

Evangelism 101:

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL ABOUT ASKING QUESTIONS?

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"My dear brothers, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry." James 1:19

"Answering before listening is both stupid and rude" Prov. 18:13 (the Message)

1. Why do we rarely - or poorly - use Questions in Evangelism?

-- Our **missional Methodology** doesn't include much training related to the importance of **invitational and self-directed evangelism**.

-- Christ taught.

-- Jesus instructed us to teach. "Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them...and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you." Matt 28:19-20

-- Paul taught, and told Timothy to "teach others" 2 Tim 2:2

-- We're in a hurry to get the Truth across, or to come to a **resolution**

-- We don't want to be **stumped**.

-- We're stricken with the disease of "**Know-it-all-ism**" (Keith Webb 17)

-- We aren't **prepared** with effective Open Questions

2. How might Open Questions open the door for evangelism?

-- **Show genuine interest and value in the other person**

"People don't care how much you know until they know how much you care."

-- **Discern worldview**

"I rarely make statements until I have sized up the person's energy and focus, and whether they are open-minded.... If I don't ask questions, I could be underrating the situation and problem, and miss the key issues." (Chad Holliday, chairman of the board and CEO of DuPont. *Leading With Questions* 1)

-- **Discern where the seeker is in their faith process**

Don Everts' "*The Five Thresholds*" chart

-- **Uncover barriers in the seeker's mind and heart**

Communication "iceberg"

Above the surface: Information, ideas and opinions

Below the surface: Fears, longings, doubts, pain, shame

-- **Facilitate the process of self discovery**

* Allows the seeker to set the pace and outcome of the dialogue

Michael Marquardt (93) says that the process of asking good questions and then (even more importantly) thoroughly listening actively, shows respect for the seeker's views, allows them the permission to focus on what is important to them, and helps them learn through the process of answering.

Adult educator, Jane Vella said, "Open questions are the single sure practice that invites critical thinking and effective learning."

* Creates space for the seeker to learn and hone the discipline of internal auditing:

- "What do I think about this topic?"

- "How do I feel about this process?"

- "What am I willing to divulge?"

- "What action am I willing to take as a result of this conversation?"

"*We own what we discover.*" (Webb 75)

-- **Transfer the control and responsibility for change from the evangelist to the Holy Spirit.**

"But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you." John 14:26

Open questions honor the seeker as a person – not a Project - and communicates your value as an equal.

"Instead of being your superior, I'm a peer." (*"Why Ask?"* 8)

3. What type of questions are helpful to use in evangelism?

-- Open questions:

- * "My idea" questions begin with the words "would, could, are, is, and does".
- * "Open questions" begin with the words "what" or "how". (Webb 85-86)

-- Head/Heart questions:

- * "What do you think about...."
- * "How do you feel about...."

-- Different Level questions:

- * Light: small talk questions to assess openness
- * Medium: reveal significance and identity issues
- * Deep: reveal fears, desires, doubts, beliefs

(See Supplemental Sheet: Sylvia's Favorite Airplane Questions, and Gary Poole's "The Complete Book of Questions" categories and samples)

4. What are the challenges of asking good questions?

-- Asking unhelpful questions:

Questions that dis-empower, drain energy, and cause loss of face:

(Judging) * You've been attending our Bible study for 3 years now. Why haven't you become a Christian yet?"

(Learning) *I value your opinion highly so I would appreciate it if you could help me understand where you are on your faith journey"

-- Asking too many closed or directed questions

(digging for the "right answer", or prescribing the answer, but forming it as a question):

- * Are you interested in knowing about Jesus Christ?
- * Do you think Jesus was just a good teacher or the Son of God?
- * Are you good enough to get to heaven on your own?

* Do you think it would be good to start attending church?

-- Moving "**below the surface of the iceberg**" too quickly without building enough trust and curiosity

-- **Miscellaneous challenges:**

- * in a group situation, the talkative people might dominate the dialogue
- * rabbit trails. Less controlled environment for the facilitator
- * facilitator not listening well and/or not responding correctly by following up with a next-level question

5. What can I do to grow in the area of asking good questions?

-- **Prayerfully develop the heart of an authentic observer, learner, and the art of appropriate curiosity**

-- **Take a Question Inventory**

- * Become aware of the questions you ask, and how people respond
- * Analyze the manner - tone of voice, authority posture - in which you ask questions? Are you a Judge or Learner?
- * Do you tend to ask more Open or Closed questions?

