

Solving Problems by Asking Questions

Quarter 12 | Lesson 11 | Life Skills

1. **Connecting:** Do an activity to understand the importance of asking good questions.
2. **Teaching:** Learn the value of asking questions from Jesus' example and practice asking good questions (Matthew 15:32–39; Mark 16:27–30; Luke 13:10–17; Proverbs 18:1–2).
3. **Responding:** Practice solving problems by asking questions.

SUPPLIES

- Bibles

Optional Supplies:

- Memory Verse Poster
- *The Action Bible*, images of Jesus feeding the crowd
- Pencils
- Student Pages

Teacher Devotion

*Do you not know? Have you not heard?
The LORD is the everlasting God,
the Creator of the ends of the earth.
He will not grow tired or weary,
and his understanding no one can fathom.*
Isaiah 40:28

We can be thankful that our everlasting God knows the answers to all of our questions. He does not grow tired or weary—no matter how many times we ask Him, “Why?” or “How?” His understanding is incomprehensible, and we can always trust that His ways are good. He welcomes our questions as He calms our fears and provides assurance in our doubts. He guides us to discover His wisdom and His truth.

Though God’s wisdom is always best, asking questions can help you to gain wisdom from others as well. Questions can eliminate confusion, allow you to show interest in the thoughts and ideas of others, strengthen your relationships, encourage creative thinking, and guide a conversation in the way you would like it to go. All of these things can help you to solve problems. So ask God for wisdom and ask questions! When you allow God to guide you, you can learn to ask questions that will help you to solve problems. Ask Him to share His incomprehensible understanding.

LESSON TIME

1. Connecting: Do an activity to understand the importance of asking good questions.

Greet the teens as they arrive. Ask them if they had any opportunities to use their creative thinking skills. Encourage them to share their stories with other students.

When you are ready to begin class, have the teens sit in a large circle. Choose 2 teens to stand in the middle of the circle to begin the game.

Whisper 1 of the items on the list below to both of the students in the middle of the circle. Then explain the rules of the game to everyone.

These 2 teens know the answer to a question. They will ask each other questions to help the rest of the class figure out the answer. But this will not be as easy as it sounds! When 1 of these students asks a question, the other must answer with another question. They can only ask questions. They cannot make statements or give descriptions. If 1 of them does make a statement, he is out of the game and will be replaced with another student.

The rest of you will try to guess the answer to the question. You can say the answer as a statement, but you cannot ask any questions. If you would like to guess the answer, say it out loud. If you are right, 1 of the students in the middle of the circle will confirm that your answer is correct. Then you will join these 2 students in the middle of the circle. If your answer is incorrect, you will be out of the game.

Here is an example if the answer is “laugh”:

The first teen may ask, “What is something you do when you are happy?”

The other teen may ask, “Is this something you do alone or with others?”

The first teen may then ask, “What is something you do when you hear something funny?”

They should continue asking questions until someone guesses the answer.

Teacher Tip: The purpose of the game is to get the right answer, but it is more important that the teens think about asking questions that will help them to get more information.

Here is the list of items:

Banana
Frog
Tree
Bus
Sun
Friend

Tell the teens in the middle to begin the game. If they cannot think of a question, you can offer a suggestion or allow another student to share an idea. If a student guesses the right answer, she joins the 2 teens in the middle. Whisper another item from the list to all 3 of the students. Then tell them to begin asking each other questions. The game is over when all of the teens are either in the middle of the circle or are out of the game. The winners are those in the middle of the circle.

Gather the class for discussion. Ask the following questions of the whole group and allow 2–3 teens to share their answers to each question.

- Was it difficult to ask only questions and not make statements? Why or why not?
- What were the best questions you heard asked? Why were they the best?
- What did this game teach you about asking questions?

Questions are a helpful way to gain and share information, so learning to ask good questions can help you to solve problems. Let's learn more about asking good questions.

2. Teaching: Learn the value of asking questions from Jesus' example and practice asking good questions (Matthew 15:32–39; Mark 16:27–30; Luke 13:10–17; Proverbs 18:1–2).

- What is the purpose of questions?

Allow 2–3 teens to share their thoughts.

As most of you said, questions are an important way to get information. But questions can also help with a lot of other communication and problem-solving issues. Questions can eliminate confusion, allow us to show interest in the thoughts and ideas of others, strengthen our relationships, encourage creative thinking, and guide a conversation in a certain direction. All of these things can help us to solve problems.

You may wonder how a question can do all of those things. Not all questions can. For example, if I ask you, "What colour is your shirt?" You will probably give me a short answer that does not provide anything but the basic answer to the question. But, what if I ask you, "What made you decide to wear that colour shirt today?" You may answer that it is your friend's favourite colour and it is her birthday, so you wanted to wear it to let her know you were thinking of her on her special day. In the first situation, I only found out the colour of your shirt. But in the second situation, I also found out that it was your friend's birthday, that your friend likes that colour, and that you like to make your friends feel special. Learning to ask good questions can help you to learn a lot!

