



COMMUNITY SHEPHERDING QUESTIONS

HOW DO I SPIRITUALLY GUIDE OTHERS?

(Adapted from Saturate & Todd Engstrom)

Question: How do I notice hurts, habits, and hangups?

Ask Good Questions.

- We must be led by the Holy Spirit! It's his job to bring conviction, and he is the primary shepherd. He alone knows the depths of a person's heart, and he will guide us as we lovingly pursue people with good question. Pray before, during, and after any shepherding conversation, asking the Spirit to speak.
- Often the Spirit will provide great questions immediately after a conversation. Write these down for future reference.
- Ask lots of questions throughout the conversation, especially in the beginning. We like to say, "Ask 10 questions for every pronouncement."
- Ask open ended questions that can't be answered with a "yes" or "no", as these questions do not provide much information, and can leave room for us to make a lot of assumptions about the answer.
- Sometimes the best question is not a question. "Tell me more..." is a great way to invite a person to tell more about what's going on in a their heart.

Some Good Questions to Use.

The following is adapted from Paul Tripp, *Instruments in the Redeemer's Hands*, p. 170-178:

- What? Ask people to define their terms. "What did you mean when you said...?"
- How? Ask people to clarify what they mean with concrete, real life examples. "How did that situation unfold? Give us some more detail."
- Where? and When? Ask people to provide more information about the details and the order of events. "Where were you when this happened? When did this happen?"
- How Often? Ask people to describe the frequency of their struggles. Ask them about themes and patterns. "How often do you do this?"

- Why? Ask people to explain why they responded as they did in a given situation. Ask the person to share their reasons, values, purposes, and desires. “Why were you feeling frustrated?”

A Word about “Why?”

“Why?” is a great question because it helps uncover the motives of the heart. We sometimes refer to “Why?” as the Why Shovel, because it helps us dig around to get to the root of a problem. However, a few cautions should be noted.

“Why?” can sound condescending, judgmental, and even rhetorical (a question that’s asked where the answer is so obvious that the question itself helps prove a point). “Why on earth did you do that!?” clearly implies that the person asking the question thinks a poor decision was made. The question does not invite an honest, vulnerable response.

Also, “Why?” is sometimes used as a one-word question, which can sound accusatory, and does not invite an open dialogue. If a wife says to her husband, “I’m feeling sad and frustrated,” and he responds by simply asking, “Why?”, she is likely to perceive that he is upset because she is feeling sad, and wants to hear her reason so he can refute it.

“Why?” can be a powerful tool that must be wielded with wisdom and the sensitivity of the Spirit.

Question: How do I give Godly counsel?

When listening to someone in order to respond with gospel-centered and Bible-based counsel, there is a progression of logic and action that is important to follow. These steps will help you care and counsel well when you are faced with a hard conversations or the need to suffer with someone in need.

Love.

God is love, so we are to love others. To disciple with a Christ-centered love, consider these points:

- *There must be a desire to help.* Our desire reveals whether we have a kingdom mind set or worldly one. If we help others for our own benefit, even if what we are doing is good, it reveals our self-centeredness. If we help others for their benefit, it starve our self-centeredness. One is an incorrect gospel application, the other is a biblical command to love God with all you are and love others as you love yourself.

- *Offer your full attention.* How will we know what to say if we have not heard their story? Be fully present and listen. Hearing will allow you to know what biblical counsel to give, which direction to take moving forward, and how to intercede for others.
- *We must show compassion.* In Hebrews, the author portrays Jesus as one who sympathizes with our weaknesses and is able to help because He suffered and was tempted in every way. No human can ever fully understand another, but we do strive to emulate the example of Christ in our laboring to understand the struggles and suffering of others.

Discern.

It is helpful to hear how an individual defines problems and struggles. It is tempting to jump in and either define the problem yourself or correct the definition of the problem without fully hearing the story. Does this situation sound familiar?

“I have this issue with my neck, it hurts when I—”

“Oh, I know exactly what you’re talking about. I have a pain in my neck too. Here’s what you need to do ...”

A tendency to be aware of is that we often quit discerning the moment we see a point to relate to. The mind works to remove dissonance and, in trying to understand someone else’s struggle, we try to compare it to our own experience and then attribute all our thoughts and experiences with that issue to theirs.

Over time, carefully and graciously help individuals look at their hurts and struggles in light of Scripture. This approach will help bring fertile ground and a willing spirit to how they are thinking, feeling, and behaving in response to their struggle or suffering.

