

# Session 7

## The Importance of Asking Questions

### Welcome and Prayer

*Ask for a volunteer to open the session with prayer.*

### Sharing

Invite the group to share any insights, questions or revelations from the daily reflections from the prior week.

### Introduction of Session Focus

The session is titled, “The Importance of Asking Questions,” but it’s really about intentional communication practices and building relationships. Discipleship is all about developing meaningful relationships: a relationship with the one you follow (Jesus), and a relationship with the one(s) that guides you in seeking and following Jesus.

Communication is critical in all relationships and this is also true in a discipling relationship. Learning to ask questions is the best way to get to know another person. It is less about what we tell about ourselves and far more about what we get to know about the other. Learning to ask questions that take the conversation to a deeper level is a way to keep the relationship growing and the best way to affirm the value of the other person.

Part of making disciples is being open to the opportunities that present themselves in daily life that allow us to share a moment and build a relationship with someone and guide them toward Jesus. Asking questions is vital to the discipleship journey.

### Time in the Word

#### Scripture reading — Romans 12:9-13

“Let love be genuine. Abhor what is evil; hold fast to what is good. Love one another with brotherly affection. Outdo one another in showing honor. Do not be slothful in zeal, be fervent in spirit, serve the Lord. Rejoice in hope, be patient in tribulation, be constant in prayer. Contribute to the needs of the saints and seek to show hospitality.”

1. How do you show hospitality to others?
2. Listening is part of showing hospitality. How do you create space and time to listen to others?

Watch the video: “The Importance of Asking Questions” with Bishop Emeritus John Bradosky

<https://vimeo.com/showcase/8417753/video/507632104/embed>

### Large Group Discussion

1. What did you find most helpful or challenging in the video?

2. Bishop John shared a list of a few important points regarding asking questions — not just to gather information, but to build relationships. How is this list helpful in expanding your insights regarding asking questions?

- Don't try to go too deep too fast.
- Make sure there is some level of trust and readiness for questions. Back off with a less personal question.
- Wait for the person to answer the question before jumping in with your own answer.
- Prepare questions in advance. Relationships take time and planning. What would I like to discover about the person?
- Ask open ended questions that let them know you are interested in their perspective.
- Be prepared to be open-minded about their answers. Their perspective may be radically different from yours. The goal is not to argue their perspective, but to understand it. Be ready to ask more questions that probe their perspective more deeply.
- Be sensitive, back off if they seem offended. Try another path of questioning as needed.
- Be aware of non-verbal clues in assessing how the communication is going.
- Don't ask too many questions in any one setting. Save some for the next time. Let the relationship grow.

3. What have you learned?

### **Breakout sessions**

Gather in groups of two or three to read and discuss the following Scriptures.

### **Scripture readings**

#### **Luke 10:25-28**

And behold, a lawyer stood up to put him to the test, saying, "Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?" He said to him, "What is written in the Law? How do you read it?" And he answered, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind, and your neighbor as yourself." And he said to him, "You have answered correctly; do this, and you will live."

**John 6:5-9**

Lifting up his eyes, then, and seeing that a large crowd was coming toward him, Jesus said to Philip, "Where are we to buy bread, so that these people may eat?" He said this to test him, for he himself knew what he would do. Philip answered him, "Two hundred denarii[a] worth of bread would not be enough for each of them to get a little." One of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, said to him, "There is a boy here who has five barley loaves and two fish, but what are they for so many?"

**John 11:23-27**

Jesus said to her, "Your brother will rise again." Martha said to him, "I know that he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day." Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life.[a] Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die. Do you believe this?" She said to him, "Yes, Lord; I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, who is coming into the world."

**Matthew 16:13-18**

Now when Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, "Who do people say that the Son of Man is?" And they said, "Some say John the Baptist, others say Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets." He said to them, "But who do you say that I am?" Simon Peter replied, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." And Jesus answered him, "Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven. And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.

**Discussion Questions:**

1. In the video, Bishop John shared that Jesus used questions in a variety of ways. Pick one or two Scripture references to examine how Jesus used questions and share your insights with others in the group.

**How Jesus used questions:**

- To engage others in a conversation.
- To build relationships.
- To force those he was interacting with to have to think about life differently.
- To create conversations about the Kingdom he proclaimed.
- To get listeners to own their own conclusions about the truth.
- He sometimes answered questions with questions of his own to draw people in.

2. How do you show people they are valued?

**Practice Scenarios**

We are practicing how to have discipling conversations. Assign one member of your group to play the part of a discipleship guide and another to be the one guided. Using the discipleship conversation model work through the scenario below. Keeping this in mind, remember that as Christ followers we are to speak the truth in love.

Our evaluations of the practice sessions should be helpful and encouraging not critical or unkind.

### **Remember**

- a. A discipleship guide is not a counselor or mentor. The goal in the conversation is to help the other person discover their own solutions.
- b. Part of the discipleship guides task is to help others see where God is already walking and working in their lives.
- c. In real life situations there will be no time constraints on the flow of your faith conversations. For this practice sessions focus on the current reality and vision steps of the discipling conversation model.

