

CONVERSATIONS THAT GROW

A Christian framework to learn, practice, and
teach "Truth in Love" Communication!

DOUG MARSHALL



Copyright © 2018 by Douglas S. Marshall
Conversations That Grow

All rights reserved. This book or any portion thereof may not be reproduced or used in any manner whatsoever without the express written permission of the author except for the use of brief quotations. For information, contact the author at doug@conversationsthatgrow.com

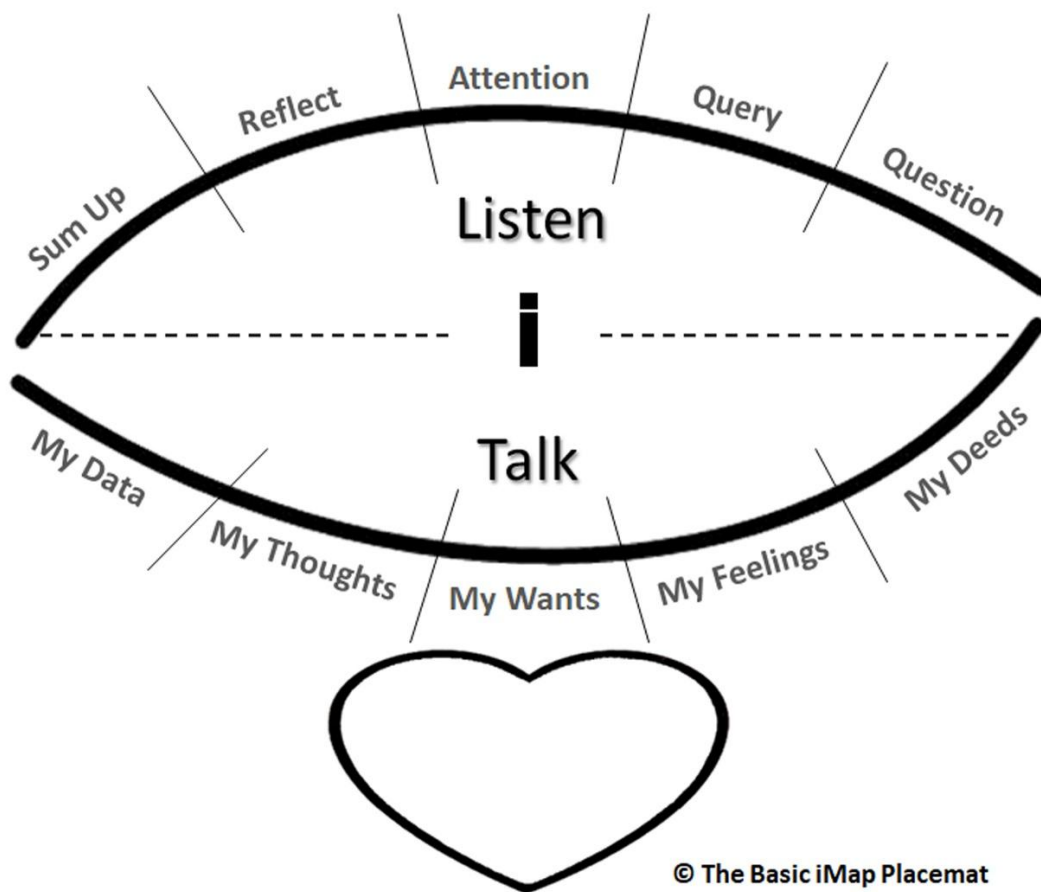
Printed in the United States of America
First Printing, NewVibe Publishing, August 2019
Second Printing, NewVibe Publishing, February 2021
Revised Kindle Edition, Douglas Marshall, December 2025

The iMat, iMap, Process Compass, and Conversation Gear Shift
Copyright © 2011

Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture quotations are from HOLY BIBLE, NEW INTERNATIONAL VERSION®. NIV® Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984 by International Bible Society. www.ibs.org. All rights reserved.

