

Good Discussion Questions

Good discussion questions can make a HUGE difference

Discussion

1. What makes for a good discussion question?
2. For your small group discussions do you tend to use the provided questions or make up your own questions? If you tend to make up your own questions, what about the provided questions are not as helpful?

Using the Provided Small Group Questions

Small group leaders usually prefer to have questions provided by the speakers. Here are some things you may have considered:

- If you get the questions beforehand, you may read them before the sermon and listen with those questions in mind.
- You may have considered to read the questions from the page or to ask the question in a casual, conversational tone.
- You may have used the questions as provided, or you may have made up your own questions.

Perhaps you have come up with your own questions. After all, you know your group and the kinds of topics they seem to enjoy discussing. Besides, questions are questions, right? Well, maybe not.

The Theology Behind Good Discussion Questions

We want God's truth to go into a person's heart and transform the person's life. But for most things, it all starts with the content. These are the stages of how truths from a sermon impact a small group.

So most (if not all) discussion questions will fall into these categories WuBUDA

1. Warm-Up questions – get to know you; get to know the topic
2. Biblical basis of the lesson
3. Understanding more about the lesson
4. Difference the lesson makes in real life. Where does this lesson connect in real life?
What are the costs of obedience or disobedience?
5. Application of the lesson

So there are different kinds of questions that match each of these categories:

1. There are questions that help the group **warm up**: they're easy to answer, interesting, not-threatening, and often fun or light-hearted.
2. There are questions that show that the lesson comes from the **Bible** passage.
3. There are questions about **understanding** the content: was the message clear? What was the main point?

4. There are questions about the **difference** the lesson would make in our real lives. This tells us where the lesson connects with real life—including the costs of obedience or disobedience. This should persuade us to take the lesson to heart.
5. There are questions **applying** this to my life: where does this intersect with my day to day life? What are some specific next steps I can do?

Example: The Secret to Giving (Matthew 6:1-4)

Sermon Outline

- I. Don't give to others to get from others.
Practicing righteousness before others to get their praise makes you lose reward in Heaven.
- II. Give to others to get from God.
God sees all our acts, and will honor us accordingly.
- III. The secret to giving is giving in secret.
Sacrifice for someone else in secret this week.

Matthew 6

¹ "Beware of practicing your righteousness before other people in order to be seen by them, for then you will have no reward from your Father who is in heaven.

² "Thus, when you give to the needy, sound no trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may be praised by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward. ³ But when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, ⁴ so that your giving may be in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

Example Questions

_____ : Have you ever had a "secret Santa" game? What makes it fun?

_____ : Why did some people in Jesus' time give publicly?

_____ : So, does this mean Christians should only donate money anonymously? Is it a sin to give money publicly?

_____ : Who do we try to impress with our acts of kindness?

_____ : If reward from man is inferior to reward from God, why do people try so hard to get reward from man?

_____ : What does Jesus want his followers to gain or lose if they obey this teaching?

_____ : Who is someone in need that we can bless secretly this coming week?

_____ : How we I live differently this week if I sought reward from God instead of man?

You Try: Using the message and Scripture from this morning, write out WuBUDDA questions.

Sermon Title: Eager Obedience

Sermon Text: Acts 16:6-10

Sermon Outline

- I. There's such a thing as obedience with a reluctant spirit. Example: Jonah.
- II. But God calls us to eager obedience. Example: Paul in Acts 16
- III. Eager obedience means we're quick to obey even when...
 - a. We're unclear about what God wants us to do.
 - b. We receive multiple closed doors from God.
 - c. We don't understand all of God's reasons.
- IV. Consider Jesus' obedience, even to the point of death on a cross. (Phil 2:5ff.)

Warm-up:

Bible:

Understanding:

Difference:

Application:

Acts 16:6-10

English Standard Version (ESV)

6 And they went through the region of Phrygia and Galatia, having been forbidden by the Holy Spirit to speak the word in Asia. 7 And when they had come up to Mysia, they attempted to go into Bithynia, but the Spirit of Jesus did not allow them. 8 So, passing by Mysia, they went down to Troas. 9 And a vision appeared to Paul in the night: a man of Macedonia was standing there, urging him and saying, "Come over to Macedonia and help us." 10 And when Paul had seen the vision, immediately we sought to go on into Macedonia, concluding that God had called us to preach the gospel to them.

What did you learn from trying to come up with your questions?

- That it's not easy. Pastor Steve said in all his years of ministry, the hardest thing he has found is to write those dreaded SDGs!
- People tend to focus on certain types of questions/discussion: theology, application, sharing, fun/tangents, etc. (Preachers have their tendencies, too!)

From the Passage to the Person to Practice

This progression usually happens in this order. If someone tries to apply it without giving people the opportunity to review and make sure they get it, then they're going too fast. If the questions keep asking about what the Bible passage says without getting at what it means or what difference it makes, the discussion may feel boring. If there are no application questions, then we are missing the point of the passage.

As a small group leader, identify what purpose the questions serve and fill in any needed questions. You may even have to make up some questions yourself.

This flow chart may help (or confuse you).

