

How to Ask Questions in a Church School Class



dorothy henderson

education for the faith,
children and youth, camping
ext 271

e mail
dhenders@presbyterian.ca

Why are questions helpful in a church school class?

- Good questions make a lively discussion.
- Questions are useful for gathering information.
- Questions involve both children and adults in learning.

What criteria should you use when asking questions?

1. **Decide what type of question is needed.** There are different kinds of questions. Some are helpful to gather information; others foster discussion.

Questions that begin with the words “who, what, where, and when” are helpful when looking for information.

Here’s an example:

When did Moses go up the mountain?

Where was the mountain?

Questions that begin with the words “why, how and have” are generally good for fostering discussion.

Here’s an example:

Have you ever wondered how Moses felt on the mountain?

2. **When using questions, allow time for discussion.**

Allow time for reflection, as well as for silence. If a child is thinking about the question, you may say, “Take your time. We’re interested in your ideas about this.” If other children jump in with their opinions, say, “I would really like to hear what . . . (Sarah) . . . thinks about this.”

3. **Respect the answer of each child.**

Even if you don’t agree with the child’s answer, affirm his or her participation by saying something like this: “That’s an interesting idea. Tell us what made you think about that.”

4. **If possible, create questions that relate to the life of the children.**

Here’s an example:

It must have been lonely for Moses on the mountain. Will you tell us about a time when you felt lonely?

5. Use a variety of methods to ask questions.

Use "group questions."

Here's an example:

Raise your hand if you think Moses was frightened on the mountain.

Stand up if you think Moses felt close to God on the mountain.

Use "question strips."

Turn questions into unfinished sentences. Write them on strips of paper. Ask the children to choose one and finish the sentence.

Here's an example:

"When Moses began walking down from the mountain, he probably felt. . . ."

Use a "question fish bowl."

Fold questions into an empty fish bowl and invite children to fish one out and try to answer.

The questions may be prepared before the class or the children may print them and add them to the bowl. If some children have trouble writing, ask them to whisper a "secret question" to you.

You can write the question and slip it into the bowl.

Use questions in "Discovery Centres."

Write research questions on index cards or a folded card in the centre of a work table.

Use questions like these: Turn to page 4 in the story book. What is Moses doing in this picture?

Why do you think Moses is smiling in this picture?

6. Encourage children to ask questions.

Here's an example: If Moses were to walk into our classroom today, what would you like to ask him?"

Questions . . . an important part of teaching.