

Teacher Training: Lesson 3 – Questions, Questions, Questions

August 14, 2022

Review – Quiz Time and Practice

On a blank sheet of paper, write out four sets of three blanks. Here are your questions to discuss as a table:

What are the three biblical passages? The three tools of a Hebrew mashal?

What are the three stages of learning in a Hebrew taxonomy? The three body parts in active learning?

Go over the answers—see previous lessons—but note the Hebrew preposition for the second stage of learning:

Literally, a student's *understanding* (*binah*) is the ability to discern the difference *between* (*bayin*) things.

In a full discussion, you should ask both how things are *similar* and how they are *different*. Both stir us to talk!

As a table, discuss the following questions:

What is the difference between...

A wasp and a bee? A toad and a frog? An alligator and a crocodile? A plant and a weed?

This last one is tricky—even a Big Ten ag school defined a weed as a plant growing where you do not want it.

In light of the thorns and thistles of the curse (Genesis 3), would this answer be too relativistic?

The point for us is not the answer, but the practice in seeing how questions can stimulate discussion.

Now as a table, discuss the following questions:

What is the difference between...

Joash and Josiah? Grace and mercy? Right and fair? God's sovereignty and the Kingdom of God?

How many answered, "Grace is getting what you do *not* deserve; mercy is *not* getting what you do deserve"?

How true is this saying? Could you prove it biblically? Beware! An overused proverb can hide understanding.

The Quest for Good Questions

As we have been reminded by those who work with oral cultures, Jesus used a lot of questions in His teaching.

Not all of Jesus' questions, however, were used to stir up discussion:

Rhetorical Questions – an assertion disguised as a question (e.g. Mt. 7:9, 10)

Convicting Questions – an obvious conclusion put into the mouth of his opponent (e.g. Lk. 10:36)

These questions are not bad in their proper use, but for generating discussions, we need a different kind of question:

For **Meditation**, we need to ask good questions of the Text of Scripture:

Shallow Questions: "Who?" and "What?" (persons/things), "When?" and "Where?" (time/space).

Deeper Questions: "Why?" (reasons) and "How?" (ways, means, or manners)

Beware! Do not skip the shallow questions and go for the deep ones—know what it *says* to know what it *means*.

We are also tempted to ask, "What does this passage mean to me?"

This is a great goal, but we must ask this question *last*—only after we understand what was said to them *then*.

Per table, ask the Lord twenty questions about Ecclesiastes 12:9-14, with about ten of them being shallow questions.

For **Motivation**, we need to ask good questions of our students. Here are some bad questions to avoid:

Yes-No Questions: The answer is either "Yes" or "No," so nothing further needs to be said.

To further the discussion, another question is necessary; therefore, why not lead with *that* question?

Limited Questions: The answer is obvious from a surface reading of the Text of Scripture.

For children, this kind of question can be useful, but most adults feel belittled to answer such a question.

Leading Questions: The answer is in the teacher's head and the class must guess the "right" answer.

Examples: *What is the reason Paul wrote this verse? What is the best way we can obey this verse?*

Beware! *A diligent teacher who has meditated on the Text will often feel tempted to ask leading questions.*

After all, we studied hard and the *Lord* gave us a true insight into this Text and into our lives!

For generating discussion, it is better to ask **open questions** with *plural nouns*:

Examples: *What are some possible reasons why Paul wrote this verse? What are some ways we can obey it?*

This is not *relativism*—as if any answer counts—nor is it *dogmatism*—as if I, the Teacher, has the Answer.

Come to the class prepared, but eager to learn more from God's word through God's people by God's Spirit.

Once discussion is generated, add your answer to the other answers—and let *all* of you be open to correction.

Per table, circle the open questions from your previous list and discuss how you will change the remaining ones.

Sources: For discernment in nature, see Marilyn Singer, *A Wasp Is Not a Bee* (New York: Henry Holt, 1995). For questions in mediation, see WordPartners, [Dig and Discover Hermeneutical Principles: The Core Principles](#), 3rd ed. (Palos Heights, IL: Leadership Resources International, 2018). For questions in motivation, see Entrust, *Leading Transformational Small Groups: A Workshop* (Colorado Springs: Entrust Four, 2017).