Where are you now? (Current Reality)

Where do you want to be? (Vision)

Does your vision reflect your beliefs, values and priorities? (Alignment)

How do you plan to accomplish your vision? (Action Plan)

What resources will you need?

How can I hold you accountable?

### **Scenario**

You are having a conversation with a non-church going friend over coffee. They are having issues with work, family/kids.

After about 10 minutes stop and discuss:

1. What went well in the conversation?
2. What might have been done differently?
3. How challenging was it to guide rather than problem solve?
4. How well did the conversation move through the various stages of a discipling conversation?

### **Large group wrap-up**

*Have participants share any closing thoughts, questions, insights or observations that arose from the break out groups.*

Remind participants to do the daily devotions and encourage them to journal their insights and questions.

Next time: "Life-to-Life Experience, part 2."

Wrap up

Close in Prayer

### **Helpful Resources**

*Coaching Questions: A Coach's Guide to Powerful Asking Skills* by Tony Stoltzfus

## Devotions: Week Seven

### Weekday 1

#### Scripture reading — Luke 7:36-48

One of the Pharisees asked him to eat with him, and he went into the Pharisee's house and reclined at table. And behold, a woman of the city, who was a sinner, when she learned that he was reclining at table in the Pharisee's house, brought an alabaster flask of ointment, and standing behind him at his feet, weeping, she began to wet his feet with her tears and wiped them with the hair of her head and kissed his feet and anointed them with the ointment. Now when the Pharisee who had invited him saw this, he said to himself, "If this man were a prophet, he would have known who and what sort of woman this is who is touching him, for she is a sinner." And Jesus answering said to him, "Simon, I have something to say to you." And he answered, "Say it, Teacher."

"A certain moneylender had two debtors. One owed five hundred denarii, and the other fifty. When they could not pay, he canceled the debt of both. Now which of them will love him more?" Simon answered, "The one, I suppose, for whom he canceled the larger debt." And he said to him, "You have judged rightly." Then turning toward the woman he said to Simon, "Do you see this woman? I entered your house; you gave me no water for my feet, but she has wet my feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair. You gave me no kiss, but from the time I came in she has not ceased to kiss my feet. You did not anoint my head with oil, but she has anointed my feet with ointment. Therefore I tell you, her sins, which are many, are forgiven—for she loved much. But he who is forgiven little, loves little." And he said to her, "Your sins are forgiven."

#### Focus Questions

*Record your thoughts from prayer and reflection.*

1. Read through the Scripture a second time and highlight words or phrases that stands out for you.
2. What is going on in your life that connects with that word or phrase?
3. How does Jesus point to the value of relationships in this story?
4. What relationships do you value? How do you show them their value?

5. Where is the Holy Spirit inviting you to respond this week?

### **Daily Journal**

*Record your thoughts from prayer and reflection.*

What has caused you to think deeper?

## **Weekday 2**

### **Scripture Reading — Matthew 19:13-15**

Then children were brought to [Jesus] that he might lay his hands on them and pray. The disciples rebuked the people, but Jesus said, “Let the little children come to me and do not hinder them, for to such belongs the kingdom of heaven.” And he laid his hands on them and went away.

### **Focus Questions**

*Record your thoughts from prayer and reflection.*

1. Read through the Scripture a second time and highlight words or phrases that stand out for you.

2. What is going on in your life that connects with that word or phrase?

3. What is being rushed away in this passage? What do you try to rush?

4. Who do you push away in that rush? What are you rushing for?

5. What are your communication patterns and priorities? What stories of failures and successes come to mind?

6. Where is the Holy Spirit inviting you to respond this week?

### **Daily Journal**

*Record your thoughts from prayer and reflection.*

What have you thought about today in this focus area that you are longing for?

## **Weekday 3**

### **Scripture reading — Samuel 1:12-18**

As she continued praying before the Lord, Eli observed her mouth. Hannah was speaking in her heart; only her lips moved, and her voice was not heard. Therefore Eli took her to be a drunken woman. And Eli said to her, "How long will you go on being drunk? Put your wine away from you." But Hannah answered, "No, my lord, I am a woman troubled in spirit. I have drunk neither wine nor strong drink, but I have been pouring out my soul before the Lord. Do not regard your servant as a worthless woman, for all along I have been speaking out of my great anxiety and vexation." Then Eli answered, "Go in peace, and the God of Israel grant your petition that you have made to him." And she said, "Let your servant find favor in your eyes." Then the woman went her way and ate, and her face was no longer sad.

### **Focus Questions**

*Record your thoughts from prayer and reflection.*

1. Read through the Scripture a second time and highlight words or phrases that stand out for you.
2. What is going on in your life that connects with that word or phrase?
3. What assumptions did Eli enter the conversation with? How was he corrected?
4. Often in conversations we spend more time thinking about how we will respond instead of actively listening. How did Eli's actions change when he listened? When have you had to change your actions because you paused to listen?
5. Changing communication habits takes time, effort, and practice. What change(s) do you need to make to listen more actively? What could you begin to do today to make one change?
6. Where is the Holy Spirit inviting you to respond this week?

