

THE ART OF QUESTIONING

One of the most important skills a group facilitator must cultivate is that of asking good questions.

PURPOSES and TYPES of QUESTIONS:

The purpose for asking a question will determine what kind of question you are asking and will help you evaluate the response.

0. **YES/NO QUERIES** – Avoid these, since they stop all conversation after the one-word answer!
1. **INFORMATION SEEKING** – An information-seeking question asks for specific data and is usually direct and concise. *What are the names of the Synoptic Gospels?*
2. **INSIGHT** – An insight question asks for a vision or insight into a topic based on the person's experience and ideas. *What do you suppose was Mary of Nazareth's first thought when she knew of the lack of wine at the wedding in Cana?*
3. **OPINION SEEKING** – An opinion-seeking question leads to discussion. *What do you think provoked Jesus to tell the story of the rich man and Lazarus?*
4. **PROBLEM CENTERED** – A problem-centered question asks for an understanding of an existing problem. *More and more Catholics seem to be turning to Fundamentalism in their approach to Scripture study. Is there some practical thing that our Bible Study Group can do about this trend?*
5. **EVALUATING** – An evaluating question asks for an evaluation of an existing situation, program, or problem. *Why is it that our parish seems to have such little interest in our existing adult religious education programs?*
6. **SCOPE WIDENING** – A scope-widening question tells you where the participant stands in understanding a topic or an expressed opinion. *Do you agree with the scholars who propose that the Beloved Disciple might have been someone other than the Apostle John? Why, or why not?*
7. **LEADING** – A leading question leads to an acceptance of a suggestion which might otherwise be rejected. *Don't you think that....?*

TIMING IS IMPORTANT:

1. Allow thinking time before you expect the listener to respond.
2. Be sure not to cut off a response to ask another question.
3. Sometimes it is best not to ask a question but to allow time for reflection. Remember that some things are to be shared, not evaluated.

CHARACTERISTICS OF GOOD QUESTIONS:

1. Concisely stated; clear and unambiguous.
2. Appropriate for the persons addressed. Avoid using overly technical language.
3. Engaging, in that they require some extended response, rather than a simple 'yes' or 'no'.
4. Simple, in that each question asks for only one thing, not several different things.
5. Organized, so that one question flows evenly to the next question.

QUESTIONS TO EVALUATE HOW GOOD QUESTIONS ARE:

1. Does your question increase a person's desire as well as capacity to learn?
2. Does it help to provide a person with confidence in his/her ability to learn?
3. Does it help to give a person a sense of joy in learning?
4. In order to get answers, is the person required to make inquiries?
5. Does each question allow for alternative answers?
6. Does the process of answering the questions tend to stress the uniqueness of each person?
7. Do the questions produce different answers if asked at different stages of a person's development?
8. Do the answers help a person to sense and understand the universals in the human condition and so enhance his/her ability to draw closer to other people?

THE ART OF QUESTIONING - EXERCISE

Based on Luke 1:39-45, formulate at least one question of each of the following types:

1. **Information-Seeking Question** –

2. **Insight Question** –

3. **Opinion-Seeking Question** –

4. **Problem-Centered Question** –

5. **Evaluating Question** –

6. **Scope-Widening Question** –

7. **Leading Question** –