

People Change When You Inquire

A *Forbes* leadership article: “How to Ask More Powerful Questions” gives us insight into what makes inquiry powerful when we want to help people change:

- It is open-ended: It’s asking what, when or how instead of asking a yes or no question.
- It comes from a beginner’s mindset: It starts from the position of: “I don’t know...”
- It is clear and succinct: It keeps things simple, without using too many words.
- It is impactful: It’s not one question after another – maybe 2-3 questions in an hour.
- It happens in the moment: You can’t plan it! Great questions happen in the moment.

There is no script for asking powerful questions. There is, however, an often-overlooked trait that will set you up to ask powerful questions in any situation. What’s the trait? Curiosity. As we get older, we are trained to lose our curiosity when it becomes clear it’s not acceptable to ask all the questions that come to mind. The secret to asking more powerful questions is digging deeper. It’s triggering our 3-year-old selves and reconnecting with our curiosity.

<https://www.forbes.com/sites/forbescoachescouncil/2017/12/19/how-to-ask-more-powerful-questions/?sh=7467973e47dc>

That’s a great summary of “powerful questions”, but what most of us secretly want to know is, ***“Why should I ask questions when I know what the other person needs to know or do?”***

Another *Forbes* article “Three Reasons Why the Best Leaders Ask Rather Than Tell” states:

<https://www.forbes.com/sites/forbescoachescouncil/2019/10/01/three-reasons-why-the-best-leaders-ask-rather-than-tell/?sh=9d8e811eb293>

Asking is better because:

- Asking opens the door to new ideas and possibilities. Inquiry promotes collaboration, creativity, innovation. (Note: People are “stuck” and they need help to get out of a rut.)
- Asking demonstrates vulnerability in admitting that you don’t have all the answers. (Note: if we act like we know all the answers, the other person may resent that or become dependent on us for future answers)
- Asking enables others to lead. (Note: people need to learn to lead themselves, set their own goals, create actions steps, and follow through with accountability.)

How does Scripture model for us the importance of inquiry?

Jesus asked lots of questions, and he told us to ask:

- “Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you.” Matthew 7:7
- And stopping, Jesus called them and said, “What do you want me to do for you?” Matthew 20:32
- “What are you looking for?” John 1:38
- “What profit would there be for one to gain the whole world and forfeit his life, and what can one give in exchange for his life?” Matthew 16:26
- To Adam, God asked: “Where are you?” Genesis 3:9

Inquiry was an overarching theme in Jesus' life and teachings.

Through the use of questions, he underscored the importance of searching, wondering, and deep pondering that helps followers better understand both themselves and his wonderful ways of life. For those made in his image, questions are a gift as they keep us in a state of Spirit-led discovery, humility, and following that leads us to answers. If we are going to “make disciples” as he did, we would do well to follow his example and ask more questions. I find it incredible that the Lord of the universe would ask his creations questions when he knows all the answers, but that’s what he did.

Those who are in Christ have “the mind of Christ.” (See 1 Cor. 2:16)

This is a mind-blowing fact, but it’s true. When Jesus-followers are asked a powerful question by someone who wants God’s best for them, the Holy Spirit in them searches their heart, soul, and mind for true truth. The question, itself, allows them to tap into their life experiences, memories, beliefs, desires, intuition, obstacles, doubts, and fears. And at that point, the Spirit can nudge them toward reconciling those old, inner drivers with what they know to be true based on the Word of God. At first, they may not like the answers they hear from the Holy Spirit, who is there to graciously guide them into all truth, but at least they are now more aware of where they actually are in life compared to where Jesus wants them to be. Seeing the gap, they want to close it.

Inquiry can lead to a much-needed structure for change.

Once Jesus-followers are convicted by the Holy Spirit, they can make good use of what’s known as “coaching methodology” to structure their life so it more fully aligns with Jesus’ commands. This structure, then, helps them set goals, brainstorm various options to achieve the goals, make an action plan, launch into action with determination and motivation, and sustain the transformation utilizing the support, encouragement, and accountability of others who believe in them and the power of Jesus in their life.

Inquiry plus structure “works” because it combines three transformative influences:

- 1) The Holy Spirit
- 2) A safe and caring relationship with a trained Discipleship Coach
- 3) A structured approach to questioning that draws out the purpose in a man's heart, which is like deep water. (See Prov. 20:5) By asking questions like: “What are you thinking in your hearts?”; “What are you looking for?”; and “What do you want me to do for you?”, Jesus enabled twelve individuals, early in their Christian faith, to discover transformational answers so they could, in turn, “Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit... teaching them to obey everything I have commanded...” (Matt. 28:18-20)

Each disciple needs a discipleship coach. And, as my childhood pastor said, “That’ll preach!”

Like the original twelve disciples, each one of us needs a Discipleship Coach, and each one of us is commanded to “Go and make disciples.” All we need is some training and the willingness to love one another in very practical way. You can actually change others through your inquiries.