

Rooted in Paradoxes

Lesson 2: Questioning Faith

Objectives:

Students will

- begin to explore the value of asking questions in regards to areas of faith
- consider how to ask “better” questions, rather than just looking for a quick answer
- be challenged to honestly and openly explore their faith

Materials Needed

- ☐ Pens and paper
- ☐ Large white board or poster paper and markers
- ☐ Bible (one per group)
- ☐ Lesson 2 handout “Questioning Faith” (one per group)
- ☐ Large sticky notes

Minds On

Begin by playing “20 Questions” with your group. Depending on group size, this could be done as a large group, or perhaps in small groups, or even in as a tournament with students pairing off and whoever “gets” the item in the least amount of questions moves on to face another student, and this continues until one is victorious. You may want to have prizes to help bolster enthusiasm and participation.

(In case you don’t know... 20 Questions is a game in which one person in the group thinks of an object or a substance and the other people ask “yes” or “no” questions about it until they determine what it is, but they can only ask 20 questions!)

Say something like: We all use questions in order to gain information. They help us make sense of what is going on around us. If we don’t understand something, we can ask for an explanation. If we didn’t hear something properly, we can ask for it to be repeated or for clarification. If want to know more about anything, the best way to find what you’re looking for is to simply ask questions. Questions are a natural, healthy, useful strategy that we use all the time, often without really even thinking about it.

Action

Say something like: Many places, questions are encouraged or even requested of you. At school a lot of times teachers will pause to see if there are any questions. Asking questions shows that you are engaging with the topic at hand and are thinking things through. Can anyone think of other places where questions are valued and encouraged? (encourage students responses)

There are, however, some times when asking questions is looked down on. It may be seen as being disrespectful or not trusting someone or something like you should. Can anyone think of some places or situations where you have gotten, or could get, in trouble for asking questions? (encourage students responses)

A lot of times, we feel like church is one of those places that we aren't supposed to ask questions. We somehow get the idea that we are supposed to take everything that is said as being completely true, without thinking about it or asking questions. There are other times when we feels like everyone around us knows what's going on, and we worry that asking questions would make us look dumb or somehow out of touch with what is going on around us.

Unfortunately, this same feeling sometimes transfers over to our relationship with God. We feel guilty or shameful if we get frustrated with our situation and want to ask God what is going on, so a lot of times we don't, and that just leaves us with a bunch of questions that go unanswered. Other times we may feel like we are the only one who ever experiences doubt or confusion about what God is doing in the world around us, and so we may feel embarrassed, and keep all of our questions to ourselves.

Let's take a look at how Jesus responded when people asked him questions or were dealing with doubts.

Have students work in groups of 2 -4 to complete the Lesson 2 handout. Give them about 10 minutes, and then bring the group back together and discuss their findings.

Say something like: Right now, we want to give you a chance to ask some of those questions that you have wanted to ask, but haven't, or to give you an opportunity to think of some questions that maybe we should be asking!

Have students break up into the same groups as before. Give each group several sticky notes, and invite them to work together to come up with questions (one per sticky) that they would like to ask God. Encourage them to be as genuine as possible, and not to be afraid to raise some "tough" questions. Also make room for questions that might seem silly, by recognizing that those questions may be one in a series that lead to a deeper place for your students. Have them create 5-7 questions, or give them 5 minutes.

When the groups are finished, bring the large group back together and compile a master list of questions by having groups post their stickies onto poster paper or a white board. If questions are repeated, the stickies can be overlapped, showing the students that they are not the only one asking that question. Try to fight the urge to offer immediate answers to their questions. Make sure that you don't belittle or downplay any of the questions, even the ones that seem simplistic or obvious to you.

Encourage the students to look for common themes or ideas that are present in the questions and group them into different categories by moving the sticky notes around as makes sense. Where possible, help them to see the bigger or "better" question that lies behind what they have asked. (Note: You may want to keep a record of the questions that have been asked. This can be a very valuable tool for helping with topics for Sunday School, Small Groups, or other events.)

Consolidate/Debrief

Say something like: Tonight is about asking questions, not finding simple answers. We need to understand that these questions are good and valuable, and can bring us closer to God. We don't need to feel guilty or ashamed because we have them. We need to be willing to ask them, because that's the only way to find answers, or to see the "better" questions that are behind them, as we have done tonight. We do, however, need to be ready to hear God's answers, or perhaps be ready to answer some of HIS questions.

Optional Experience

Have students get comfortable, perhaps sitting or lying down on the floor. Dim the lights and play some quiet instrumental music. Read through all, or portions of, Job 38-42:6 with dramatic emphasis. The reading could be split up among a number of readers positioned in different places around the room creating a "whirlwind" effect for the students in the middle.

God knows what he is doing. He has a plan and a purpose for each one of us, and he loves us deeply. He wants us to get to know him. He wants to have a relationship with you because you are special and unique, and he cares about you very much. So don't be afraid to ask questions...it's the only way to get to know him better!

Encourage students to choose one question from the board and see what God says about it throughout the next week. Challenge them to look for answers in the Bible, by talking to people around them, or by looking for what God is saying and doing around them.