



SUNDAY LESSONS

This Month's Topic:
**Becoming More
Christlike**

How to Ask **QUESTIONS THAT MATTER**

*Asking the right questions can help open people's hearts
to a testimony of the truth.*

By David A. Edwards
Church Magazines

You have opportunities to teach all around you, whether in a minute-long conversation on a bus, in a lesson at church, in online comments, or in a deep one-on-one discussion with a friend.

So here's a tip for effective teaching in any situation: ask questions.

Good questions lead to good learning, and luckily, asking good questions is something you can study, practice, and learn to do well. Here's how.

Ask Questions That Matter

The questions that matter are the ones that make you think and feel deeply, the ones that lead you to truth, testimony, and change. They can cover a wide range of subjects, but they usually have a few things in common: (1) they're not superficial or merely factual (though they can be a follow-up to factual questions), (2) they have some connection to our everyday lives, and (3) they challenge us to give more than just a preprogrammed response.

Remember Why We Ask Questions

Questions engage us by introducing a gap that our minds then want to fill. Specifically, asking questions that prompt personal reflection can allow the following process to occur:

1. People become interested in what you're saying.
2. They use their agency to think about and express an answer.
3. This use of agency allows the Holy Ghost to testify to them of the truth.¹

With this process in mind, you'll get a sense for what kinds of questions to ask and which ones to avoid.

EXAMPLE: Instead of just asking, "Why is reading the scriptures important?" you might ask, "How has studying the scriptures made a difference in your life?"

Remember You're Teaching People, Not Just Lessons

If you know the people you're teaching and think about their needs, you'll choose questions aimed at helping them, not just at getting certain ideas across.

EXAMPLE: Instead of just asking, "What are the steps in the repentance process?" you might ask, "How do you make things right when you know you've done something wrong?"

Study and Think Deeply

To prepare to teach the gospel, study the scriptures and the teachings of modern prophets and apostles, and pray so that the Holy Spirit can be with you and those you teach (see D&C 42:14; 50:21–22).

Also, if you want to ask people questions that really make them think, you need to do that same kind of thinking yourself. Ponder what you study. You'll find that what gets you thinking most deeply are the questions you ask yourself along the way. Pay attention to the kinds of questions that make you really think. These are the questions that lead to greater insight and testimony, the same kinds of questions you could ask when you're helping others learn about the gospel.

EXAMPLE: Instead of asking, "How do we obtain charity?" you might ask, "What do you think it means in Moroni 7:48 when it says to pray for charity 'with all the energy of heart?'"



Ease into Deeper Questions

Sometimes it's best to ease into questions requiring more thought and self-reflection, so you may want to ask an introductory question that's easy to answer and then follow it up with one or more questions that lead to more thoughtful responses. Here are some simple examples:

Introductory Question	Follow-up Question
How old was Joseph Smith when he went into the Sacred Grove?	When have you prayed to Heavenly Father with the kind of sincere desire that Joseph had?
Do you believe in God?	What role does God play in your life?
What have you done to serve others recently?	How does knowing that we're all children of God change the way you think about service?

If you seek the guidance of the Holy Ghost as you ask questions, you will be more likely to ask the right question at the right time. You never know—it might change someone's life. **NE**

NOTE

1. "You must exercise your agency to authorize the Spirit to teach you" (Richard G. Scott, "To Acquire Spiritual Guidance," *Ensign*, Nov. 2009, 8).

TIPS FOR ASKING QUESTIONS

- Wait for responses.
- Use follow-up questions to spark deeper thinking.
- Avoid questions that create controversy or encourage argument.
- Occasionally ask questions that prompt silent reflection.

For more tips, see *Teaching, No Greater Call: A Resource Guide for Gospel Teaching* (1999), 69-70.

JOIN THE CONVERSATION

Things to Ponder for Sunday

- Has anyone ever asked you a question that made you want to know more about the gospel or to change your life in some way?
- How did the Savior use questions when He taught?

Things You Might Do

- As you study the scriptures this week, write a list of some of the questions you think of.
- In church, ask a question as part of a class discussion.