

Questions to Build a Relationship and Uncover Thirst

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Listening well is a critical first step for evangelism. Missiologist David Hesselgrave said,

“More than any other communicator, [the missionary] should have the incentive to discover all he can about people — the way they think, speak, act, evaluate, and decide— and the remote and contemporary background factors that have molded their present state.”

The more skilled we are at asking good questions and then listening intently with real curiosity to know the other person, the more they will know that we genuinely care about them. We will also be better prepared to share with them our own story and the gospel message. As we listen to them and the Holy Spirit, we will have ideas as to which ‘facet’ of the gospel to begin with as we share with them the Good News. Jesus modeled this method for us in several encounters with very different people. He began where they were, with the questions they were asking at that time in their lives and then moved into revealing the truths that answered their deepest longings.

Begin with the general background questions below and as you do be alert to possible worldview or life issue questions that may surface. These are areas that you could pursue at a later time as your relationship develops. Look and pray for opportunities to invite them to read with you what the Bible says about a particular question or topic of discussion. When you finish, invite them to see what the message of the Bible as a whole is all about.

General getting to know a person

Background

- Tell me about your family, parents, grandparents, siblings? What was your relationship with them like? What are your best and worst memories about growing up in your family?
- Tell me about your hometown? What is it best known for? What would you recommend I see or do if I ever visited?
- What are you reading that is not an assignment or required by your work?
- How are you growing personally?
- How would you describe your father and his impact on your life?
- Tell me about your mentor and his/her impact on your life.
- What do you think would probably surprise most people about you? Why?
- What is your greatest strength, and what are you doing to develop it?
- What do you consider to be two major turning points in your life?
- What is something you consider to be a great personal success? Why was it so significant?
- Tell me about two of your life-long friends and why they have such an impact on your life. What made you choose them?
- How would you describe your mother/father and the impact they have had on your life?
- What is your favorite thing in American culture? What is your least favorite? (American students answer as well)
- What is your favorite thing about your home culture? Least favorite? Americans share something they have seen in other cultures that they love and oh were true in America?
- What is the weirdest thing you have seen people do here? (Americans answer too)
- What is the weirdest thing you have seen people do in your home country?
- How is America perceived in your country?
- What is the hardest thing about going away to school in America?

- What led to you pursuing a career in _____?
- How did you meet your wife/husband?
- What has parenting been like for you?
- How does your family feel about you being here?
- What have been some of the big turning points in your life?
- Where do you feel you are really doing well in life? Not doing so well at life?
- Who are some heroes in your life? Who do you look up to? ... Why is that?
- What are some of the biggest challenges you have faced in life? How did you deal with them?
- Where would you like to be in life in 5/10/20/30... years?
- Has anything ever happened to you that was dramatic, personal or spectacular enough to cause you to be certain there is a God who is both infinite and personally caring?

Religion

- Do you have a background in religion? If so, what was it like?
- Is religion important to you? Do you consider yourself a religious person?
- Was there ever a time you believed in God? If so, why did you think it changed?
- Was there a time in your life when religion/spirituality became more or less important to you? Have you had any turning points along the way in your spiritual journey? What led to those turning points?
- How important is spirituality to your life now?
- Are there any things that attract you to religion? And are there any things that turn you away?
- What experiences have most shaped your spiritual life?
- What would it take for you to believe in God in general and Christianity in particular?
- When do you feel close to God? When do you feel far away from Him?
- If you could know God personally, would you be interested?
- Have your views on religion changed since you were a child? How? Do you believe what you were taught as a child?

Worldview

Existence of God

- Do you believe in God, higher power, gods, a Creator? Why or why not? Has that belief changed over your lifetime?
- If you don't believe in any God, how do you explain the universe and life as we know it came into existence? This is not about what you were taught in school but rather what you believe is true.
- What do you think about this statement regarding what all people on earth know to be true? Do you agree? Why or why not?
 - "They know the truth about God because he has made it obvious to them. For ever since the world was created, people have seen the earth and sky. Through everything God made, they can clearly see his invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature. So they have no excuse for not knowing God. Yes, they knew God, but they wouldn't worship him as God or even give him thanks. And they began to think up foolish ideas of what God was like." Romans 1

Truth – is there such a thing as objective truth?

- What have been some standards of truth for you in your life? your family, teachers, your culture, experts, science, God, religion, church???
- Is there such a thing as morality, things that are always right or wrong no matter the circumstances or people involved?
- How do you know what is true? What is false? How do you determine what is right or what is wrong? Logic – our ability to think? Feelings – our emotions tell me what is true or right?
- Does truth come from within us or from outside of us?
- Does truth change over time?
- What do you believe about the Bible as a source of truth given by God? Have you ever read it for yourself?
- Do you consider yourself a seeker of the truth?

Life after death – existence of a soul or spirit

- What do you think happens after our life here? Do you think there is at least a part of us that lives on after death?
- What do you think a person needs to do in order to enter into life after death?

