

# THE ART OF ASKING QUESTIONS

## FIRST THINGS FIRST

Take a minute to pray for God to guide you as you study...

Have you ever found yourself in a debate and had an amazing argument ready? This argument was so persuasive that you just knew you would win in a debate or could answer any concerns? Maybe it wasn't an argument, but you had a persuasive point to help you get something you really wanted. Maybe it was asking your parent for money for that new toy, game console, pair of shoes, concert tickets, car, etc., only to have your entire persuasive argument dismantled by one question. It's terrible when one question seemingly does away with all the prep you have done to make sure your point or argument is "fool proof."

There is a lot of power in questions, and our lesson for today will show us how Jesus used questions to dismantle common arguments or ideas and lead people to see how wonderful God really is.

To begin, start off by sharing a time when you thought you had a "fool proof" argument or plan only to see it come apart under the power of a well-placed question...

In the Gospels, we see Jesus asking many questions. In fact, around 300 of Jesus' questions are recorded! A big reason questions play such an important role in Jesus' ministry is because of the Jewish culture that God chose to use in setting up the coming of Himself. When you read the Old Testament and see all the Jewish cultural practices, we need to remind ourselves that the Jewish culture comes from God's plan of redemption and therefore in some way points to the cross of Jesus. A major Jewish practice was the training of future Rabbi's to ask questions.

When a Rabbi would go through the ultra-selective process of choosing his followers, the entrance exam wasn't a written scantron test, but instead, it was one of questions. Because Jewish boys from an early age had memorized the Old Testament and

several rabbinic writings, they weren't tested on what they knew, because they had memorized them. Instead they were tested on the interpretation. This testing was done through questions. The student who could ask the best, well thought out, questions that could dismantle other interpretations showed their grasp of the writings.

Jesus shows us how prepared He was in Luke 2.

**Luke 2:46-47:** "After three days, they found him in the temple courts, sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions. Everyone who heard him was amazed at his understanding and his answers."

Notice how it says that Jesus was asking them questions, and everyone was amazed at His understanding and His answers. Jesus was showing the grasp He had on understanding what God was wanting to do, and He was showing it through well-placed questions.

Let's look at some of the questions used by Jesus to lead others to Himself as the savior of the world.

**Matthew 16:13-15:** "When Jesus came to the region of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, '\_\_\_\_\_?' They replied, 'Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, Jeremiah or one of the prophets.' 'But what about you?' he asked. '\_\_\_\_\_?'"

**John 5:1-9:** "Some time later, Jesus went up to Jerusalem for one of the Jewish festivals. Now there is in Jerusalem near the Sheep Gate a pool, which in Aramaic is called Bethesda and which is surrounded by five covered colonnades. Here a great number of disabled people used to lie—the blind, the lame, the paralyzed. One who was there had been an invalid for thirty-eight years. When Jesus saw him lying there and learned that he had been in this condition for a long time, he asked him, '\_\_\_\_\_?' 'Sir,' the invalid replied, 'I have no one to help me into the pool when the water is stirred. While I am trying to get in, someone else goes down ahead of me.' Then Jesus said to him, 'Get up! Pick up your mat and walk.' At once the man was cured; he picked up his mat and walked."

**Matthew 8:24-26:** "Suddenly a furious storm came up on the lake, so that the waves swept over the boat. But Jesus was sleeping. The disciples went and woke him, saying, 'Lord, save us! We're going to drown!' He replied, 'You of little faith, \_\_\_\_\_?' Then he got up and rebuked the winds and the waves, and it was completely calm."

**Luke 10:25-28:** "On one occasion an expert in the law stood up to test Jesus. 'Teacher,' he asked, 'what must I do to inherit eternal life?' 'What is written in the Law?' he replied. '\_\_\_\_\_?' He answered, '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, 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' 'You have answered correctly,' Jesus replied. 'Do this and you will live.'"

Jesus was a master at utilizing well-placed questions to open the door so that He could share about Himself being the savior we need.

### BASIC POINT

Asking questions is an important skill that helps people be open to hearing the Holy Spirit.

So often, when we are sharing about Jesus with our friends, family, neighbors, enemies, coworkers, etc. we get stressed out and forget that we aren't on trial. We forget that we know Jesus and therefore don't need to have all the answers (even though knowing why we believe what we do is important), because He has all the answers! But when we do begin to share about our Lord and Savior Jesus, we can begin by asking good questions. Write out some questions you might use to get people to think about God's existence, think about Jesus as the only true God, think about the Bible as inspired, or start off sharing one of the Adventist fundamental beliefs.

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Now let's look at our questions and see how many of them are open-ended questions or close ended questions. An open-ended question is a question that opens up the conversation for further discussion. Whereas a close ended question might only require a single word response. Examples of open-ended questions are:

- What is your favorite memory from childhood?
- How did you and your best friend meet?
- What sights do you expect to see on your vacation?
- What were the major effects of World War II for the United States?
- How do you go about purchasing a home?
- What is it like to live in Morocco?
- What is the quickest way to get to the pet store in town?
- How could I present myself better?
- What makes the leaves change color?

Notice how these questions require an answer that cannot be given in just one word. Jesus utilized both types of questions meaning that both can be effective in sharing about Jesus!

Give an Example where one would use an open-ended question to share about Jesus.

Give an example where one would use a close ended question to share about Jesus.

Using well-placed questions can be amazingly effective! One time, I was sharing about Jesus to a high school class of non-denominational Christians. They were asking me about several of the beliefs of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, and one of the questions they asked me was on the teaching over death, what death is like. Seventh-day Adventists believe that when we die, it is like being asleep, and that you know nothing. This class asked me to explain. I responded with a statement that set up a question. I explained how the Gospel of Jesus is His death and resurrection. How the power of conversion comes solely based off the death of Jesus. I then simply asked the question what type of death did Jesus die? There responses varied and I was able to share the beautiful heart-breaking truth that Jesus experienced the second death on our behalf and that this is what is so powerful about the Gospel.

But I used a question to disarm their defenses so I could share with them the good news about Jesus. Questions have power, and when we use them like Jesus, the Gospel is more effectively shared with someone else. May you have boldness in asking questions in order to help someone know Jesus.

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## FUNDAMENTAL QUESTIONS

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1. What makes asking questions so powerful?
  2. Is it easy or difficult for you to ask open-ended questions? Why?
  3. How can you more effectively use questions.
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### LESSON 9: THE ART OF ASKING QUESTIONS

