

COACH EQUIP NIGHT FEB. 20, 2020

ASKING GOOD QUESTIONS

Every month you're faced with a problem.

It's this: "What do I talk about with my leader?" Surely you—like all of us—feel the pressure of your own limits:

- You only have so many experiences
- You only know so much Scripture
- You've only been through so many years in your own Small Groups

That's a barrier. You shouldn't have to feel limited by your own knowledge and experience. There has to be a way to direct leaders into unlimited options beyond just what you've personally done. There is. That's exactly what tonight's topic accomplishes: "asking good questions."

- You can connect with your leader
- Open a whole new world of conversation based on what really matters in their life and leadership
- And walk away with them owning an action plan to make that change

We're going to grab a hold of Asking 3 Types of Good Questions:

- 1. A FRAMEWORK FOR ASKING GOOD QUESTIONS**
- 2. ASKING GOOD OPEN VS. CLOSED QUESTIONS**
- 3. ASKING GOOD PURE VS. JUDGMENTAL QUESTIONS**

1. A FRAMEWORK FOR ASKING GOOD QUESTIONS

Coaching is built on active listening and asking powerful questions.

- It's not counseling
- It's not mentoring
- It's coaching!

Two Models

I was first introduced to this framework through [CBMC](#) and Tony Stoltzfus' book [Leadership Coaching](#). And recently, I've seen this reinforced by a similar model in Keith Webb's [The COACH Model for Christian Leaders](#).

Key Biblical Principles

Before I introduce the framework: Let me point out that this is really based on a few key biblical principles:

[L]et every person be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger (James 1:19)

*The purpose in a man's heart is like deep water,
but a man of understanding will draw it out. (Prov. 20:5)*

This method primarily comes from Proverbs 20:5. And this approach doesn't mean we are not moving our brothers/sisters to action! We are!

¹² When he had washed their feet ... he said to them, "Do you understand what I have done to you? ... ¹⁴ If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. ¹⁵ For I have given you an example, that you also should do just as I have done to you. ... ¹⁷ If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them. (John 13:12-17)

²⁴ And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, ²⁵ not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near. (Heb. 10:24-25)

This framework is a method for HOW to do that! Let me show you the two models and how they are the same thing that we can use in every single one of our Coaching meetings. There are 2 acronyms: GROW & COACH. I personally like GROW better, but you can choose which is easier for you to remember. But pick one of them!

	G Goal	R Reality	O Options	W Willingness
C Connect	O Outcome	A Awareness	C Course	H Highlights
<i>Connect personally to grow the relationship</i>	<i>Find the Goal the coachee finds most valuable to pursue right now</i>	<i>Actively listen about the currently Reality and why change is needed</i>	<i>Lay out Options for getting at the Goal, and establish actionable steps</i>	<i>Review, establish the coachee's Willingness to complete, and ask to circle back</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How have you been? • What progress have you been making on your action steps? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What would you like to work on right now? • What's a goal/problem you want to see changed? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What does the current situation look like? • What else do you think/feel about this? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are some options for how you could get there? • Which of these options do you like best? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are your action steps? • How committed are you to making this happen? • Can I ask about it at our next meeting?

1.) Connect

Which just means *connecting personally to grow the relationship*. Even before we place our order for coffee or breakfast when we're with our leader, we can ask:

- *How have you been?*

Or how they've been feeling about work, family, or Small Group in general. We can also connect at this point by doing follow-up from the last meeting and ask:

- *What progress have you been making on your action steps?*

If they didn't make progress on their action steps from last time; you'll need to figure out whether your time is served best with back-tracking to assess (both wins and struggles) from this last action step, or whether to move onto what is fresh.

2.) Goal/Outcome

Where we *find the Goal that the coachee finds most valuable to pursue right now*. This is probably the most important question of the whole conversation:

- *What would you like to work on right now?*
- *What's a goal/problem you want to see changed?*

Sometimes I like to phrase it in terms of either the *goal* they want to achieve or the *problem* they want to fix. Your coachee gets to set the agenda for the conversation: And the whole conversation is centered on this Goal. If they have multiple Goals, you can help them settle on just one: The most pressing or important in their eyes.