Human Nature

- Do you think people have a natural tendency to do good or evil? Are you born this way or do people change as they mature into adults?
- Why do people do what they do? What are the assumptions you make about people?
- Are some groups of people better than others? More intelligent, stronger, kinder, moral than others?
- Do you believe that we are more than just flesh, do we also have a soul or spirit or both?
- Are humans any different than animals? In what ways?
- How would you describe what we call the conscience? Is it reliable? Do animals have something similar? Where did it come from?
- Where does your sense of value or self-worth come from? Yourself, your accomplishments, from what others think about you, your family, friends or ???
- When you were growing up where did you try to find your significance? Did this satisfy you? Why or why not? Did this change over time, do you look to other things to find significance now?
 - Story of two sons. Where did they each find their significance? Did it change over time? Luke 15:11-32

Marriage

- Who invented/created the concept of marriage?
- Do you think marriage is important? Why?
- How do you plan to have a good marriage?
- Do you think this relationship will make you happy?
- Have you ever read any good books about marriage or taken a class on marriage?
- Do you know any examples of a good marriage that you would like to model your own after?
- I believe in a Creator God who also designed marriage for our good. He gave us some instructions on how a good marriage should work. Would you like to look at some of those instructions with me?

Money

- Have you dealt with the questions? “How much money is enough, and what do I do with the rest?”
- Is money a good or bad thing? What do you think about this statement? “For the love of money is the root of all kinds of evil.”
- “Whoever loves money never has enough; whoever loves wealth is never satisfied with their income. This too is meaningless.” Do you agree or not? Why?
- Do you think wealthy people are the happiest people? Why or why not?
- How would you define materialism, and how do you deal with it in your life?
- If you were to inherit a million dollars today, and couldn’t spend it on your own enterprise or keep it for yourself, what would you do with it and why?

Time

- Do you view time as linear, with a beginning and end or as a never-ending cycle? Why? What difference would your answer make in how you live your life?
- What is the key to maintaining balance in your life?

Work

- Do you think work is a good thing or a bad thing?
- Should you work hard just so that you can retire as soon as possible?
- What would be your ideal job?
- How do you think a person can keep from becoming a workaholic? What is wrong with being a workaholic?

Contentment

- Would you describe yourself as a person who is content right now or are you always looking for the next thing (accomplishment, degree, job, income, relationship) to bring that contentment?
- How do you deal with regrets from your past?
- What are you living for? What do you value most?
- If you could design the perfect life for yourself from here on out, what would it look like?
- What do you think is most people’s vision of “the good life”? What motivates people to go about living life the way they do? What about you personally? What are you striving for?
- What is the one thing, that if you had it, you would be able to say, “Enough, I need nothing else in life, I am satisfied.”
- “Watch over your heart(desires) with all diligence, from it flow the springs of life.” Proverbs 4:23 What do you think this means? Is it true? Do our desires control the direction of our life? How can we watch over those desires? Who or what controls your decisions and the direction of your life?
- What did the author do to find meaning in this life? What did he conclude about his experiences? Read Ecclesiastes 1:12-2:26

Meaning/purpose in life

- What single thing would you like to make absolutely certain you do (if at all possible) during your lifetime?
- Is there any purpose or meaning in life? If so, how can we know what it is? What do you think is the purpose of life?
- Who or what are the most meaningful things in your life right now?
- What are 2 or 3 major truths upon which you have based your decision-making in life?

Trials/troubles/hardship in life

- What do you believe is the greatest issue in the world? What would you do to fix it?
- What do you believe is most needed in our world right now?
- Why is there so much suffering in the world? What do you think has gone wrong?
- When you have problems or questions, who do you turn to for help?
- From what or whom do you draw the strength to endure a difficult situation?
- Do you pray, if so, who do you pray to? Why??
- What causes your greatest concern or stress?
- What do you do to relieve your stress?
- What do I do to relieve stress? 1 Pet 5:7 I believe in a creator God who made the world and everything in it, and He also cares about me and my problems!
- How do you handle pressure? When the pressure is really on, what do you need from your friends?
- What have you found to be the best way of absorbing disappointment, rejection, distress and discouragement?

Christianity

- Have you ever discussed with anyone the meaning of Biblical Christianity?
- What do you believe about Jesus?
- Do you put Jesus in the same category as other religious figures? Why or why not?
- What do you understand the core of the Christian message to be? In other words, what is your understanding of the gospel?
- In your opinion, how does one become a Christian?
- What do you find most attractive about Christianity/the person of Christ? What do you find least attractive about Christianity/the person of Christ?
- Have you ever read the Bible? Would you like to?

Holidays

- What is the most important holiday in your country/culture/ to you personally? Why?
- Did you know that Christmas/Easter celebrate historical events? Do you know what happened? Would you like to read about these events as recorded by eyewitnesses?
- Can I tell you about when Christmas/Easter became more than a cultural celebration for me?