For further information go to www.conversationsthatgrow.com

THE BASIC IMAP – CONVERSATION MAP



CHAPTER 14 – QUERIES AND QUESTIONS

Except for Attention, all the listening skills are essentially questions. With reflects and summaries, I am stating what I think I heard in a way that infers the question, *“Is that accurate?”* The question is implied. *This is what I heard. Did I get it right?* Reflects and summaries are basically “yes and no” questions. For this reason, I put these two skills together on the left side of the iMap. As we shift to the right side of the iMap, the questions are more obvious.

Another competency, then, I must gain to become an effective listener is the art of coming right out and asking for information from the other person. Spiritually, this means I must be mature enough to have genuine interest in the other person and possess a healthy and loving “curiosity” about the other person and their experience. Without interest and curiosity, I will not ask! Asking for information involves two skills that involve me requesting the other person to share their experience with me. The first questioning skill has a number of labels, but I like to call it a “query.” The second skill is to simply “question.” These are grouped on the right side because they both are about asking for information.

QUERY

I call the first listening skill on this side a “query.” (14-1) A query is an extremely broad request for information. It is completely open and general. It is also simple and powerful.

When I make a query, I am asking someone in the most open way possible to tell me what is going on with them. I might start a conversation with the query, *“How ya doing?”* Other examples are ...

“What’s up?” “How’s your day been?” “How’s life treating you?” “What’s going on?” “Qué pasa?”

It is that simple.

A query looks a little different and is more powerful when used in the middle of a conversation. After the person has indicated they are finished talking and I am free to respond, instead of talking I almost always follow up with the query, *“Anything else?”* This simple invitation for the other person to share additional information is often the key that opens the door to deeper sharing. This is where people begin to share what is really on their minds and hearts.

Here are some common ways to make a query before and after a person has shared.

Ask a question: *“Something on your mind?” “Anything else?” “Is there more?” “And?” “But?”*

Make a request: *“Tell me what’s going on.” “Tell me more.” “Go on.”*

Make a statement: *“Looks like you need to talk.” “Seems you have more to say.” “It sounds like there is more to the story.” “I’m listening.”*

Though technically not queries, exclamations like, *“Wow!” “Amazing!” “Unbelievable!” “Really?” “You’re kidding!” “No way!” “Interesting.”* also function to invite the other person to tell me more.

Again, resist talking and invite them to share more information. Realize the issue people start with is seldom the issue they truly want to talk about. When we share with others, we tend to start with safer content to test the waters before we get to the scary stuff. We want to find out if the other person genuinely cares and will be safe with our secrets.

Many beginners either miss this simple listening skill or make too much of it. They either skip it or make it an interrogation. The simplest and most effective way to do a query is to ask, *“Is there anything else?”* If necessary, stick with that. Just continue to make that query until you get the full story. My church family pokes fun at me because I use this query so much! Almost everyone, however, appreciates me asking. Besides, what comes after is usually gold!

QUESTION

Asking questions is an important part of listening, not only because this is how I acquire missing information, but it conveys solid proof to the speaker that I care enough to know more. (Fig. 14-2) However, the questions need to be intelligent. If I ask for information the person has already shared, that shows I was not listening. If I ask for information irrelevant to the story, this conveys a disconnect as well.

Questioning differs from a query in that it requests specific information. Instead of just asking, *“How’s it going?”* I might ask, *“Anything exciting happen at work today?”* The second question is more specific and focused on a topic. The following conversation highlights the difference.

Question: *“How did it go at work today?”*

Friend: *“It was a lousy day.”*

Query: *“Tell me about it.”*

Friend: *“My boss was on my case all day.”*

Question: *“What was his problem?”*

Friend: *“I think he thinks I’m out for his job.”*

Query: *“Really?”*

Friend: *“Yeah, I was talking to the department head the other day and said I hoped to move up in the company. But I wasn’t shooting for anyone’s job. I think my supervisor caught wind of it.”*

Question: *“Any idea what’s going on?” “What are you going to do?”*

A question focuses on some specific aspect of the other person’s experience while a query stays general and less focused. Questions utilize the basic questions a reporter might ask to get the full story: Who, what, when, where, why, and how.

