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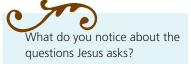
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Leadership involves two-way communication. In talking with people, the way we use words is critical. We can encourage or discourage people, open them up or close them to us; we can motivate and inspire or dampen enthusiasm and engender doubts.

We want to learn to ask questions that will treat people like their thoughts and feelings are important. When we ask questions that are open-ended, we hear more from them and learn more about them than if we ask specific questions looking for specific answers.

BAD QUESTIONS	Good Questions	
Yes/No: Could, would, should, do, did, will, can	What, where, when, who, how	
Closed-ended	Open-ended	
General	Directed toward specific categories of information	
Content-oriented	Process-oriented	
Leading	Stimulates thinking	
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## Case Studies

Presenting Issue	Friend desires your approval for their decision to drop the commitment they've made to your team	Friend desires your approval for their decision to move out of their apartment, leaving roommates behind
What concerns do you have?	You fear that their decision is based in self- protection and risk avoidance rather than in wisdom	You know her roommates have made different lifestyle choices which are hard for your friend. Her conflict-avoidance and harboring resentments have increased the tension
BAD QUESTIONS YOU'D BE TEMPTED TO ASK	How do you think the others will feel, being dropped like this? How do you think I feel?  What could possibly be a higher priority than serving in this way?	Do you have a string of broken relationships and unreconciled friendships behind you?  Is this your usual way of dealing with relational tension?
Open-ended questions that would actually help	What are the commitments in your week you most enjoy? What is satisfying about them?  What priorities make this choice look attractive? What would be sacrificed?  How could these tradeoffs be avoided?	How have your conversations gone regarding your hopes to move out?  What are the tension points in your relationships? How do you contribute?  What could you do to address these tensions? How might God be at work?

**PRACTICE Now:** Take some time in pairs to work on asking good questions. One of you present an dilemma or issue about which you are seeking clarity, perhaps a decision you are really facing. Or else you could talk about a recent event regarding which you still have some unprocessed feelings (positive or negative). The other will be simply trying to draw out the one speaking, by asking good questions and trying to help the one gain clarity, perspective, or peace. Take five minutes (or so) then switch roles.



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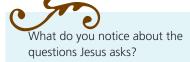
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Leaders' notes: In the gospels, Jesus often asks "bad questions": rhetorical questions that he knows the answer to, questions that make people think but not to elicit information (for example, "How long must I be with you?"). But when Jesus is not teaching, he can be very pastoral and ask open-ended, good questions. Don't be caught up in all the examples of "bad questions" in scripture—we aren't saying that there is no place for these kinds of questions, but that they aren't the kind of questions designed to help a friend or to listen well to someone who is struggling.





- Jesus asks questions to help him understand what he is dealing with.
- He asks questions that lead people into greater faith.
- He asks rhetorical questions meant to get his disciples to think and learn: he wants to make them think
- He asks people to express what they want from Jesus—he doesn't assume he knows
- He honors people by listening to their requests and their answers to his questions

Leadership involves two-way communication. In talking with people, the way we use words is critical. We can encourage or discourage people, open

them up or close them to us; we can motivate and inspire or dampen enthusiasm and engender doubts. Of course, this is a leadership skill, but really this is simply a friendship skill. We want to be the kind of friends that know how to draw out the thoughts and feelings of our friends well. We want to love people by listening well to them.

We want to learn to ask questions that will treat people like their thoughts and feelings are important. When we ask questions that are open-ended,

we hear more from them and learn more about them than if we ask specific questions looking for specific answers. Consider the difference between "What did you enjoy about your day?" and "Did you have a good day?" The first question is more open-ended, and is likely to get more response than the one word "yes" of the second question.

We can get pumped up to ask people questions and then get trapped in a form of questioning that produces defensiveness on the part of the responder, simply because we ask questions of them the way a lawyer asks questions while cross-examining a witness. Lawyers, with a witness on the stand, know they are never to ask a question to which they don't know the answer. The point, in a cross-examination, is not to discover the truth, but to highlight the points of information that make the truth sound like what the lawyer wants it to sound like. That is, in fact, the lawyer's job. But that is not our job, when we are trying to listen well to our students and friends. So we need a different approach, one that doesn't make people defensive (for they have nothing to defend), one that makes them the expert, the one with the real information regarding the best way to make the decision. So we ask questions of the following type:

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