Their Goal could be something related to *leading their Small Group* or it could be related to their *spiritual development*. You're goal as a Coach is to help with both: their leader development and their spiritual development!

Now, if they always bring up their own spiritual life and never mention group dynamics—this is probably something to probe more into. Or vice versa.

Vague Goals

Your leader may throw out a super vague Goal. This is an opportunity to use clarifying questions:

Clarifying Questions (Get Clearer!):

- What do you mean by ____?
- Could you give me an example of ____?
- What would ____ look like if it happened?

Exploring Questions (Go Bigger!):

- Let's back up a minute; what's the bigger issue behind this situation/problem?
- What in particular about this is important to you?

Focusing Questions (Go Smaller!):

- That's a big topic, what part of that would you like to focus on today?
- What part of this would be most immediately helpful to you right away?

- What would achieving that do for you? For others?

Example

For example: Brad: "I want people to engage more in our discussion times!"

Coach: "Getting people to engage more in your discussion time! That's a big topic, What part of that would you like to focus on today?"

Brad: "Well, what I really want is to help one lady in our group who never speaks during discussion."

3.) Reality/Awareness

Where we *actively listen about the current reality and uncover why change is needed*. Ask:

- *What does the current situation look like?*
- *What else do you think/feel about this?*

Some coaches say that this is where the bulk of the conversation will take place. I think this might differ on personality and the level at which the Leader has already thought about this issue. But keep in mind: this phase is where *discovery* and *awareness* can happen! We need to be careful not to undervalue this.

We have to figure out how to listen beyond the Leader's words. Reflect back, challenge some assumptions, help them probe into discovery.

Angles

By talking through the nature of a problem—even from different *angles*—the leader can discover something he never saw before:

- Like why this problem feels so personal to him
- Or what’s underneath the dynamics between two group members
- Or how others have been feeling that he didn’t think about till now

Some different “angles” include *relational* (What the the relational dynamics going on?), *information* (What additional information do you need?), and *values* (Which of your values are you trying to honor in this situation?).

Keep in mind, even as we need to take time to understand this present reality: We’re not going to stay stuck the whole conversation in the past or present. We are going to move onward to the future!

Example

For Example: Brad: “Well, the lady’s name is Eleanor. She’s a widow who lost her husband a year ago. And she’s the only person without a spouse in the group. Also, I don’t feel like me or my wife have really gotten to know her that much compared to others in the group. So I want to make sure she feels comfortable chiming in during our discussions. She has a valuable voice!”

4.) Options/Course

This is my favorite phase. This is where we *lay out the Options for getting at the Goal, and establish actionable steps*. Your goal is to help the Leader throw out options!—maybe even more options than they feel comfortable with—before they choose which one is best.

I personally like to ask “What are 5-6 options for how you could get at this?” Because at first that seems like an outlandish and inefficient number. But it gets us both thinking outside the box. It’s really cool to see what they come up with. Don’t let them corner you into giving them advice until you’ve asked them at least three times for their options!

Example

For example: Brad: “Sure, I could just call on Eleanor by name during discussion. But I could also have my wife take her out for coffee to get to know her more first. Or maybe I could even have the group all silently write down their answers to the first question of the night—and then we all go around and share ours!”

What a creative idea, right! And because the leader came up with it, he’s way more likely to own it!, isn’t he? When helping them get Options on the table, you’re free to keep it pretty basic: It’s just these questions:

- *What are some options for how you could get there?*
- *Which of these options do you like best?*

5.) Willingness/Highlights

Where we *review* what we talked about, *establish the coachee’s Willingness to complete* an Action Plan, and *We ask to circle back* to keep them accountable.

We ask:

- *What are your action steps?*
- *How committed are you to making this happen?* (If it’s less than a 7 on a 10 scale, then you need to revisit the previous steps to find out what makes them hesitant and how you can adjust to make a workable Action Plan)
- *Can I ask about it at our next meeting?*

Their action plan can have anywhere from 1-3 steps in it.

