

The Art of Discussion

Three Types of Questions

<u>Type</u>	<u>Example</u>	<u>Use</u>
Open Questions Questions that allow group members to share any answer or relevant thoughts they have on the subject or passage.	“What truths stand out to you in this passage?”	Very valuable for group discussion. This kind of question stimulates thought and discussion because there are no right or wrong answers.
Closed Questions Questions that are obvious or imply the answer is expected by the leader.	“Paul says we are to rejoice in everything, doesn’t he?”	Questions like this are not valuable for discussion and actually stifle group interaction.
Limiting Questions Questions which limit the number of correct answers to a particular question.	“What three motivations does Paul mention in this passage?”	These questions aren’t valuable for open discussion, but they are useful to summarize a point, direct the conversation, or get the group back on track.

A. Questions that Help You Apply Scripture

- What personal application or idea has God given you for this study?
- What reasons for praising God does this passage offer?
- What personal need or issue has the Holy Spirit exposed during this study?
- What aspects of this study encourage you most? Why?
- What truth(s) from this lesson can you illustrate from personal experience?
- What part of this study convicts you? Why?
- What “I never thought of that before” insight did you gain?
- What unresolved questions on this subject still bother you?
- Did any aspect of this lesson bring a role model to mind? Who? Why?

B. Ten Weeks of Icebreakers

1. What was the scariest thing you ever had to do? In retrospect, are you glad you did it or do you have regrets?
2. What was the last thing you saw someone do that really impressed you? Why?
3. What did you wear to your last costume party?



4. If you had to eat the same food for dinner for an entire week, what would it be?
5. What was your favorite story when you were a child? Why?
6. What's your relationship with your mother/father like? How are you like them?
7. What ability do you wish you had that you don't? Why?
8. If money were no object, where would you like to have a vacation home?
9. What's your favorite room in your house/apt? Why?
10. What's the best or most memorable compliment you've received?

C. Ten C's Concerning Quality Questions

- Concise. Good questions cover only one idea at a time.
- Clear. Keep it understandable, don't go over their heads.
- Complete. Make sure participants have all the information they need to answer a question.
- Connected. Try to avoid asking questions that lead the group on tangents.
- Conversational. The aim is to facilitate conversation.
- Challenging. Stretch their minds. Silence is okay. It means they are thinking!
- Contestable. Doesn't have one right answer.
- Creative. Get members to look at both sides of an issue.
- Controversial. Make a controversial statement and see how the group responds. Use this method sparingly with discernment.
- Considerate. Don't embarrass. Don't get personal too quickly.

D. Questions to Ask when Your Discussion Goes Off Track

Are we really off track? People may respond to questions in ways you don't expect. Their view is so different from what you were looking for that you assume they're on a tangent. In fact, they simply may be coming from a different perspective.

How is the rest of the group responding? Do they seem interested? Are they joining in the conversation, nodding in agreement, sitting forward in their chairs? Allow the discussion to flow, while gently guiding it so it doesn't stray too far. Sometimes tangents happen because they're relevant to what group members are currently facing.

Are my discussion questions boring, simplistic, threatening, to complex or not practical? Several Bible Study how to books are available that can help you ask more effective questions. Ask a Student LINC consultant or Campus Crusade staff member for suggested books.

Are others in the group concerned? Talk with your group about the reasons your discussions go off track so often. Do they think it's a problem? If so, enlist their help in



resisting tangents. Some groups come up with humorous signals that let everyone know it's time to reel the conversation back in. Seek a solution everyone's comfortable with.

E. Communicating with Clarity

- How do you make the issue clear?
- Select one subject. People can't follow someone who talks about intercessory prayer, gossip and atonement in the same presentation. Select one subject and develop it well.
- Determine your purpose. For example, if your topic is intercessory prayer, your purpose might be help my group spend 15 minutes praying each day. Keep your purpose in front of you as you develop a topic.
- The audience is less likely to ask, "Where is this going?"
- Determine a structure. Make sure your presentation has logical flow. Without structure, we tend to ramble. Look at Paul's presentation in Acts 14:13-41, or Peter's in Acts 3:12-16. Both make their points logically and clearly so their audience gets the point.
- Adopt a clear style. Use words everyone understands. Keep your sentences short. Give your audience a preview of your presentation in the introduction and review as you move along. It's more important being understood than admired.

F. Other helpful resources for discussion:

1. *Leading a Small Group...the Ultimate Road Trip*
2. *Discipleship Journal* issue 96 page 113
3. *Discipleship Journal* issue 89 page 111
4. *Discipleship Journal* issue 86 page 89
5. *Discipleship Journal* issue 92 page 80
6. *Discipleship Journal* issue 87 page 85

