity is magic. Students have way too much negativity in their life, so they don't need more negative feedback during small group. Small group should be encouraging. If students are being negative towards each other, kill the negativity immediately.
9. *Be focused*. Being sensitive to the Spirit doesn't mean wandering around aimlessly as you go on so many rabbit trails. Rather than covering a ton of subjects on a surface level, go deep with just one or two.
10. *Repeat long answers with a quick summary*. When one student talks for a long time, and is confusing, you'll lose the rest of your group. To bring them back in, give a quick summary, or gently ask for one.
11. *Be willing to be the first to answer your own questions*. This gives the students a chance to think of what they want to say. Of course, the group leader shouldn't over-do this because the goal is to get the kids to talk, not to let them hear you talk.
12. *When you ask one question, don't let one student answer it*.
Get multiple perspectives. Prompt further responses with phrases like "Good, who else...what's your take?" "Does anyone have something to add?" "Who agrees with what was said? Ok, why?" "Who disagrees...Why?" Don't be afraid of the silence. Give time for students to process in their brains. Their brains are not fully developed yet, so give them a minute to think.
13. *Learn multiple sides of an issue*. Understand multiple perspectives on different topics. Students are coming from different familial and cultural backgrounds and experiences so be open to learning other takes on the same subjects.
14. *Be transparent*. Share your inadequacies in understanding different truths. Limit your stories about your "sinful past."
15. *Learn to question your students' answers*. Do not allow a student to state an answer without him/her defending it. Challenge the answers your students give you by

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applying them in all kinds of situations. Test your students for consistency in their answers. Don't accept fluff.

16. *Have students write down their unanswered questions.* Some of their great questions may need some time to process. Suggest for them to journal about it or to go find the answers. This is also great for questions you don't have a chance to get to. Plus, this allows students to learn how to seek faith-based answers on their own.
17. *Demonstrate passion.* When talking about God, show some excitement. Passionately talk about why you follow Jesus. This never gets old. Share how Jesus changed your life.