-- **Practice moving from declarative statements to open ended questions:**

- A. "Here are 3 things you need to know about becoming a Christian"
- B. "What do you think might be important to know about becoming a Christian?"

- A. "I'd love to get together and talk about faith issues with you."
- B. "How would you feel about getting together to talk about what's important in your life?"

EXERCISE: Around a meal or coffee date with friends or family, take 15-30 minutes to discuss any relevant topic or problem. The one ground rule is *Statements can only be made in response to a question*. Have one person be the ground-rule keeper. Evaluate what this exercise reveals about the ability of individuals or the group to ask and process questions.
(Marquardt 181)

-- Create an Effective Questions data-base

Categorize by Light, Medium, Deep or other headings.
(See Supplemental Sheet)

CONCLUSION:

The objective of this seminar was to challenge each of us to develop confidence in the process of Holy Spirit-directed evangelism that is seeker-driven.

What are some ways you can use what you've learned or experienced in this workshop?

"The purposes of a man's heart are deep waters, but a man (or woman) of understanding draws them out." Proverbs 20:5

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Supplemental Info

Types of questions –

(Gary Poole’s *Complete Book of Questions*)

Icebreaker questions – Use these a lot in the formative stages of the group. Keep it lighthearted and fun. Use the “leader go first” model. That way you can model what you want them to do.

Transition questions – Use a question to shift gears...

Example: If you are moving into the discussion about the prodigal son in Luke 15... “Describe a situation where you lost something really valuable. What did you do? How did you feel when you realized it was lost?”

Observation questions -

Luke 15: “What was the common reaction in all three stories when the missing thing was found?”

Sin issue: “What separates people from God, a propensity toward sin or a lack of knowledge? Or “Do you believe people are born good, bad, or somewhere in between? Why?”

Interpretation questions – meaning behind the observation

Luke 15: “How does your reaction to losing something valuable compare with the Father’s reaction to finding his son?”

Sin issue: “If the penalty of sin is death, what do you think being spiritually dead means?” “The idea of people being able to balance the scales...do you agree with or not?” “Why?”

Reflection questions – emotional in response (no wrong answers here!)

Luke 15: “How do you feel about the claim that God throws a party when one person comes home?”

Sin issue: How do you feel about the claim that sin separates you from God?”

Application questions – Now, what?

Luke 15: “What would God need to do for you to feel loved by Him?” “What is your understanding of what he has already done?”

Sin issue: “Do you minimize or maximize sin by comparing yourself to others? “How do you deal with the problem of personal sin?”

Some of Sylvia's favorite "Airplane" Questions:

Light questions:

- What is the best thing that happened to you so far today?
- Who are the top five people who have influenced your life and why?
- What's something you'd like to be famous for some day?
- What's makes you want to get out of bed in the morning?
- If you could wave a magic wand over only one of the world's worst problems and it would be instantly solved, what problem would you select? Why?

Medium questions:

- If there was one thing you could change in your life to make it significantly better, what would it be?
- What satisfies or dissatisfies you about your life right now?
- What would you like to be remembered for? What will it take for you to become that person? (This can open a dialogue about virtue vs happiness)
- If you drew a circle around everything that represents your life and your world, where would you place God? Why?

Deep questions:

- What keeps you awake at night because you can't figure it out or are afraid?
- If you could ask [the one true, living, creator] God one question and you know He would answer truthfully, what would you ask Him? (Follow up with: From what you know about God so far, how do you imagine He might answer you?)
- If you ever sensed Jesus was knocking at the door of your heart, and you were thinking of inviting Him in, what question would you want to ask Him first?" (Follow-up Question: "How do you think He would answer you, from what You know about Him so far?")
- I value your opinion highly so I would appreciate it if you could help me understand where you are on your faith journey"