### **Daily Journal**

*Record your thoughts from prayer and reflection.*

What small specific step and active response can you take in the direction God's Word is leading you?

## Weekday 4

### Scripture reading — John 21:15-19

When they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, “Simon, son of John, do you love me more than these?” He said to him, “Yes, Lord; you know that I love you.” He said to him, “Feed my lambs.” He said to him a second time, “Simon, son of John, do you love me?” He said to him, “Yes, Lord; you know that I love you.” He said to him, “Tend my sheep.” He said to him the third time, “Simon, son of John, do you love me?” Peter was grieved because he said to him the third time, “Do you love me?” and he said to him, “Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you.” Jesus said to him, “Feed my sheep. Truly, truly, I say to you, when you were young, you used to dress yourself and walk wherever you wanted, but when you are old, you will stretch out your hands, and another will dress you and carry you where you do not want to go.” (This he said to show by what kind of death he was to glorify God.) And after saying this he said to him, “Follow me.”

### Focus Questions

*Record your thoughts from prayer and reflection.*

1. Read through the Scripture a second time and highlight words or phrases that stand out for you.
2. What is going on in your life that connects with that word or phrase?
3. What do you learn about the priority of relationships for Jesus in this post-resurrection, lakeside interaction?
4. When has Jesus come to you and invited you to follow him again?
5. Where is Jesus asking you to feed and tend his lambs and sheep in this season?

6. Where is the Holy Spirit inviting you to respond this week?

### **Daily Journal**

Record your thoughts from prayer and reflection.

How does this passage focus your attention first on Jesus, second on your identity “in Christ,” and third on your participation in the Body of Christ?

How is this passage moving you beyond yourself to take a specific small step in the direction of serving your family, church, or neighbor?

## **Weekday 5**

### **Scripture readings —**

#### **Proverbs 20:5-6**

The purpose in a man’s heart is like deep water, but a man of understanding will draw it out. Many a man proclaims his own steadfast love, but a faithful man who can find?

#### **Psalm 26:2-3**

Prove me, O Lord, and try me; test my heart and my mind. For your steadfast love is before my eyes, and I walk in your faithfulness.

#### **1 Thessalonians 2:1-8**

For you yourselves know, brothers, that our coming to you was not in vain. But though we had already suffered and been shamefully treated at Philippi, as you know, we had boldness in our God to declare to you the Gospel of God in the midst of much conflict. For our appeal does not spring

from error or impurity or any attempt to deceive, but just as we have been approved by God to be entrusted with the Gospel, so we speak, not to please man, but to please God who tests our hearts. For we never came with words of flattery,] as you know, nor with a pretext for greed—God is witness. Nor did we seek glory from people, whether from you or from others, though we could have made demands as apostles of Christ. But we were gentle among you, like a nursing mother taking care of her own children. So, being affectionately desirous of you, we were ready to share with you not only the Gospel of God but also our own selves, because you had become very dear to us.

### **Focus Questions**

*Record your thoughts from prayer and reflection.*

1. Read through the Scriptures a second time and highlight words or phrases that stand out for you.
2. What is going on in your life that connects with that word or phrase?
3. When we disciple others we listen with them to God. We ask questions. Our questions are guided by our training, but (hopefully) more by the Holy Spirit. What is in our hearts and minds affects our ability to be present and listen and participate fully in guiding conversations. Having self-awareness is important to our preparation to be a disciple who discipled others. How do you practice self-awareness with the attitudes you have while listening to another? With the questions you ask? With the words you share?
4. Where is the Holy Spirit inviting you to respond this week?

### **Daily Journal**

*Record your thoughts from prayer and reflection.*

Reflecting on the Scriptures this week, what theme do you see developing?

Review any action steps you have felt led to take. Start today if you haven't made any actions steps yet.

Begin to write a one or two sentence statement for this week's focus area. Try to have it reflect what the verses this week have taught you about who Christ Jesus is, and his invitation to follow him in this area of life.

### **Saturday (before worship...preparing)**

Saturdays are a day of preparation as we contemplate the coming Sabbath. Look back over the week, consider such questions as:

1. What sins will I lay before the Lord in my confession?

2. What prayers will I lift up?

3. What questions will I be seeking the answers to?

4. What burdens do I need to lay down in order to be fully open to the movement of the Holy Spirit?

5. Who might I invite to journey with me?

### **Sunday (after worship...pondering)**

Sundays are devoted to worship and reflection. We gather together as the Body of Christ to lift our praises to God and receive what only he can give us. Later, reflect on such questions as:

1. What point of the sermon or Sunday School lesson most caught my attention? What exactly touched my heart?

2. Which song, hymn or portion of liturgy most became a prayer or conversation with God?

3. How will making my confession and hearing the absolution affect how I live this week?

4. What strength or comfort did I receive as I participated in worship today?

5. What was the gospel message I heard today and who did I share it with?

6. Who did I speak with that I can remember in prayer this week?