- In what kinds of situations could asking good questions help you to solve problems?

Allow 2–3 teens to share their thoughts.

Let's learn about asking questions from someone who did it very well—Jesus. He used questions for many purposes, and we can learn from His example. Listen to this parable and see if you can figure out the purpose of Jesus' questions. Remember, some of the purposes of questions are to eliminate confusion, to show interest in the thoughts and ideas of others, to strengthen our relationships, to encourage creative thinking, and to guide a conversation in a certain direction. You can choose 1 of these purposes for questions, or you may decide that the question had a different purpose.

Divide the teens into groups of 3–4. Have a teen read Mark 16:27–30 aloud from the Bible. If that is not possible, the passage is printed here for you. If you are using the Memory Verse Poster, show it to the students.

*Jesus and his disciples went on to the villages around Caesarea Philippi.
On the way he asked them, "Who do people say I am?"
They replied, "Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah;*

*and still others, one of the prophets.” “But what about you?” he asked.
“Who do you say I am?” Peter answered, “You are the Messiah.”
Jesus warned them not to tell anyone about him.
Mark 8:27–30*

Give the teens 2 minutes to answer the questions with their groups. Then allow 2–3 groups to share their answers with the whole class. Repeat this process with each of the passages in this section.

- What do you think the purpose of Jesus’ question was?
- What evidence do you have to support your opinion?

Teacher Tip: If necessary, explain to the teens what it means to support an opinion with evidence. Help them to understand that they should look for proof—in this case, words or facts discovered in the passage. Evidence makes opinions more believable, and opinions supported by evidence are usually more accurate. Learning to look for evidence is an important problem-solving skill because gathering more information usually leads to a better solution.

- What are some situations in your own lives where you could use questions in these ways?

In this situation, Jesus may have been trying to discover whether or not the disciples understood His teachings. He may also have been checking to see if they trusted Him. The purpose of His questions was probably to eliminate confusion or to strengthen His relationship with His disciples.

Let’s try another passage. In this situation, Jesus had been preaching far away from the town, and a large crowd was listening to Him.

Optional: If possible, share the images from *The Action Bible*.

*Jesus called his disciples to him and said, “I have compassion for these people; they have already been with me three days and have nothing to eat. I do not want to send them away hungry, or they may collapse on the way.” His disciples answered, “Where could we get enough bread in this remote place to feed such a crowd?” “How many loaves do you have?” Jesus asked. “Seven,” they replied, “and a few small fish.” He told the crowd to sit down on the ground. Then he took the seven loaves and the fish, and when he had given thanks, he broke them and gave them to the disciples, and they in turn to the people. They all ate and were satisfied. Afterward the disciples picked up seven basketfuls of broken pieces that were left over. The number of those who ate was four thousand men, besides women and children. After Jesus had sent the crowd away, he got into the boat and went to the vicinity of Magadan.
Matthew 15:32–39*

- What do you think the purpose of Jesus’ question was?
- What evidence do you have to support your opinion?

In this situation, Jesus was probably encouraging creative thinking. He may have been encouraging the disciples to think about how they could solve the problem, or He may have been encouraging them to realize that He could solve the problem.

Let's look at 1 more situation. In this passage, Jesus healed a woman on the Sabbath, which was the holy day the Jewish people set apart to worship God. The woman had been disabled for 18 years.

*When Jesus saw her, he called her forward and said to her,
"Woman, you are set free from your infirmity." Then he put his hands on her,
and immediately she straightened up and praised God. Indignant because Jesus
had healed on the Sabbath, the synagogue leader said to the people,
"There are six days for work. So come and be healed on those days,
not on the Sabbath." The Lord answered him, "You hypocrites!
Doesn't each of you on the Sabbath untie your ox or donkey from the stall
and lead it out to give it water? Then should not this woman,
a daughter of Abraham, whom Satan has kept bound for eighteen long years,
be set free on the Sabbath day from what bound her?"
When he said this, all his opponents were humiliated,
but the people were delighted with all the wonderful things he was doing.*
Luke 13:12–17

- What do you think was the purpose of Jesus' question?
- What evidence do you have to support your opinion?

In this situation, Jesus was responding to the criticisms of the religious leaders who had accused Him of doing something that was not honouring to God—healing on the Sabbath. His question may have been asked to eliminate confusion, or it could have been to guide the conversation in the direction He wanted it to go. But it could also have been to respond to the challenge of the religious leaders in a way that made it clear that His way was honourable. By asking these questions, Jesus defeated the religious leaders in a verbal battle, which made it clear that He was honourable and that His actions were right.

- What are some situations in your own lives where you could use questions in this way?
- Allow 2–3 students to share their ideas.

Now that you understand how to use questions to help with problem-solving, we need to learn how to ask a good question.