Who was there?

What exactly happened?

When did this go down?

Where did all this happen?

Why did they say or do that?

How did that happen?

One skill related to asking questions is learning to ask “open” questions rather than “closed” questions. A closed question can be answered with a single word answer and does not ask for more information beyond that.

“Did you do OK on the test?” “Yeah.”

“Was your day interesting?” “No.”

“Are you OK?” “Yes.”

Closed questions are ‘yes’ or ‘no’ and ‘true’ or ‘false’ questions. Questions are also closed when all they require is a specific one-word answer.

Question: “What time did you get to bed?”

Answer: “11:30.”

An open question is necessary when a query doesn’t work. Some people, especially men, and even more especially teenage boys, will respond to queries with the least amount of information possible. Even semi-open questions can still be answered with minimal information.

How was your day? Answer: OK.

What happened at school today? Nothing.

How was your date? Answer: Fine.

So, learning to ask open questions becomes an important skill to get inside another person’s life. A truly open question cannot be answered without some explanation. It almost forces the speaker to share more information. Questions beginning with “what” seem to be especially fruitful, especially when followed up with “Why was that?”

“What was the best part of your day?” “What was the worst?” “Why was that?”

“What was the most challenging thing at school?” Why was that?”

“What made your date good or bad?” “Why was that?”

Of course, if the other person truly doesn’t want to share (be known), then respect their boundaries. Many people, however, guys included, really do want to be known, and don’t mind if someone takes the time to dig deeper, even if we gripe a little.

That said, there is a place for closed questions. Sometimes in listening to someone’s story, they may leave out content, making their story difficult to understand. I may have to ask for that information. In order to least interrupt the flow of the story, a good, closed question gets me in and out without disturbing the story too much. *When did that happen? Who is Sam again? Where were you?*

Especially use questions to ask about missing parts of their awareness, or rather my awareness of their awareness. People often leave out important information. They may leave out important data or facts. They may leave out some key thoughts. They especially may gloss over their wants and feelings. And they may intentionally leave out their own actions.

A Word of Warning

Once again, remember we are still on the “Knowledge” of the compass. Any intention to influence must be resisted. My question must be for the purpose of learning information about the other person. I say this because questions are an extremely powerful means to influence others. I will address this in chapter eighteen as well, under “Directive Listening.” When I shift to influence, my “queries” become “prods” and my simple “questions” become “leading questions.” As soon as my questions become influential, the other person will pick up on that and shift gears in what they share. It changes the dynamic of the conversation. If my aim is to just know someone, I must resist influence.

On the darker side, an even more serious danger with questions arises. They are often used to control. If I am in “control mode,” questions can become manipulative and attacking. Consider how attorneys use questions to discredit, entrap, and undermine people on the stand. This is not communication, it is control. Questions can be dangerous if not used wisely and compassionately.

Avoid “interrogating.” I can ask too many questions in a short period of time. After three or four questions in a row, the talker will typically stop talking and wait for the next question. I need to ask questions sparingly and wisely.

Avoid direct “why” questions that require the other person to explain their actions. “Why” questions put the talker in the position of having to defend or justify themselves. Sometimes, I don’t know why! This causes embarrassment, like I did something wrong. So I stop sharing.

A final use for questions is how they can function with people who talk too little or too much. A person who is prone to share little can only be known by careful and skillful questioning. We still need to be respectful of their boundaries, but love requires interest and curiosity. Interest and curiosity require questions. Questions can also be used with those who “over-share.” Some people “gush” as a way of coping and relating. Others gush as a form of control. Questions can serve as a caring and compassionate way to deal with this situation. As the person shares, I can identify key points of information and interrupt with a question about it. By interrupting with questions, I can usually guide the conversation toward a productive end. I also can narrow the conversation by making the questions more closed. Even better is to combine the use of questions with the listening skill of summing up. These two skills together can offer a better solution than trying to think of ways to escape and avoid people who talk too much.

