

# Questions for the Heart within Discipleship Relationships and Groups

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(with help from an assortment of places/experiences such as: Parakaleo, counseling sessions, Wellspring, and heart training from Monte Starkes)

We all need help getting to the heart of an issue, a person, a story. As disciples and disciple-makers, we want to be able to see the roots of unbelief in *our own hearts*, and then, help others to do the same, because as we walk in greater freedom when we do that, we long for the same for others.

I don't mean for this guide to be comprehensive, but just *one* helpful tool to assist you as you love and lead others to the cross. It will not answer all questions, and very rarely are we ever the ones called to "fix" an issue, sin pattern, unbelief, or just plain hard and difficult situation; but, we can point to the One who can and choose not to be afraid of entering into the pain, questions, and uncertainty, just because we don't have an "answer". And yes, there will be times when someone in your group needs some specific counseling, whether that's with you one-on-one, someone else (ask for help!), or a professional that you help open their eyes to. All that to say – let's lean into our brothers and sisters, not afraid of the heart, or of sitting in the dark unable to "fix it". Let's be more curious than certain, and depend on Jesus to finish the work he began.

For example, what do you do when a person says, "well, I'm just a selfish person. That's it." or, "I just want to be engaged like those around me." Or, "I need a new job. Mine is so frustrating." And, they stop at that. You don't want to just leave it there but aren't sure whether you give advice, fix it, or just say, "oh, me too. Let's move on now."

Or perhaps, someone tells part of their story, but you sense there's more there and maybe *they need some help being seen and heard*...maybe they need to know that others **want** them to continue talking, sharing God's faithfulness, or sharing their struggles, but they aren't sure if anyone could possibly identify with them. Or, if others will just silently judge, which is a great fear. **You, as the leaders, get to lead your group members in doing this, and then they will start to do it naturally too!**

Now, for starters, I know we aren't God. We **aren't** the One who will produce the change in hearts. We sow seeds, love well, create space for authenticity and depth of conversation, and DIG into the Word, holding it up to our lives and seeing what needs to change as we feebly attempt to walk in repentance and newness. None of the questions I will give you to ask, or books I could suggest to read will make you the perfect leader or will change the hearts of those you disciple. *But, I hope it gives you an **arsenal** for a depth of conversation, and that the Spirit will lead as you lean in and ask questions.*

My main goal in this document is to help walk alongside you as you walk alongside others. And, equally important, give you an arsenal of heart questions to ask **yourself**, so you can get the

root of your own heart, see where you are believing a lie, repent and speak the truth to it. The point of getting to the heart is getting to identify what the root issue is, not just trying to pluck the fruit or cut the branch, so that you can turn to streams of living water, believing the truth and living out of that. And then, as we believe the truth, we long to proclaim it to others and help them identify the roots of unbelief and walking in freedom as well. This leads to multiplying our lives out in discipleship and evangelism.

Let's say someone is telling their story, but through the Spirits guidance, you want to enable them to tell more, if they want – you want them to know you are safe and that you care about the details.

### **Some simple questions to ask are:**

*\*Can you tell me more about that?*

*\*Was there anything you left out that you want to backtrack to and add?*

*\*How did it feel to share your story/share that with us?*

**Or a response:**

*\*Thank you for sharing and being vulnerable with us. I love that you trust us with your life. I know that can be hard! Can I pray over you and your story right now?*

*\*I loved it when you said \_\_\_\_\_. I can identify with your experience of \_\_\_\_\_.*

*\*I learned more of God's unfailing faithfulness through your story. You are so valuable to our group!*

I think we all want to share; we are just afraid that we will be naked and exposed when we do and that no one will understand. Let's cover our brothers and sisters back up when they are exposed! **Not because we are scared of what we see, but because we want to honor their dignity!**

### **Here's a more comprehensive list of questions you could use in follow up:**

What would that give you? (ex: a better job, having a baby, sinning less, etc)

What do you think God is up to in this?

What do you think God wants you to hear from His heart?

What are you longing for?

What emotions are you experiencing?

What might the underlying issues be?

What lie are you believing right now?

What scripture could you use to combat the lie?  
What actions do you want to take to move forward?  
How is this affecting your family?  
What do you want Jesus to do for you?  
Based on what we know in Scripture, what do you think the Father is saying to you now? The Spirit? Jesus?  
What might walking in repentance look like in this situation?  
Where is Jesus inviting you to believe Him today?  
What would it look like to trust God in that?  
Is there any unconfessed sin in your life you need to repent of?  
What do you think it would look like to walk in freedom in this situation?  
What would “failing” take away from you?  
How can we walk alongside you in this?

#### Example:

“I just want to get married.”

*What would that do for you?*

“It would make me know that I’m wanted.”

*What would being wanted give you?*

“Love.”

*What would being loved do for you?*

“It would give me peace that I won’t be alone. I want to feel secure.”

\*At this point, you’ve gotten to a root issue that *everyone* in your group can identify with at some level. We can’t all identify with being single and longing to be married, but we can identify with a **struggle with security**.

Sometimes, this question is to help enlighten their hearts to the root issue, not just the fruit issue. You may **not** need to give specific answers to “solve the problem.” *But you have helped to open their eyes to the reality of not finding security in Jesus.*

#### You could follow up with:

*\*Can I challenge you to dig into scripture and find how God is your true security?*

*\*Is there something in your past that makes you fear being alone, or fear not being secure/loved?*

*\*Do you believe God will provide everything you need?*

*\*Can we move in and pray for you about that, and encourage you in scriptures through the week for you to meditate on, and ask you about it later?*

Now, will it go exactly as I wrote that? Maybe, maybe not. But I love how this line of questioning is *more curious than certain* and calls THEM to see and say things.

**DO:**

\*Let them cry as many tears as they want, as long as it takes. The bible study, scripture memory, and equipping to live on mission are super important, yes, but let's apply what we're learning and equip each other to dig down deep to the roots of our hearts so we can experience authentic transformation!

\*Move in with a gesture of a hand on the knee or shoulder. Sit close – you are there for them. Your group members will follow suit!

\*Say things like: I can relate. I understand. I am willing to walk alongside you in this. I admire you for sharing. I am broken over what has happened to you. I want to enter into the battle with you.

\*If, a few days later, you think of a question or scripture or are praying for them, text and tell them! The Spirit may bring something to mind later and people usually feel valued when they know you are continuing to think about and pray for them and that you are digging in with them.

**DON'T:**

\*Try to fix it.

\*Give solutions. (sometimes this may be appropriate – ask the Spirit to lead you here!!)

\*Tell them “it will be okay” (because it really might not be).

\*Share your whole story of what you perceive to be the same experience. It often minimizes their experience.

\*Shy away from asking a follow-up question about a sin pattern they are struggling with. You may be the one to speak the truth in love and call them out gently in their sin and lead them to the Word and to walk in repentance. (James 5:19-20)

\*Be hard on yourself. God is at work and is faithful to lead and guide your heart as well as theirs. Nothing is a waste for a child of God! You aren't the fixer, just the facilitator, and not doing it perfectly really brings more glory to Christ than to you!

**Lean in friends. Let's lean into the hard, the questions, the unbelief in our hearts, the scary and uncertain. Let's lean in because our sanctification is a community endeavor as we *fight together for each other*. Let's lean in because the Jesus that holds us, holds our brothers and sisters too.**