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## How-To Lead a Bible Study

# Asking Great Questions and 3 Roles

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## Optional Lectio

Before we get started, take some time to pray over a Scripture passage about God's word.

- **First**, read Matthew 6:25–33.
- **Second**, reflect on the words that caught your attention.
- **Third**, pray from your heart and respond to what Jesus is saying to you.
- **Fourth**, rest in what God has told you and in His presence.

**Discussion Questions** *(These are sample questions; feel free to develop your own.)*

1. What jumped out at you as you read Matthew 6:25–33?
2. In the Gospels, Jesus asks more than 100 questions. Why do you think He uses this method so often?
3. What do you think about the questions He asks here? Did they have an impact on your own life?
4. What are some ways that you can use questions with others?

### **Vision for Asking Great Questions**

Proverbs 20:5 tells us, “The purpose in a man’s mind is like deep water, but a man of understanding will draw it out.” One of the best ways to draw out the thoughts of your group is to ask good questions. As a student leader, your goal is to facilitate a conversation with your group. Questions encourage this facilitation because they help the group members respond and interact with each other.

At times, it can be tempting to simply act like a teacher and lecture to your group, but one of the best ways people learn is by discovering the answers for themselves (also known as self-discovery learning). Asking questions allows the members to reflect on the information and retain it in a personal way.

As the leader, try not to simply tell information that could be learned through questioning. For example, someone might ask you, “What do you think this passage is saying?” Turn the question back to the group by asking, “That’s a great question. What do *you* guys think this passage is saying?” While certain topics or situations will call for you to

do some teaching—whether it be clarifying the Church’s teaching on a subject or moving the group through the material—you ultimately want your group to feel like it is *their* study, not your study. Asking good questions will help you achieve that goal.

### **Four Types of Questions**

As you prep your study, you will want to brainstorm what questions to ask. First, identify the goal of the study. FOCUS materials have questions to guide your reflection, but you are free to ask the questions in ways that might be more meaningful for your specific group. Try to avoid rhetorical questions and yes-or-no questions (an example of both: Did John the Baptist baptize people?). You can find more information on how to use FOCUS materials within each study.

Here are some ideas of what questions to ask:

- *Launching Questions*

How do I begin? Launching questions are designed to get the discussion started. It can be something as simple as, “What stood out to you in this chapter?”

- *Observation Questions*

What are the details? These questions help to recall what was read. You might ask: “What story did the author use to open up this chapter?”

- *Understanding Questions*

What does it mean? These types of questions will help the reader understand the ramifications of what they are reading. For instance, “How would you state the theme of this chapter?”

- *Application Questions*

How should I respond? These questions help apply the material to their lives. For instance, “How do you see yourself in the story we just read?”

Guiding the group discussion is like a captivating, well-played volleyball game: As the leader, you serve the ball by asking a good question. Then someone answers, setting the ball up for someone else in the group, who then passes it along to another. When the volley is dead, you serve up another question. The goal is not to simply keep the discussion going but to achieve the goals of deep transformation, intimate fellowship, and spiritual multiplication.

### **Three Roles of a Facilitator**

Guiding your group through a Bible study is an art form, and difficulties may arise. Some people in your group won't participate; others participate too much. Perhaps you have a hard time engaging the members of your study with the material. Here are three roles of a facilitator that will help you lead your Bible study effectively.

### *Cheerleader*

This role is fairly simple: Be excited to lead your study and to encourage your group's participation. Leading a study takes energy, especially when you feel like you're the only one excited about it. If you aren't excited about the material or the group, chances are your members won't be, either. As a cheerleader, show enthusiasm when people participate, especially those who don't normally do so. It will encourage them to engage and participate more.

### *Trail Guide*

If you've ever hiked before, you know how helpful it can be to have a guide who has been on the trail before: They know which way to go, when to stop, and where all the good views are. With your Bible study, you need to be a trail guide—someone who has been through the material before and who knows where to go. You won't be able to lead a good discussion if you haven't studied and applied the materials to your own life.

When looking over the material, ask God to teach you about your own relationship with Jesus. When you are personally involved with the material, two things happen: First, you are more aware of how to apply the materials to someone else's life. Second, your Bible study members will be more open to sharing their own lives when you share yours.