Further Tips About Listening:

Sometimes I Need to Talk First! With people who talk too little, I sometimes need to “prime the pump” by talking. If the person is not talking, then there is nothing to pay attention to and nothing to reflect or sum up. Furthermore, people who are adamantly resistant to talking will dodge and deflect queries and questions as well. Sometimes I need to share an “I” message about my own experience to get the ball rolling. For starters, I can make an

An “I” message can function as a “Query.” Here are some examples:

“I am noticing you are awfully quiet.”

“I have the impression something is bothering you.”

“I would sure like to know what you are thinking (or feeling).”

“I’m feeling concerned about you.”

“I have been trying to get you to talk all day.”

To take this a step further, I can use “I” messages to volunteer information about myself. I can share something of a personal nature they may identify with or relate to. By becoming vulnerable myself, I open the door for them to risk sharing themselves. This is called “Appropriate Self-Disclosure.” I don’t want to shock the other person with my own battles with the dark side, but when I share my secrets, this has the natural effect of encouraging the other person to share their secrets as well.

With people who talk too much, I may need to share an “I” message to set and maintain “Listening Boundaries.” What do you do with a person who always wants to talk at inconvenient or inappropriate times? Or when they do talk, they spend exorbitant amounts of time talking about themselves? When I can’t listen at that moment or when I am unable to listen anymore, I need to have a preplanned way to inform the other person I am unable or unwilling to listen at that time. Here are some examples.

“I would really like to listen to what you have to say. Can we arrange a time to get back together? I want to be on time for an appointment, and I need to leave right now to make it.”

“Sally, I really care about you and this problem you are sharing with me. I have observed that we have had this same conversation at least three times before and I am wondering if talking it through again is really productive. I really don’t think this is going to help. Let’s talk again when something has changed.”

“Jack, I only have fifteen minutes to talk with you right now. Can we cover the important stuff in that time? Otherwise, it would be best to get together when I have more time to give.”

An interesting consideration about the listening skills is how I can apply them when listening to myself. “Self-listening” can become an actual conversation with myself. This is not a new concept. I have found I can use the same listening skills I use with others in the conversations I have with myself. Just for fun, start a conversation with yourself with a “Query.” For example, I can query myself, *“So what’s going on Doug?”* As I listen to myself, I pay attention to the five categories of my experience. I try to reflect and sum up to myself in my own mind what I am hearing. Then I follow up with some more queries and open-ended questions and see what else I uncover. I am often amazed at what I discover. This has saved me thousands of dollars in therapy!

A more staggering consideration emerges when I consider how I can use these listening skills with God. I realize this is uncharted territory for many people. Some of you might dismiss the idea God talks to us at all. But let me ask you this: Can the devil put ideas in our heads? If the devil can, why not God? If He does, let me suggest these listening skills can be a powerful tool to hearing Him correctly. At least, they might be helpful in sorting out the voices in your head.

Using the Listening Skills on the iMat and iMap Placemat

On the iMat or iMap Placemat, the five listening skills are placed at the top arc of the eye, causing me to move toward the other person when I am listening, and back from them when I talk. When I listen, however, the “attention” space becomes home base. I keep returning to “attention” after I have used one of the other listening skills. I keep going back to it. I start on attention, then stand on or point to one of the other listening skills I am using at that precise moment, then immediately return to attention. Most of the time I will be standing on or touching “attention.”

When we put the listening skills together with the talking skills, we have the Basic iMap showing the full skill set to “Know” and “Be Known.” (Fig. 14-3)

When you practice these skills, it results in great satisfaction to those you listen to. In fact, people will start seeking you out. You can become popular when you become a good listener. Our motive, however, must be love. There is great satisfaction for me when others take me into their trust and share their lives with me. It is an honor when someone tells me something they have never told anyone else, and to see the healing, relief, deliverance, and freedom they experience from sharing their story with another human being.