As this approach progresses, the person being discipled will begin to view and discuss their troubles through the lenses of God’s Word. With this, the individual’s thinking, feeling and behaving are, in turn, filtered through truth rather than circumstances, sufferings, or problems. This progression frees the disciple to see his or her problems in relation to the affections of the heart, which is where Jesus says the things that defile us come from.

In and among suffering, affections will be exposed as either affections for self or affections for Christ. These misplaced affections will constantly point to deeper heart issues.

Identify Biblical Solutions.

Through hearing and discerning, we look to Scripture that speaks adequately to the heart and circumstance. If discernment toward the heart is skipped and you jump straight into biblical solutions, there becomes a danger of behavior being addressed without true heart change that comes through the Holy Spirit as God's Word impacts the heart.

This may seem like a small thing, but biblical solutions apart from understanding where affections of the heart have gone wrong lead to legalism. The Pharisees and the Sadducees displayed these displaced affections as they consistently approached problems through the law with hearts that were far from the Lord.

Exhort Biblical Endeavor.

Once biblical solutions are identified and studied, the disciple maker exhorts the disciple toward biblical pursuit. This includes but is not limited to exhorting the individual to these things:

- *Forsake allegiance to the flesh.* The individual grows in an understanding of how the flesh has traditionally played out but stays keenly aware of the heart issues beneath.
- *Trust in the character of God.* The individual grows in trust in who God is (His power, His love, His independence, etc.) while acknowledging and embracing the deep need to walk in His ways and actively trust in His goodness.
- *Dwell upon the gospel of Jesus Christ.* There becomes a great understanding of what has been secured in and through the gospel of Jesus Christ. Justification, sanctification, and glorification are all realized in Christ and empowered through the Holy Spirit
- *Meditate upon, memorize, and apply the Word of God.* There is an increased hunger for God and desire to know His Word.
- *Seek power and comfort from the Holy Spirit.* A proper view of the Holy Spirit as part of the Godhead is embraced. This means there is a persistent desire to grow in the knowledge of the Spirit, walk in the power of the Spirit, and seek the Spirit in all things.
- *Engage fully in the body of Christ.* A great failure of many believers has been looking outside the body of Christ for care and help. This exposes a great failure of the church to not be a place and people who pursue authentic, biblical Christianity. As the church strives to be an instrument of God to His people, the individual should be encouraged to engage the body of Christ.
- *Wait patiently upon the Lord and His timing.* A failure to trust God is a failure to trust in His sovereignty.

Question: How do I encourage honesty and repentance?

We live in a culture that often views repentance in a negative light, or at least in an uncomfortable one. Yet, God uses confession and repentance to bring our sinful minds, hearts, and actions back to Himself every day. We continuously walk away from Him in our thoughtlessness and self-centeredness, yet these gifts allow us to move forward to follow Christ.

Encouraging honesty.

- Model it through your own vulnerability and admittance of your need for grace.
- Make time for it during group.
- Guard it so that people are careful with the way they confess, keeping the focus on Jesus and not sin.
- Don't stop at honest confession. Lead confession through repentance to joy.

Themes in our honest confession.

- It is agreeing with God and admitting that we don't know best (Proverbs 3:5-8).
- It goes beyond our actions and words to the heart (Romans 10:10).
- It is about following Christ (2 Corinthians 10:5).
- It involves the community (James 5:16).
- It is not merely listing our sins out before a priest or a friend.
- It is not primarily about sin and our bad decisions.
- It is not generally admitting that we are sinful.

Encouraging repentance.

- Model it.
- Teach the basic truths of repentance (see below).
- Pray for repentance in your group.

Themes in our repentance.

- Rejecting sin and turning to God's transforming love (2 Corinthians 7:9-10; Revelation 3:19).
- Turning away from sin and self to the gospel and God (Romans 2:4)
- Turning from commitment to sin to commitment to God's kingdom (Matthew 4:17).
- Turning to God in a way that affects our lives deeply (Matthew 3:8).
- Pursuing godly sorrow rather than a worldly sorrow (2 Corinthians 7:9-10).
- Running to God with our shame rather than running away (2 Peter 3:9).

- It is not feeling bad about something because we think God is mad at us.
- It is not trying to dissect sin and understand it completely.
- It is not trying to stop a behavior without addressing the heart issue behind it.