

Soul Care Questions

Proverbs 20:5

A plan in the heart of a man is like deep water, But a man of understanding draws it out.

Kinds of Questions to Ask

- Avoid yes and no questions unless it is what you are looking for or you have a non-communicative counselee.
- Ask questions that will eliminate extraneous material.
- Ask questions about specifics.
- Ask *what* questions for basic data gathering. After asking the *what*, follow it with:
 - *How?* The answer to this question gets at the mechanics of something, i.e., the *way* in which it happened.
 - *What for?* The answer to this question is aimed at motive, purpose, or function. It is not identical with *why*, although at first it may seem to be. *Why* implies all of the problems of the various steps of causality that so often lead into speculation and frustration. *What for* is narrower and focuses only upon intention.
- *How often?* By this question the counselor seeks to discover whether an event was a practice or only one isolated incident. He asks it when he is looking for patterns.
- *When?* The answer to this question may reveal contingencies. One of the basic questions that counselees often should be asked is, "What led you to come for counseling *now*?" Often the answer to that question will uncover an important precipitating factor. It may disclose the fact that one has reached a desperation point at the culmination of many events. (Adams, Jay E., *The Christian Counselor's Manual: The Practice of Nouthetic Counseling*, p. 274-5, 85-8)

Examples of Questions to Ask

Preliminary Questions

- What is your problem?
- What have you done about your problem?
- Why do you want to fix your problem?
- What would fixing your problem look like?
- What do you want me to do?

More Specific Questions

- What was going on? (Tell me about the situation.)
- What were you thinking and feeling? (Heart response to situation.)
- What did you do? (Active, behavioral response to situation.)
- Why did you do it? (Motives, goals, desires that shaped the active response.)
- What was the result? (How their response affected the situation.)
- When you have a problem, what do you usually do?
- Tell me about your relationship with God: how it began, how it has developed, how important it is, where God fits into the total picture of your life or the picture of what is happening to you now, what you are doing to strengthen your relationship with God.
- When you have had problems in the past, what has helped you most in resolving them?
- What are some things you wish you could undo?
- What do/did you want, desire, seek, aim for, pursue, hope for?
- What do you fear or tend to worry about?
- When did you first begin to experience this problem?
- What brings out the worst in you?
- What brings out the best in you?
- What were you thinking when you ...
- What do you think about most often?
- What do you talk about

Physical

- Generally speaking, how would you describe your present and past physical health?
- Tell me about your sleep patterns.
- What is involved in the work you do?
- If you could change four things about your work, what would you change?
- Give me a description of what you do in a typical day in your life.

Resources

- Tell me about the most important persons in your life, and why they are so important to you.
- Share with me the relationships in your life that give you the most joy; the most sadness or heartache.
- When you have a problem, what do you usually do?
- Tell me about the persons in your life with whom you feel comfortable sharing your private thoughts and feelings?
- Tell me about your relationship with God: how it began, how it has developed, how important it is, where God fits into the total picture of your life or the picture of what is happening to you now, what you are doing to strengthen your relationship with God.
- Describe what your church means to you.
- When you have had problems in the past, what has helped you most in resolving them?
- What are some of your greatest resources, strengths; greatest deficiencies/weaknesses?
- What are your Bible reading and prayer practices?

Emotions

- What are some emotions that you frequently experience?
- How do others see you emotionally?
- If you were able to change anything about yourself emotionally, what would you want to change?
- Give me a few examples of times when you were extremely... (angry, happy, sad).
- How do you feel about what is happening in your life right now?
- If I had tape-recorded what you have just said and played it back to you, what emotions would you hear?

Actions

- As you look back over your life, what are some of the things you have done that were worthwhile?
- What are some of the things you wish you could undo?
- As you look at your life right now, what are some of the things you think you are doing that are right? that are wrong?
- Tell me some of the ways you see yourself growing as a Christian.

- Tell me some of the ways you could improve as a Christian; in your relationship with Christ; as a testimony for Christ.
- Tell me how you have helped other people; been a hindrance to other people.
- When you think of the Ten Commandments, which ones do you have the greatest problem with?

Concepts

- What do you see as your most pressing problem?
- Do you have any idea why the problem has become so severe?
- What do you think about the way you have been handling the problem?
- What does all of this tell you about yourself?
- Do you have any idea why criticism is so hard for you to handle?
- If I had a tape recorder and could record your thoughts at this moment, what would I hear?
- What happens inside your head when I give you a suggestion about handling a problem?
- What do/did you want, desire, seek, aim for, pursue, hope for?
- What are your goals, expectations, or intentions?
- Where do you look for security, meaning, happiness, fulfillment, joy, or comfort?
- What do you fear most? What do you tend to avoid?
- What would make you happy?
- What brings out the worst or best in you?
- What or who rules or controls you in the nitty gritty of life? To what or whom do you listen?
- In what or whom do you place your functional trust? What drives you? In what or whom do you set your hope?
- When you are pressured or tense, where do you turn? Where do you find relief? How do you escape?

Historical

- When did you first begin to experience this problem?
- Tell me what was happening in your life when....
- Tell me about your relationship with the Lord over the years: the high points and low points.
- As you look back over your life, what are the happiest and saddest experiences you have ever had?
- Tell me about some of the most positive influences in your life; the most negative influences in your life.
- Tell me about your marriage, your family, your church, your work, etc.
- If you could change anything about circumstances in your life, what would you change?
- What is going on in your life that brings you the most pleasure? The most pain or distress?
- What external pressures are you presently experiencing?