



How to Ask Engaging Questions

Small groups can easily fall into “safe” routines: everyone shows up, has some light conversation, reiterates the main takeaways from the week’s sermon, and goes home unchanged and unchallenged. This isn’t necessarily bad, as community and relationship-building are good things, but we believe Connect Groups should go deeper. They should create important — sometimes intense — conversations that encourage members to be real with one another, learn more about God and themselves, and leave desiring a more personal connection with the Spirit.

It can be difficult to reach this level, especially with a newer group. Here are some ideas to help group leaders lovingly challenge their members and encourage growth within their group.

1. **Thoroughly prepare before your group meeting.** Whether your video or study provides questions, or you’ve come up with some on your own, re-read them before the meeting. Consider how both you and your members might answer. Is this a question that’s likely to start a conversation, or will it die off quickly? Does it provoke thought? Is it too personal or deep for a group discussion (especially for a new group)? Think about tweaking or adding questions that you are confident will engage your group members and match the personality and rhythms of your group.
2. **Dig into Scripture.** I’ve found sometimes the best discussions come from reading a verse or passage, then simply asking the group, “What do you think about that?” or “What does that mean to you?” We all interpret Scripture in different ways based on our experiences, knowledge, and how God has spoken to us. When you open-endedly invite others for their opinion, the intimidation bar is lowered, and members feel more comfortable speaking up.
3. **Avoid “yes/no” questions.** These types of questions tend to halt conversation and don’t require much thought. If you can’t come up with a way to rephrase the question, follow up with “Why?” or “Why not?”
4. **Think about application.** Rather than asking questions about what the Bible or study said, consider how you and your group members can apply it in your lives. How does this week’s learning influence how you act moving forward? Encourage group members to think about what they’ll do with the information in the coming week.
5. **Avoid questions that call for one specific answer.** It’s OK to ask questions that have a correct answer, but don’t depend on them to drive conversation. For instance, you could ask, “In Matthew 19, what does Jesus say about the rich

entering the Kingdom of God?” Knowing the answer to this question is important and increases Biblical knowledge and understanding of God, but it likely won’t spark discussion. Once someone says the right answer, that question is concluded and it’s unlikely anyone will add much else. But if you rephrase the question (“How do Jesus’ words about the wealthy in Matthew 19 make you feel about how you approach finances?”) or include a follow-up (“What do you think makes Jesus say that?”), you encourage the group to think more deeply and come up with their own response versus simply reading the answer.

6. **Don’t answer your own questions.** Especially with new groups, there are going to be moments of awkward silence after you ask a question. Tempting as it may be to fill that void and move on to the next question. Your members may be carefully thinking, or they may not understand the question. If silence persists, follow up with “Does that question make sense?” and offer to reword it.