

ASK GENEROUS QUESTIONS: LISTEN WITH AN OPEN HEART

GENEROUS QUESTIONS CULTIVATE DEEPER RELATIONSHIPS

Generous questions invite us to lean into the living presence of Jesus as we cultivate a deeper relationship with Him and with each other. When we slow down and listen with an open heart, we grow *together* as the Body of Christ on earth.

Jesus asked piercing, intentional, and sometimes surprising questions, but He did so to radically reorient His listeners. His questions include:

- **Who do you say that I am?** (Matthew 16:15)
- **What do you seek?** (John 1:38)
- **Why are you gripped with fear?** (Matthew 8:26)
- **Do you want to leave me too?** (John 6:67)
- **Do you love me?** (John 21:17)

LISTEN WITH AN OPEN HEART

Questions are only half of the equation. The other half is learning to listen intently without judgment or agenda. Listening begins with sacrificial kindness and whole-hearted compassion.

When we set aside our biases and our need to fix or find a solution (offering our time and attention instead), we create a safe environment for others' stories, which fosters deeper bonds.. Open-hearted listening can help us reframe the questions we ask God.

Illness and pain leave us overwhelmed, anxious, angry, and afraid, leading us to ask God:

- Why are You allowing this?
- How can any kind of good can come from this?
- Where are You, God?
- How long, oh Lord?
- Why won't you take this pain away?
- Why won't you heal me?

LEARNING TO ASK BETTER QUESTIONS

Open-hearted listening can help us learn to ask better questions.

- How do You see me, Lord?
- Who have You created me to be?
- How have you gifted me?
- What is my purpose?
- How can I serve You?
- How can I better love others?

Generous questions spark our curiosity, kindle hope, and inspire creativity. When we seek to ask those better questions, we are saying, "I am curious. I'd like to to understand. I want to know more."

SO HOW DO WE BEGIN?

Deeper relationships always begin with prayer. The next time you have an opportunity to talk with someone, pray first, then listen—not to give a quick response or to find a solution but to know more, to learn why they hold the beliefs they do, why they are anxious or angry, and why they struggle to trust others. There is nothing more grace-filled than a generous question followed by compassionate, open-hearted listening.

18 QUESTIONS TO SPARK A CONVERSATION

1. What makes you feel most alive?
2. What makes your heart sing?
3. What are you holding onto that is keeping you stuck or robbing you of joy?
4. What do you value most in friendship?
5. If Jesus asked, "Who am I to you?" how would you respond?
6. What makes you feel valued?
7. What do you wish others understood about you?
8. What is your greatest personal struggle?
9. What are you grateful for?
10. What do you fear?
11. What makes you feel overwhelmed or anxious?
12. What has recently resonated with you in Scripture?
13. What does it mean *to you* to be brave?
14. What do you do when life gets hard?
15. What is most difficult about your illness or pain?
16. How has illness or pain changed you?
17. Where do you find hope?
18. What is the best question you've ever been asked?