Example

For example: Brad: “Okay, well, in order to help Eleanor speak up at gatherings, I’m first going to have my wife give her a call this week to get to know her more. Then I’m going to have us write down our answers at our next gathering for at least one of the questions. I feel 100% confident that this is the right way to go, and I’d love for you to ask me how it went next time.”

By the way, this “Willingness” phase is a perfect opportunity to make specific “[S.M.A.R.T. Goals](#).”

ACTIVITY

Write down one question for each phase of your model (“G.R.O.W.” or “C.O.A.C.H.”): a question in your tone that you’d feel comfortable asking.

Examples Questions for Each Phase:

Connect: *How have you been? What’s God been doing in your life lately? What insights have you had since our last conversation? Follow-up: What progress did you make on your action steps?*

Outcome/Goal: *What outcome/result would you like to take away from our conversation today? What would you like to work on? What’s a problem you feel you need a solution to? What’s the most pressing goal you have for yourself or your group right now?*

Awareness/Reality: *What would you say are the key points to understand this situation? What other factors are influencing this? Let’s look at it from a different perspective: What do you think...? What else do you feel about this? What would help you to move forward?*

Course/Options: *What do you feel you need to do to move this forward? What are 5-6 options we can lay out to get at this? What are 2 more? Which of these options would you like to actually do? How? By when?*

Highlights/Willingness: *On a scale from 1-10 how ready are you to take action on this? (*If less than 7, return to making the plan.) What parts of what we talked about today were most helpful?*

What's something you're aware of now that you weren't thinking about before? What are your action steps? Can I ask you about this at our next meeting?

2. ASKING GOOD OPEN VS. CLOSED QUESTIONS

What is a closed-ended question? It ends up in “yes/no” answers or only choosing between a set of options (e.g.: “Do you want to read a book about this or talk to your friend?”). Open-ended questions keep the conversation going! But we need practice in doing these well.

ACTIVITY

Try to translate the following 15 closed questions into open-ended questions. If you want some helpful hints: see the key for how you can open your Open-ended Questions.

As a note: I've mentioned to avoid “why” questions. “Why” do you guys think we recommend avoiding “Why” questions? Because they make people feel defensive and can feel hard to answer. Instead, use “*What* led you to this?” or “*How* did you arrive at this conclusion?”

CLOSED (Yes/No)	OPEN
Is/Are Does/Do Would/Could	What How When Where Who *Avoid Why!

1. Are you happy about this decision?
2. Does your Co-Leader agree?
3. Are you going to speak with her directly?
4. Do you learn from books or by talking to people?
5. Is it time for you to make a career move?

6. Could you have a weekly meeting with them?
7. Would Tuesday be a good time to start this?
8. Are you praying regularly as a group right now?
9. Does your wife think the same way?
10. Are you going to ask Brent?
11. Is Lynn the one hindering you from moving forward?
12. Could someone in your group help?
13. Is your next step to share this with the group?
14. Did you have a nice week at work?

3. ASKING GOOD PURE QUESTIONS VS. JUDGMENTAL QUESTIONS

It's amazing how easily a question that I want to ask comes out as judging the other person.

For instance:

Judgmental Question: *What part does your negative attitude play in this problem?*

Pure Question: *How might your mind-set be helping or hindering this problem?*

Judgmental Question: *Have you thought about kicking them out of your group?*

Pure Question: *What options do you see in working with them?*

Oftentimes, Judgmental Questions don't come out as questions at all! They come out as statements like:

- *"That's a terrible idea."*
- *Or "I can't believe you didn't do it this way."*

“Pure” Questions are neutral. They motivate and encourage thinking it through. They’re also usually oriented toward positive opportunities instead of negative realities.

ACTIVITY

During this activity, translate the Judgmental Questions into Pure Questions.

1. What don’t you like about your group right now?
2. What’s wrong with Marty & Brianne?
3. That will never work.
4. How could you be less of a dictator in your family?
5. That’s a stupid idea.
6. I don’t think your current approach is working; what are you going to try next?
7. How could you be a better “team player”?

Hopefully reading about and practicing how to ask good questions begins transforming us into unlimited question-askers. But the real transformation isn’t going to happen until we actually look our leader in the eye, open our mouth, and ask them a question.