

7 Types of Questions to Ask in Group

The idea of asking questions instead of always offering answers seems simple, right? It's easy to understand, but challenging to practice . . . especially when something difficult or controversial comes up in group. Asking good questions takes practice as well as an understanding of what makes a question good and what type of question to ask depending on what you're trying to accomplish. Today and Friday, I'll to give you seven types of questions you can use in group. I'll also break down when and why to use them.

1. Launching

These are open questions used to kick off a discussion. They're particularly helpful in setting the tone of a conversation and drawing all of your group members into the discussion.

Example: *What are some ways other people's words have hurt you?*

2. Clarifying

These questions help guide your group toward accumulated facts by urging them to define, clarify, explain, or compare and contrast. Clarifying questions are particularly useful for bringing the group back on topic when they've begun to stray. They do so by prompting group members to think about the main topic in a new way.

Example: *Can we back up for a second? What was going through your mind when he said that to you?*

3. Follow-Up

These questions draw the entire group into a discussion after a single member has answered a question or expressed an opinion. Follow-up questions are great for helping group members connect through shared experiences or emotions.

Example: *That's really powerful. Thank you for sharing. Has anyone else ever experienced something like that?*

Using launching, clarifying, and following-up questions requires intentionality and a little practice. But making the effort can free your group discussions from routine and help the people you lead to grow in their relationship with Jesus.

4. Summarizing

These questions draw the rest of the group into discussion after a member answers a question or expresses an opinion. Summarizing questions can also help a group go deeper by consolidating the ideas they've been discussing.

Example: *Do you see some common threads between what you've said and what Ellen was saying?*

5. Applying

These questions help the group make a connection between the material you're discussing and their lives. Because growth is driven by the application of information and not information alone, applying questions are crucial in encouraging your group members to make the most of what they're learning and discovering.

Example: *Based on what we've talked about, what are some things you can do to resolve your conflict with your brother?*

6. Reversing

Reversing questions pose a question back to the person who originally asked it. You don't want to overuse reversing questions because they may become irritating or seem condescending. But used correctly and sparingly, reversing questions can help a group member think through a question rather than just rely on your answer. The more people think through a problem and come to their own conclusions, the more they own those conclusions. And people are more likely to apply a conclusion they own than those they've been told.

Example: *That's a great question. I don't have a quick answer. What are your thoughts?*

7. Relaying

Use relaying questions to turn a question you've been asked over to the group or to a specific group member. Relaying questions help a group to work through an issue rather than rely on you to provide answers. Again, they help build ownership among the group members. Relaying questions can also be used (carefully) to draw specific group members into the discussion.

Example: *That's a great question. I don't know. What do you guys think?*

Asking great questions is one of the most useful skills you can add to your leadership toolbox. It's both strategically smart and relationally powerful. Most of us don't do it well naturally, but it's like a muscle: if you commit to exercising your question asking skills on a regular basis, it will get stronger.