CHAPTER 18 – DIRECTIVE LISTENING

Directive Listening—Leading by Listening

Years ago, as I was listening to a person who had come to me for advice, I made a noteworthy discovery. I noticed the five basic listening skills outlined in chapters thirteen through fifteen took on a different character when my intention shifted from just knowing the person and their issue, to influencing them to solve it. From then on, as I continued to monitor my listening behavior, I discovered I was doing more than just “active listening.” I was effectively influencing individuals, as well as whole groups by just the listening skills without making any “I” statements about myself. I was using the listening skills with an influential edge. I realize this is not a new discovery. It happens all the time with good counselors, negotiators, mediators, teachers, salespeople, and leaders. The disciplines of Appreciate Inquiry, Neuro-Linguistic Programing, and Solution Focused Coaching and Counseling all use listening skills to change, alter, and influence others.

My intention to “influence” turns “active listening” into what I call “directive listening.” With directive listening, I can help others grow. There are five advanced listening skills I associate with this kind of influential listening. Before I describe these skills, let me clarify when “directive listening” is appropriate. Directive listening helps people grow in the following ways.

1. To lead people to greater or more accurate awareness of themselves and their situation and take responsibility for their own choices.
2. To lead people to perceive and evaluate their own experience differently, especially becoming aware of other people’s perspectives and interests.
3. To lead people to discover and resolve inconsistencies between their own data, thoughts, wants, feelings, and deeds.
4. To lead people to see possibilities they do not currently perceive.
5. To lead people to see and hear their situation from a “more or less” extreme and dramatic perspective.

With each of these, I am using listening skills to lead. I can lead by listening. Remember, as with all influence, directive listening requires sufficient passport or rapport. I must have successfully shifted up through the Conversation Gear Shift to influence before I employ it. I must be competent to read the other person’s reactions, especially their body language, in case I go too far and lose passport. I must also have the spiritual maturity to be aware of my own agenda for change, surrendering that to God, so as to pursue God’s will and not my own.

The Five Directive Listening Skills

With these conditions met, I can adapt the five basic listening skills into effective instruments for leading and influencing others toward growth. (Fig. 18-1) With directive listening, instead of just paying “Attention,” I now “Focus” attention on specific things said and not said that reveal deeper heart issues. Instead of just “Reflecting,” I now “Reframe” the other person’s responses. Instead of just “Summing Up,” I now “Clarify” what the other person has shared by reviewing what they have just said. Instead of just making a “Query,” I push a little harder and “Prod.” Finally, instead of just asking “Questions,” I now “Lead” with questions. While “leading

questions” do the heavy lifting in directive listening, the other listening skills are equally powerful.

1. FOCUS Attention On ...

Directive listening begins with how I pay attention. I am still listening to their data, thoughts, wants, feelings, and deeds, but now I am looking for specific issues, patterns, and themes. I am looking for inconsistencies as well as information they are not sharing. I am looking for problematic beliefs and agreements. I will specifically look for deeper heart issues that may divide, as well as common ground that can serve as a basis for further relationship building.

If I have several frameworks of analysis in my toolbox, I will look for clues as to which framework works best. Is there a hidden sin? Is there an addiction? A psychological issue? A learning disability? A physical or mental handicap? Is there abuse? If I begin to employ a specific framework, I will filter what I hear through that framework.

As a pastor, I look for points where a person’s beliefs are either shaky or in error regarding what the Bible teaches. Besides troublesome faith issues, I also look for wants that have become controlling dependencies and divisive demands. Some call these “heart idols.” These are things we trust to give us the peace and joy that only God can give. One way I do this is to listen for “X-ray Statements.” I have adapted this from another term, “X-ray Questions,” coined by David Powlison (2003). I will give an overview of X-ray questions later. X-ray statements are statements that reveal underlying desires that have become controlling dependencies and demands. I pay extra attention when I hear the following phrases:

- *I need ...*
- *I deserve ...*
- *I only want ...*
- *I should be able to ...*
- *I should not have to ...*
- *You ought or should ...*
- *You ought not or should not ...*
- *I always (have to) ... I never (get to) ...*
- *You always (get to) ... You never (have to) ...*
- *It’s not fair ...*
- *If only ...*

There are others, but these give the idea. The point is directive listening focuses attention on things needing change and how to make the change happen.

