

How Can I Improve as a Discussion Leader?

How Do You Formulate Questions?

The leader's ability to design questions specifically for the different phases of discussion is an important and necessary skill.

Questions can be classified into three categories:

1. INFORMATIONAL (FACT LEVEL) QUESTIONS

An informational question requires the learner to remember specific facts in order to answer the question. What are the actual words of the Bible passage? When did this event take place? Who was involved in this story? Informational questions allow everyone to begin on common ground and provide a proper launching point. Let's use an example. Suppose a group is studying the book of Job and the lesson aim is: "To determine how the book of Job's view of suffering differs from ours?" Examples of informational questions might be:

How does Elihu explain suffering?

Who proposes the view that suffering is punishment for sin?

It is almost impossible to have a meaningful discussion guided by informational questions alone. Therefore, we also need:

2. ANALYTICAL (CONCEPTUAL LEVEL) QUESTIONS

Analytical questions encourage students to attach meaning to the facts, thereby developing concepts or principles which might be ultimately applied to their own lives. What is the meaning of this parable? What meaning did its author intend? What motivated this character to act the way he did? Examples might be:

Why is suffering a problem for Job?

Did Job see any value in his suffering? Why or why not?

How does Job see the relationship between sin and God?

Does Job's view of suffering change? Why or why not?

Leaving the discussion at this level would not allow the learner to apply the Scripture in his own life and thus complete the learning cycle. The final category of questions needs to be:

3. PERSONAL (VALUES LEVEL) QUESTIONS

Personal questions seek out a learner's values and attitudes. How does this information fit in with your known facts, beliefs and values? Is this your view of the world? What action or behavior becomes necessary? The focus of these questions is to guide learners in their own decision making and value forming. Examples of this would be:

Do you find Job admirable? Why or why not?

What would you have said to Job? Why?

Do you feel any obligation toward others who are suffering? Why?

Which of Job's sufferings would be hardest for you to bear? Why?

Do you know anyone who is suffering?

What could you do to help alleviate his suffering?

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QUESTIONING