

The Art of Asking Questions

Simply telling your mentee what he or she needs to know can be ineffective for at least two reasons:

- The student is passive and uninvolved.
- The student may not be convinced he or she needs the truth, and therefore the lesson won't make an impact.

The eternal truths of God and wisdom for everyday living are too important (and complex) to reduce to a lecture of platitudes and clichés. We need to master the art of asking questions.

A good question puts the ball in the court of the mentee. Questions create an opportunity for students to become more active participants. Good questions allow for self-discovery. Personal understanding and ownership can be facilitated by good questions. Teach young people to think for themselves!

Some Keys to Good Questions

- Discern the particular truth you hope to communicate, and then create good questions to lead your mentee there.
- Avoid yes-or-no questions. Go for questions that will cause your mentee to think deeper or share more details.
- Don't settle for the "right answer." When your mentee gives you a quick answer, is he saying something he believes, or just repeating something he's heard before? Ask your student, "OK, I hear what you're saying, but what does that really mean?"
- Be positive.
- Draw your mentee out by asking for more information. Ask questions like, "And then what did you do?" "How did you feel when that happened?" "How can I help you?"

The Art of Listening

Along with asking good questions you will need to be a good listener. There is a danger in wanting to supply a young person with answers too quickly. Teenagers want to be heard just as any of us do. Here are some tips for active listening:

- Offer your undivided attention. Don't try to listen when you are doing something else.
- Maintain eye contact.
- Accept what your student is saying. You don't have to agree, but give your mentee some encouragement by showing interest in what he or she is saying, and don't act like you are anxious to change the subject or offer your advice.