## *Traffic Cop*

Several difficulties can occur during a small group. Perhaps someone in your study rarely participates, or another participates too often. What can you do? As the facilitator, your job is to direct the conversation. Imagine yourself as a traffic cop: At times, you will need to hold off certain traffic, especially if one or two members are dominating the conversation. You can say something like, "We've heard from this side of the room; what does this side of the room think about the question?"

At the same time, just like a traffic cop, you can use one hand to "stop" one side of the room and the other to invite someone else to "go." This allows quieter members the chance to speak up, which can help balance out the group. You may also want to take a more vocal member of the study aside, telling him how much you appreciate his participation and asking if he would be willing to hold off on some of his comments to help you encourage the others to participate more.

If you experience a total lack of participation, try to keep a few things in mind. As the leader, don't be afraid of silence; people need time to process the question and think about what they will say. If you are always quickly answering your own questions, the group will get used to not having to participate. Feel free to count to 15 or say a slow Hail Mary while you wait for a response. After waiting, ask the question in a different way or make sure everyone understood you.

Also, use discussion starters and time outside of the study to build up the relationships within it. People are more comfortable sharing when they know one another. The skill of effectively leading a conversation does not happen overnight. Continue to work hard, practice, and read up on how you can do a better job.

**Discussion Questions** *(These are sample questions; feel free to develop your own.)*

1. What methods for leading a discussion stood out to you?
2. Why is self-discovery learning so effective? How can a leader promote this type of learning?
3. What fears do you have about leading a Bible study discussion?
4. What can you do to help build your confidence in leading a study?

### **Optional Practice**

Use the “Understanding the Four Types of Questions” worksheet to practice how to write the four types of questions.

### **Summary**

During this time, you should have:

- Read and prayed through Jesus’ words and questions in Matthew 6:25–33.
- Reviewed *Vision for Asking Great Questions*.
- Reviewed *The Four Types of Questions*.
- Reviewed *The Three Roles of a Facilitator*.
- Practiced writing the four types of questions (optional).



## **Conclusion**

We didn't cover every technique or address every difficulty in this short article; you can find more tips in the recommended readings listed below. We also strongly encourage that you attend the Bible study of a FOCUS missionary or an older FOCUS student leader. This will give you some real-life examples to emulate.

## **Recommended Resources**

*A Facilitator's Guide*, by Rich Cleveland

*The Ultimate Road Trip: A Guide to Leading Small Groups*, by CruPress

# UNDERSTANDING THE FOUR TYPES OF QUESTIONS

## #1: LAUNCHING QUESTIONS

### Definition

How do I begin? Launching questions are designed to get the discussion started.

### Example

After reading through this chapter, what stood out to you?

### Your Example

*If you could ask God one question, what would it be?*

### Notes

## #2: OBSERVATION QUESTIONS

### **Definition**

What are the details? These questions help recall what was read.

### **Examples**

What story did the author use to open up this chapter? Who is Jesus speaking to in this parable? What was St. Paul doing when God spoke to him?

### **Your Example**

### **Notes**

### #3: UNDERSTANDING QUESTIONS

#### **Definition**

What does it mean? These types of questions will help the reader understand the ramifications of what they are reading.

#### **Examples**

How would you state the theme of this chapter? What is the relationship between sin and pride?

#### **Your Example**

#### **Notes**

## **Types of Understanding Questions**

- a. Questions of Value – What is the most important aspect of evangelization?
- b. Questions of Feeling – What was your reaction to the story of the son's disobedience?
- c. Questions of Relationship – What is the relationship between forgiveness and bitterness in the text?
- d. Questions of Identification – Who do you identify with in the Prodigal Son story?
- e. Questions of Example – Can someone give me an example of loving your neighbor?
- f. Questions of Similarities or Opposites – What is the difference between grace and works?
- g. Questions of Summary – Who can sum up this paragraph?
- h. Questions of Definition – How would you define fruitfulness?
- i. Questions of Explanation – Explain what you think is meant by the quote on p. 16.

## #4: APPLICATION QUESTIONS

### **Definition**

How should I respond in light of this information? These questions help the group apply the material to their lives.

### **Examples**

How do you see yourself in the story we just read? After going through this chapter, what's one way you want to live out these principles this week?

### **Your Example**

### **Notes**