I especially listen for control talk. These could be statements I hear them make toward themselves, others, or God. Where there is control talk, there is control. Where there is control, trust is absent. This needs to be explored and brought into the light.

2. REFRAME

The concept of “reframing” refers to a number of conversational skills we use to put a new frame around what a person is sharing with us. We can help a person reframe by asking questions and making statements that help the other person shift their perspective, usually from negative to positive. What I am describing here, however, is more subtle. Instead of merely reflecting back what a person says, I can repeat back what I heard them say in a slightly modified form also called a “Reframe.” This kind of reframe restates the message so it is understood differently than the speaker originally intended. I will reframe to help someone hear what they just said with a different perspective. I may want to nudge them toward possibilities. At times I may want to plant a seed of doubt. I may use a reframe to detoxify a statement and model respectful and productive communication behavior as a correction. We are showing them, *“This is how to say what you just said appropriately.”*

I can use a reframe to challenge or even confront. But I do this not by asking questions or making statements but by repeating back what they themselves said with some slight “tweaking.”

Consider the following examples.

A Friend: *“I totally suck at math. I just can’t do it!”*

A Simple Reflect: *“So you don’t feel very confident in your math skills.”*

Reframe to shift their negative attitude: *“So your confidence in math needs some improving.”*
(This reframe opens them up to positive action.)

Reframes to shift their time frame: *“So, up to now, you haven’t had a good experience with math.”* *“So, you aren’t very good at math yet?”* (This reframe opens them up to the possibility of positive experiences in the future.)

Here are some other examples:

A Friend: *“My boss is just being a jackass about the schedule!”*

Reframes to detoxify: *“So you are steamed at your boss about the schedule.”* *“Your boss doesn’t seem to be flexible?”* *“The boss’s schedule isn’t working for you.”*

Reframes to challenge: *“So, your boss isn’t willing to do it ‘your’ way.”* *“So, your boss is a jerk because he isn’t adapting the schedule for you.”*

Reframe to shift to solution thinking: *“So you are struggling to find a way to get your boss to be more flexible.”*

Another Friend: *“I am pond scum! I am the scum on pond scum! Why did God make me anyway?”*

Reframe to detoxify: *“You are feeling pretty bad about yourself, huh?”*

Reframe to challenge: *“So, you have absolutely no redeeming value on the planet.”* *“So, you think God screwed up?”*

Reframe to shift the negative attitude: *“So you really think there is no hope for you?”*

I can reframe to initiate collaborative problem solving.

Husband: *“I want the kids to stay with me, and Jane wants them to stay with her.”*

Reframe to encourage collaboration: *“So you and Jane need to figure out together how to decide who the kids stay with.”*

I might reframe by purposely misstating or exaggerating a point to force the party to rethink what they just said.

Church member: *“Sam is always throwing a monkey wrench into the plans! He is an obstacle to growth!”*

Reframe: *“So, Sam is the only reason the program is struggling?”* (Of course, they may say, “Yes!” In that case, it’s good to know.)

In each case, I change the message slightly, sometimes even adding content, to increase its potential for positive impact on the speaker.

3. CLARIFY

I use the term “Clarify” here to describe a summary that intentionally highlights missing or inconsistent information that someone has shared. This kind of clarification “to influence” is different than a clarification just “to know.” A clarification “to know” simply involves asking a question to sort out missing or contradictory information for my benefit. When I clarify to influence, however, I am attempting to help the person talking to me see the missing or inconsistent information they are unaware of for themselves. A “Clarification” could be viewed as an expanded “Reframe.”

