

TRAINING YOUTH TO ASK MEANINGFUL QUESTIONS

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Ever notice how a child has a natural inborn gift, desire and ability to ask questions? They start off slow and gradually increase to the point where some parents, in frustration say:

- ✓ *I'm not going to tell you anymore to stop bugging me with questions.*
- ✓ *Please, you're driving me nuts with all your questions. Give it a rest.*
- ✓ *Don't you ever get tired of asking questions? Please stop for a while.*
- ✓ *Please stop with the dumb questions.*

In time most children will slow down asking questions, withdraw and keep them inside. When they go to school, even Bible school, they will be reluctant to ask questions. In college and in social events, etc. questions will not be asked. Failing to ask questions creates a reluctance to answer questions.

In the August 2012 issues of *Parent* magazine, this list of the *9 Most Common Questions Kids Ask* was published:

1. *Why aren't there anymore Dinosaurs?*
2. *Why are there so many language in the world?*
3. *Why don't we want others to see our private parts?*
4. *Why is that man homeless?*
5. *Why do people get sick?*
6. *Why do grown-ups sometimes cry when they are happy?*
7. *Why can't I stay up as late as you do?*
8. *Why do the kids next door have more toys than we do?*
9. *Why do I have to invite that girl to my party?*

In an article in *edutopia*, July 8, 2014, Maurice Elias, professor of psychology, Rutgers Social-Emotional Lab, in an article titled *The Importance of Asking Questions to Promote Higher-Order Competencies*, made this observation: *"Irving Sigel devoted his life to the importance of asking questions. He believed, correctly, that the brain responds to questions in ways that we now*

describe as social, emotional, and cognitive development. Questions create the challenges that make us learn.”

FACT: All education is tied to asking and answering questions. Notice how you are continually asking yourself, and others, questions.

The Greek philosopher Socrates developed a method (*Socratic debate*) based on asking questions to stimulate critical thinking and to draw out ideas and underlying presumptions.

The Power of WHY Questions

Webster defines WHY (adv.) as: *“Pertaining to motive; with what purpose, etc.* Why do people fail? Why do people succeed? Why do people win? WHY is an interrogative tool used to explore the cause-and-effect relationship underlying a particular problem or issue. The cause, as well as the solution, is discovered by repeating the question WHY?

Notice this mixture of WHY questions?

LIGHTHEARTED:

1. *Why is “abbreviated” such a long word?*
2. *Why don’t we ever read a headline where a “Psychic Wins the Lottery?”*
3. *Why doesn’t McDonald’s sell hotdogs or pizza?*
4. *Why don’t we daydream at night?*
5. *Why do they nail down the lid of a coffin?*
6. *Why does the sun lighten our hair and darken our skin?*
7. *If money doesn’t grow on trees why do banks have branches?*

SERIOUS:

1. *Why do we grow old?*
2. *Why do we need to rest and sleep?*
3. *Why do we need to exercise and eat properly?*
4. *Why don’t we start out being old and then grow younger?*
5. *Why must a lost person be baptized?*
6. *Why must we “Obey the laws of the land”?*
7. *Why must we continually ask WHY questions?*

Jesus Asked Questions

As a teacher come from God, Jesus not only asked many questions, He was the Master of asking questions. During His three-plus years of earthly ministry, the four Gospel record approximately 300 questions He asked. Because of the duplicate nature of some of the Gospel narratives, the same questions are repeated. I have collected over 100 specific questions Jesus asked.

What follows are some of His question. See how many answers you can apply to your daily walk with the Master:

1. *And why do you worry about clothes? (Matthew 6:28).*
2. *He replied to him, 'Who is my mother, and who is my brother?' (Matthew 12:48, 49).*
3. *Who is the greatest in the kingdom heaven? (Matthew 18:1)*
4. *Who do people say the Son of man is? Who do you say I am? (Matthew 16:13-15).*
5. *John's baptism, where did it come from? Was it from heaven, or from man? (Matthew 21:23).*
6. *Who touched my clothes? (Mark 5:30).*
7. *Man, who appointed me a judge or an arbiter between you? (Luke 12:14, 15).*
8. *Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to his life? (Luke 12:24-26).*
9. *Women, He said, why are you crying? Who is it you are looking for? (John 20:15).*
10. *What shall it profit a man if he gains the whole world and loses his on soul? (Matthew 16:26).*
11. *Can you drink the cup I am going to drink? (Matthew 20:21, 22).*
12. *Why did you seek Me? Did you not know that I must be about My Father's business? (Luke 2:49).*

What did you gain from answer Jesus' questions?

Personal WHY Questions

Spend some time reflecting on and answering the following WHY questions:

1. WHY do you become a Christian? (John 14:1-6).
2. WHY do you pray? (1 Thessalonians 5:17).
3. WHY do you study the Bible? (2 Timothy 2:25, KJV).
4. WHY do you DO (Practice) the Bible? (James 1:21-26).

5. WHY do you live by faith? (Hebrews 11:6).
6. WHY do you give as you have prospered? (1 Corinthians 4:1, 2).
7. WHY do you attend the assemblies? (Hebrews 10:24, 25)
8. WHY do you work on “bearing the fruit of the Spirit”? (Galatians 5:22-26).
9. WHY do you share the Gospel with others? (Romans 1:14-16).
10. WHY do you help those who are in need? (James 1:27).

How have your answers made you think? Feel? Acts? What have you intentionally learned from them?

How to Ask Questions

All categories of knowledge and education relies on the process of questioning. A person constantly explores a subject with properly formed questions. As a result the answers are discovered in unique and personal ways. The only way to learn how to ask questions is by asking questions. Asking questions creates a self-motivated learner—a researcher—a disciple.

It is not enough for the teacher to simply ask the class, “Are there any questions?” Students have grown up under the pressure of not asking questions. There needs to be a positive environment where questions are natural occurrences. There are no bad questions. Never cast a negative insult, even subtly or as a joke, when answering a question. Remember, asking questions in Bible classes is no different than any other context; it is a delicate and fragile thing.

Part of the teaching process should contain an ongoing encouragement to ask questions as well as some basic tips for asking questions. Here are some tips:

1. Remind the student that all education results from asking questions. It is a must!
2. There are no bad, dumb, or unimportant questions. Jesus said, *“You have not because you ask not.” ASK!*
3. *If possible spend a few moments or minutes in thinking about your question before you ask it; maybe even writing it down.”*
4. *Don’t ask questions in an effort to try and “trick” the teacher or “show-off” how smart you are.*
5. *Don’t begin a questions with “I was wondering”, get right to the question. Be specific.*

6. *Be sure the questions relate to the subject and helps stay on it; don't launch a rocket question into another subject area. Stay on the subject and in the context.*
7. *Know your specific purpose for asking the question?*
8. *Ask questions that may relate to you personally: "How can I use this with my peers?"*
9. *Ask closed questions. Closed questions seek a yes or no answer: "Did Jesus walk on water?"*
10. *Ask open-ended questions: "Why did Jesus walk on water?"*
11. *Use simple words when asking a questions. Don't make it long and drawn out. It becomes a statement more than a question.*
12. *Do not "jump in" or interrupt. Wait for the appropriate time to ask a question.*
13. *If you think the question is likely to create controversy, you may need to ask it in private.*
14. *Remember: Say less, ask more.*
15. *In order to become a good question asker it takes practice, practice and more practice.*

By asking great questions you contribute to the quality, interest and depth of the discussion. In a sense you become a "teacher". By teaching youth how to ask questions you prepare them to become better students and followers—disciples—of Christ.

How will you intentionally use this lesson on asking questions?