Have the teens remain in their groups for the rest of this section of the lesson. They will discuss the questions with their groups. Then 2–3 groups will share their answers with the whole class.

- What do you think are the most important characteristics of a good question?

Here are some characteristics of a good question.

It has a purpose. It is okay to ask questions about unimportant things. But to use questions in a problem-solving situation, asking purposeful questions that give you information is more helpful.

It is clear. If people cannot understand your question, they will not know how to answer it.

It is challenging. A good question requires you to think and invites others to think as well.

It keeps the discussion focused on the problem. Your question should keep others thinking about the problem that needs to be solved and how to solve it.

It does not lead others to a specific answer. In problem-solving, questions should help the person to think creatively about the problem. This can help him to find a solution.

Sometimes we ask questions for the purpose of helping others to see that our way is the right way, as Jesus did this with the religious leaders. This is useful for some situations but not for problem-solving.

Here are some other things to think about when you are asking questions.

Do not ask yes or no questions. You can get more information from asking an open-ended question—one that requires a person to use multiple words to answer. If you do ask a yes or no question, follow up with an open-ended question.

Teacher Tip: Yes or no questions can be answered with either “Yes” or “No.” This type of question does not require a person to think carefully in order to respond. This is why open-ended questions that require more than simply “Yes” or “No” are better for problem-solving.

Ask why or how. When someone makes a statement, ask the person why he believes that is true or how he thinks it can be accomplished. These kinds of questions will help you to understand what the person is thinking so you can offer better solutions.

Do not interrupt. Be sure to listen to the person’s whole question or thought before you ask your question. This shows that you value what the person has to say and allows you to get as much information as possible before you ask your question.

The Bible teaches us that understanding a situation or another person’s opinion is important. This helps us to make wise decisions and solve problems in creative ways. Listen to this verse:

An unfriendly person pursues selfish ends and against all sound judgment starts quarrels. Fools find no pleasure in understanding but delight in airing their own opinions.

Proverbs 18:1–2

- **How does this verse help us to understand more about asking good questions?**

Allow 2–3 teens to share their thoughts.

Let’s practice asking questions. I will share a situation, and your group will think of questions you could ask to help to solve the problem. Think about what questions you could ask and whom you would ask these questions of.

Situation: You have lost something that is valuable, and you need to find it right away.

Give the groups 3 minutes to practice asking good questions. Each teen should share a question with her group. The other group members will see if it has a purpose, is clear, is challenging, keeps the discussion focused on the problem, and does not lead others to a specific answer. They will check to be sure it is not a yes or no question and that it asks why or how. If the question does not fit those characteristics, they can make suggestions to make the question fit those characteristics. After the discussion is done, allow each group to share 1 question with the whole class.

Congratulate the teens for their good questions. Then ask the whole class the following questions and allow 2–3 teens to share their answers for each.

- **How do you think the questions we shared would help solve this problem?**
- **If others thought of ideas you did not, did those new ideas help you with the solution? Why or why not?**
- **Did the questions of others help you to think of questions? If so, why do you think they did?**

Questions can be an important part of solving a problem. In this class, I try to ask you questions that will help you to understand the Bible and learn how to live in the ways God has called believers to live. Asking and answering questions helps you to learn, and that is an important part of becoming a good problem solver.

3. Responding: Practice solving problems by asking questions.

We practiced asking questions to solve a small problem. Now let's practice asking questions to solve a bigger problem. But in this situation, you cannot share an opinion or idea until after you have asked a question and listened to the answers of others. Here is the situation:

Situation: The government of a nearby country decides that the people can no longer speak the language they have always spoken. A law is made that anyone who speaks the language could be arrested. What can the citizens do to help solve their problem?

Have the teens work with their groups to ask questions to solve the problem. Each student should ask a question that helps to solve the problem. Then allow 2–3 groups to share their ideas with the whole class.

Now think of a problem you have in your own life that needs to be solved.

- **Can you think of some questions that may help you to solve the problem? You do not need to share your questions out loud.**

Pause to allow the teens to do this.

Optional: If you are using the Student Pages, the teens can do this activity on their pages.

We can always ask God to give us wisdom to help us to ask good questions and solve problems.

- **What is 1 question you could ask God about the problem you are trying to solve? Again, you do not need to share your question out loud.**

Pause to allow the teens to do this. Then allow the groups to pray for one another and to ask God for wisdom to solve their problems. They do not need to be specific in their requests. They can simply ask God to provide wisdom to each other in their situations. Then close with a blessing based on Proverbs 18:1–2:

Blessing: May you seek to be a friend who is unselfish. May you find pleasure in understanding as you learn to ask questions before expressing your opinion.

Family Connection: Encourage the teens to think about problems their families are facing and ask their family members for help in solving these problems. They can share the information they learned about asking good questions to help solve the problems.

Lead the students in singing this quarter's song, if possible. "Mighty God" by Elevation Worship:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NAhkYoWYxAY>