Jim: *“The Johnsons are always playing their music full blast at seven o’clock in the morning. So, I figure I should be able to use my power tools at the same time.”*

Jim’s Pastor: *“So, their music bothers you?”*

Jim: *“It drives me nuts!”*

Jim’s Pastor: *“And you haven’t spoken to the Johnsons about this?”*

Jim: *“Not really. There is never really time.”*

Jim’s Pastor clarifies: *“So when they play their music in the morning, it really upsets you. Then instead of talking to them right then, you go to your shop and use your power tools. Did I get that right?”*

Hopefully, Jim will hear the implication of this clarification and see what is missing in his own response to his neighbors. A wise clarification can help a person see holes in their perspective about themselves, others, and their situation.

Clarification: *“So, you want to get out of your parents’ house to focus on your music. Your plan is to rent a place, buy food and gas, insurance, and pay utilities from what you earn from your music. Is that the idea?”*

Friend: *“Oh, I hadn’t really thought of all that.”*

A good clarification can help the other person see possibilities or opportunities they didn’t think of.

Clarification: *“So, you are devastated your company let you go at this point in your career. You have no clue what to do next. But you have a great severance package and no commitments to anyone or anything for the next three or four months.”*

Friend: *“I guess I do have an opportunity here, don’t I?”*

Again, clarification involves more than just summarizing. It is summarizing in a way that helps the other person see a missing piece, an inconsistency, or a different perspective.

4. PROD

A “Prod” is simply an intensified query. It is still a general and open-ended query for more information, but it is more insistent. *“There has to be more to the story.” “Something is missing.” “What aren’t you telling me? “You’re holding back.”* Prodding can be a repetition of general queries until I get the “full” story. *“Anything else? Anything else? Anything else? “Come on, there has got to be something else.”* Remember, the initial issue is seldom the real issue.

I can also prod to diffuse high emotions by inviting a person to share more about what is upsetting them. I can do this by first reflecting the emotion and then prod, *“Fred, you are really fired up! It definitely sounds like there is a lot more going on here. What’s the story?”* Prodding is best used in combination with reflects, reframes, summaries, and clarifications.

5. LEAD (Leading Questions)

Unlike an attorney in a courtroom, these kinds of leading questions are not intended to manipulate, entrap, or coerce, but rather to reveal and bring to light assumptions, motives, and implications the other person may not be aware of or is purposely avoiding. The methodology of Appreciative Inquiry refers to this skill as “generative questioning” because its aim is to foster an appreciative attitude, generate solutions, and inspire positive action. As a leader, I don’t have to have the right answers. I just have to ask the right questions.

When I lead with questions, I am asking questions I already know or suspect the answers to, but the other person may not. At times, the answer is in the question itself. They frequently serve to direct the person to a certain answer or conclusion. This is why questions have always been a powerful method of teaching. The “Socratic Method” uses questions to lead students to deeper understanding of their own perspectives and assumptions. Leading questions are most effective when used in combination with reflects, reframes, summaries, and clarifications.

Here are some examples of how leading questions can influence others. A leading question can help another person to...

- **Discover Positive Actions and Resources:** *What has worked in the past? What is working for your now? What do you have going for you now?*
- **Determine Next Steps:** *“What one small thing can you do right now that would lead you closer to your objective?” “What is the next right step?”*
- **Take responsibility to find solutions.** *“What are your options?” “What do you think the answer is?” “What are the things in this situation you can make choices about?”*
- **Empathize with others.** *“How do you suppose John felt when you ...?” “What did you hear Jan just say?” “How would you feel if you were in their shoes?”*
- **Realize effects and consequences of their actions.** *“How would you respond if that happened to you?” “What would happen if you said that to your boss?”*
- **Evaluate their thoughts and actions against a system of values.** *“Do you think that is fair?” “How does that line up with what you see in the Bible?”*
- **Examine assumptions and expectations (reality testing).** *“Could there be some other possible reasons Jane didn’t show up?” “How realistic is it for you to get a job at that pay scale with your level of experience?”*

• **See things from another perspective.** *“What will this look like five years from now?” “Is there another (positive) way to look at this?” “What would this look like if you were an adult?”*

Leading questions can also reveal controlling desires, interests, and motives. When it comes to questions that reveal deeper motives, David Powlison (2003) has formulated a list of what he calls “X-ray Questions.” (pp. 129-143) Based on his list, here is a sampling of questions I have adapted to lead others to examine their problematic wants, desires, and interests.