Bad things happen when people commit

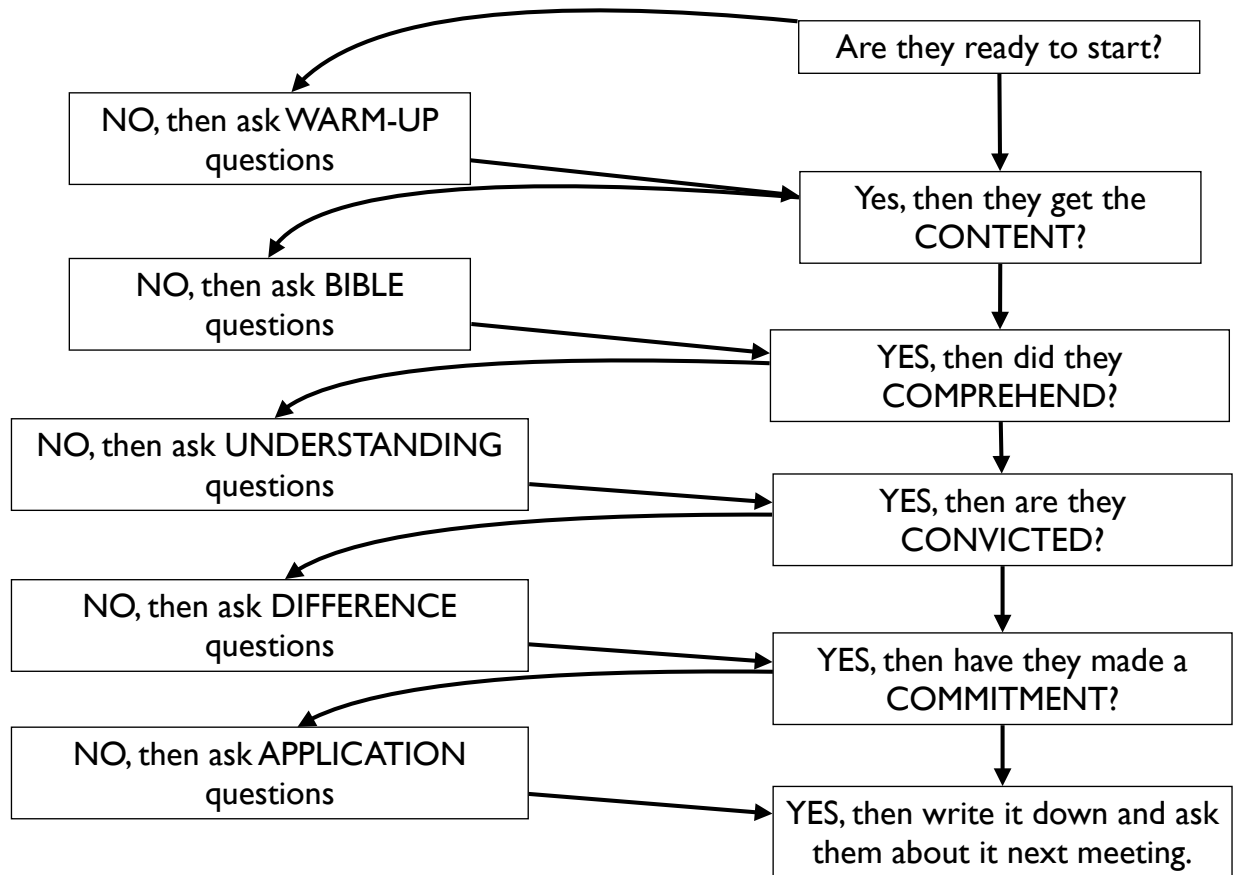
People want to get to application so badly, that they often skip over important steps.

If people apply before seeing Bible content...	... people are blindly following . (Follow rules they haven't seen in the Bible. They may even obey a rule faithfully, but have never studied it for themselves from the Bible.)
If people apply before comprehending...	... people become legalistic . (Follow rules they don't understand. They may even hold others to those standards but don't understand why it's important to God.)
If people apply before conviction...	... people become hypocritical . (Follow rules for wrong reasons, and for short time. Unless they get convicted, they'll stop obeying. Example: someone graduates from high school, leaves home and Teen Fellowship, and backslides because they may not have been truly convicted.)

If your group tends to find the Bible or Understanding questions too obvious, then consider how your group is reaching out to either young-, new-, or non-believers. You can move quickly through the Bible and Understanding questions, but think: does your group even need a Bible for your typical discussion?

This progression is why we identify a Discussion Goal for each SDG. Now that we've covered the thinking behind a SDG, let's walk through a past SDG.

When to ask what questions?



Listen like a Leader

- As you listen to the sermon, jot down every question or discussion point you think of.
- Before Small Group, pick out the 1 or 2 best questions for each category. Edit them if needed.
- If you are not facilitating discussion, you can still offer your best questions to the leader.

Enoch's Vision: What if we become a community of great question writers who share their best questions with all of our groups? What if we crowd-sourced our question-sharing?
Anyone interested in setting this up?