

...indeed, if you call out for insight and cry aloud for understanding...

Proverbs 2:3

Group discussion can be an excellent way to add to the learning during your small group meetings. However, there is one way to short circuit that opportunity - bad questions. Here is a short list of four types of questions to avoid.

Captain Obvious

Observational details are good things to keep in mind, though asking those types of questions in a group session tends to kill any deeper insight into the material. People also hesitate to answer, because the answer is right there in front of them for all to see. Instead of asking, "Who are the three people Paul interacted with in the city of Philippi in Acts 16?" (limited answer: Lydia, a slave girl, and a jailer), it'll garner more discussion to ask, "Describe the three people Paul interacted with in the city of Philippi. What does the text tell us about their jobs, nationalities, and positions in society? Do you notice anything significant about their similarities or differences?"

Those types of questions challenge the group to look a little more closely at what is obviously printed on the page and will help them think beyond the basic facts.

One Word Wonders

If a question's answer is "Yes" or "No," "God" or "Jesus," or "right" or "wrong," it's probably best to go back to the drawing board. Instead of asking, "Are there

people in your life that you consider beyond hope for coming to faith?" (limited answer: yes or no), perhaps ask, "What type of people do we often think might not be receptive to the good news? How does having that mindset affect your interactions?"

Mission Impossible

Well versed Biblical scholars don't tend to populate small groups in large numbers. Be careful about asking questions that most of the group can't answer. For instance, while studying Acts 16 you may hear the crickets chirping when you ask, "What was the culture like in the city of Philippi?" Most people aren't familiar with first-century Roman culture. You'll invite a more interesting discussion if you go ahead and describe the cultural distinctions of Philippi and then ask, "In what ways is their culture similar or different than ours?"

Too Much Information

In general, openness and vulnerability in small groups is a good thing. However, some questions fall flat because they require too much information too soon. I've found asking application questions in a general sense can invite vulnerability without forcing it. Asking a question like, "Where are you struggling with sexual sin like David?" might lead to awkward silence or even more awkwardly, too many words (that can never be unheard).

A more general way to think through an application on the same point is a question that acknowledges the struggle, and seeks to work through it: "In the church today, many are struggling with sexual temptation. What practices and habits can we put into place to help us to fight temptation?" This can lead to a helpful conversation about resources and accountability, and allow the opportunity to discuss private struggles in a one-on-one setting.

In the Same way that it takes to time understand a passage and teach it in a meaningful way to a group of people, learning to ask good questions takes the same type of time. Weeding out these four types of questions will; help you along in that process.

Much of the information in this article is taken from, "Four Types of Questions NOT to Ask in Your Small Group Bible Study", found on thegospelcoalition.org. The article was written by Melissa Kruger

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