

CREATING GREAT GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Asking questions is a great way to gather information. But like everything else, there's a skill to it. In our group discussions, we want to create an atmosphere where group members will do just that – DISCUSS THE MESSAGE.

Not all the questions should be the type that have a right or wrong answer, though some questions should. But to get folks really talking and learning from the discussion, there should be a lot of questions that allow for a variety of answers that would provoke discussion. Often that means 'personalizing' the questions. For example,

- What struck YOU most?
- How do YOU feel about that?
- What will YOU do with this information?

are questions that require a personal response that will vary from one person to the next and get the group THINKING about more than just their own perspectives.

Let's set a few guides for creating questions:

1. Avoid asking close ended questions that require a one word reply. They bring conversations to a screeching halt and you usually get inadequate answers as well. For example, after hearing a message you ask:
 - Did you like the message?
 - Will it result in any changes in your life?As you can see, a person can give a short quick answer to these questions.

2. Instead, create open-ended questions that encourage people to TALK and compel them to offer more information. For example, after hearing a message you might ask:
 - How did you feel about the message?
 - What changes will you make in your life as a result of this message?See the difference?

3. If you're struggling to get someone to open up with the broad open-ended questions, try narrowing the questions at the beginning and then make them broader after you get people into the conversations. For example, you might begin by asking:
 - What part of the teaching impacted you most?

And then broaden it by going deeper with a question that asks why or how. This will help you get more specific information and lengthier answers:

- How will you change as a result of that?
 - Why did that impact you the most?
4. Make sure that you LISTEN to the responses. Getting discussion going for discussion sake is pointless. Listen to the responses and pay attention to the answers so that you can insert appropriate questions that deepen the conversation. Don't just jump to the next question on the sheet and miss a

great opportunity for follow-up questions. Make an effort to really listen to the answers!

5. Other ways to create open ended questions would be to begin the question like one of the following OR to use these as follow up question:
 - Tell me about _____.
 - What else can you do with the _____?
 - What do you think would happen if _____?
 - Is there another way to _____?
 - What would you like to know about this topic ?
 - What do you mean by _____ ?
 - Would you tell me more about....
 - What else can you tell me that might help?
 - I'd be interested in knowing....
 - Would you explain...?
 - I'm not quite sure what you meant? Could you please restate that for us?
 - Would you explain that to me in more detail?
 - I'm not certain I understand.... Can you give me an example?
 - I'm not familiar with _____ . Can you explain?
 - What examples can you give me?
 - What do you already know about _____ ?
 - When you say _____ , what do you mean?
 - Can you describe the kind of life change you would like to make?
 - If I could find the perfect book to help you, what would that book have in it? Or, what would the title be?
 - How will you apply the information?
 - Is there anything else that someone would like to comment on what we've discussed?

6. Finally, keep in mind that the questions you develop are for ADULTS. This isn't grade school where we want to plant information in their heads and then make sure they know it. We want to get them thinking, analyzing and transforming their souls through the discussion in our groups.