

Helps for Curriculum Writers | NT1210 | Fall 2006

This list comes with thanks to Deb Bogaert, of *Lutheran Woman Today* and was developed for writers of Bible studies published in that magazine. Even so, you may find some good stuff here for other kinds of Bible study.

QUESTIONS GONE BAD

Not all questions are created equal.... Here are some to avoid:

GUESS WHAT I'M THINKING! I know the answer, do you? I have this point I really want you to figure out. If a concept is complex or difficult, it's probably best to make the point in exposition and ask questions of interpretation.

Example: What are the theological underpinnings of this passage?

THIS IS A TEST! These are questions with definite right/wrong answers that cannot be found in Scripture or in the study text. The participant has no way of knowing if her answer is "correct" or even close.

Example: What is the canon of the Bible?

THE NON-QUESTION. These are questions answered immediately by the writer.

Example: Read Matthew 1:1--2:6. What do you think Matthew's intention was in writing his Gospel? Matthew's intention is to demonstrate to his Jewish readers that Jesus is their Messiah.

THE INVASIVE QUESTION. Personal questions can get too personal.

Example: Share a time when you've been emotionally, physically or sexually abused.

BUSY WORK.

Example: List below the genealogy of Jesus (Matthew 1:1-16).

YES/NO QUESTIONS.

Example: Do you think this is true?

This kind of question is okay if along with it is, "explain your answer" or "why or why not?"

TOO EASY OR TOO OBVIOUS. Too many easy questions offend people. (There are fewer of these than one might think, however.)

Example: Who is the Messiah?

TOO DIFFICULT OR OBSCURE. A few really challenging questions are great. Too many are discouraging.

TOO MANY. Aim for 8 to 10 good questions, not 20.

TOO FEW. Better 8 to 10 good questions than 3 good questions.

TYPES OF QUESTIONS

Putting-It-All-Together Questions

These questions ask the participant to reorganize information into something new; take details and come up with the big picture, a global perspective; break down a big idea into smaller concepts. Compare/contrast wording is often key to this type of question. These type of questions often make the advanced participant feel she's getting her money's worth, but can be intimidating to the beginning student, so use with care.

- A. Compare the resurrection stories in the four Gospels. What does Mark include that the others don't? What does Mark "leave out"?
- B. How does the way Matthew tells the resurrection story reflect his goals?
- C. How are Mary and Elizabeth alike? How are they different?

In-My-Humble-Opinion Questions

Which is best? What is right? Is it true? These questions ask for evaluation, a judgment. Sprinkled gingerly throughout the sessions, these questions ask participants to "take a stand." They require a good leader and careful facilitation in a group setting to allow for respectful discussion of opinions.

- A. What is necessary for eternal life?
- B. When is war justified? Explain your answer.
- C. Where is God when people suffer?
- D. Is tithing essential to being a good steward? Explain.

Imagine-All-the-Feelings Questions

Here participants are asked to feel, empathize, relate, imagine.

- A. What goes through your mind when you see a homeless person?
- B. Imagine you are Mary and you've just be told you will give birth to the Messiah. What are you thinking? What are you feeling?
- C. Jesus recalled Psalm 22 during his crucifixion. In times of trouble, what hymns or scripture verses do you recall?
- D. If you were asked to paint a picture of this text, what colors would you use?
- E. Imagine that your hands are wings lifting a problem up to heaven. At Jesus' feet is a box for burdens. See yourself leaving your trouble in the box, closing the lid, and bringing your hands back down to your arms. Pray for the trust to leave this trouble for Jesus to handle.

Just-Do-It Questions

These questions require a hands-on approach and recognize that some people learn best by doing.

- A. Make a collage reflecting the theme "All God's Children."
- B. Write a letter of thanks to someone whose life and witness has helped you grow in faith.
- C. Take four "meditation" walks, each time focusing on one sense (what you see, smell, hear, or touch). How did each different focus change the walk for you?
- D. Label this diagram of...
- E. Draw something from nature that represents a quality that you like about yourself.

Find-the-Answer-in-the-Bible Questions

It is good to include several questions in each session that can be answered directly by referring to Scripture--thereby assuring participants that they are engaging in Bible study--especially at the beginning of the session.

Direct-answer (objective) questions might come in the form of listing, true/false, matching, fill-in-the-blank, underlining. Some objective questions are more difficult than others.

- A. Read Matthew 5:1-12. Who does Jesus call *blessed*?
- B. Read the first creation story, Genesis 1--2:4a. List what God created, in order.
- C. Read Hebrews 13:1-5. Fill in the chart below, using the sample as a guide.

Verse	What we are to do	Reason
13:2	show hospitality	may entertain angels without knowing it
13:3		
13:4		
13:5		

- D. Underline in your Bible the gifts of the spirit mentioned in 1 Corinthians 12:4-11, or write them below.

Understanding Questions

If direct or objective-type questions can be compared to a multiplication problem, the questions in this category are similar to story problems. Before a participant can answer an understanding question, she must take the passage, observation, facts or story and draw her own conclusions as to what it might mean.

- A. What might it mean to be "poor in spirit"?
- B. Read these miracle stories of Jesus, and make up a title for each:
 - Matthew 9:18-34
 - Mark 3:1-6
 - Luke 8:26-39
- C. Read Matthew 5:17-20. Does Jesus take the law seriously? Explain your answer.
- D. Read 2 Corinthians 5:14-15. What do you think is the message of this passage? (Note how "What do you think" is a better choice than "What is.")

Bring-It-Home Questions

These questions ask the participant to apply themes and concepts of the session to today's world, and especially to her own life.

- A. John the Baptist was a character clearly "outside the norm" of the community of faith. How open is your congregation to persons seen as "outsiders"? How might your congregation become more accepting or welcoming?
- B. In what ways is your home a "house church"? In what additional ways could it be?
- C. Are you more like the prodigal or the older brother? Why?