“What are you preoccupied or obsessed with? What occupies your thoughts?”

“How would you complete this statement: “If only _____, then I would be happy, satisfied, and secure.”

“What do you want to protect or keep from happening?”

“What do you want to avoid at all costs?”

“Who do you trust? What are you putting your trust in?”

“Who or what are you depending upon?”

“What are you afraid of? What is it you fear?”

“When a certain desire is not met, do you feel frustrated, anxious, resentful, bitter, angry, or depressed?”

“Is there something you want so much that you are willing to disappoint or hurt others for?”

Asking leading questions to move someone to deeper and more accurate self-awareness is an art form. However, it can be learned and cultivated. I usually have more impact with a question than a comment. This is especially true when we seek to influence others toward God.

Here is a list of leading questions you may find useful.

• **The Big Picture.** *“What is the bigger picture?” “What do you think God is up to?”*

• **Time Travel.** *“A year from now, what would you have wished you would have done or said today?” “If you could go back in time what would you have done differently or do again?”*

• **Shoe Exchange.** *“If you were in their shoes, what would you be thinking, feeling, or wanting?” “How would you feel if someone did or said that to you?”*

• **Worst Case Scenario.** *“How could this get worse?” “What if the worst happened?”*

• **Best Case Scenario (or The Miracle Question).** *“Say a miracle happened overnight and when you woke up everything had become exactly the way you want it. What would it look like?” “What is the best you are hoping for?”*

• **Explore the Impossibilities!** *“What’s something that would be impossible, but if it happened, would dramatically make things better?”*

• **Myth Busting.** *“Do you really believe that?” (Don’t argue.)*

• **Fill in the Blanks.** *“So, what you are hoping for is _____?”*

• **Repeat, Repeat, Repeat.** *“What are you afraid of?” They answer. Ask again, “What are you afraid of?” They answer. Ask again, “What are you afraid of?” They spill.*

- **The Four Cartesian Questions.**

1. *What WOULD happen if you DID ?*
2. *What WOULD happen if you DIDN'T ?*
3. *What WOULDN'T happen if you DID ?*
4. *What WOULDN'T happen if you DIDN'T ?*

- **The “Umbrella” Question.** *“I wonder if there is any way both of you could get what you want?” “What would need to happen for everyone to find satisfaction in this situation?” “If there was a way to make everyone happy, what would it look like?”*

There are scores of creative power questions out there. Develop your own question database. When you hear a good question, record it and put it in your tool kit. An excellent resource on advanced listening is Mark Goulston’s (2010) book, *Just Listen*. Besides delving into the brain chemistry of listening and basic listening fundamentals, he covers many of the questions above, plus more. I recommend it for anyone who desires to lead through listening.

One of the more intriguing aspects of directive listening is how it can be used to lead in groups, especially when the group process is bogged down, stalled, or sideways. Any participant, even if they are on the sidelines, can use these skills to redirect, clarify, focus, and detoxify group discussion. Through directive listening, a team member can shift the discussion from being adversarial to collaborative. They can encourage trust and swing the group process from negative to positive. This can be done without anyone being aware of what is happening. It’s pretty cool!

USING QUESTIONS TO LET THE BIBLE SPEAK INSTEAD OF ME

At some point I will want to introduce the Bible as a reliable resource to hear from God. I want them to hear the “truth-in-love” from God Himself. Here are some basic tips to effectively use the Bible.

- **Ask permission.** *“Do you mind if we look at a passage of Scripture?”*
- **Ask them if they think the Bible is worth using.** *“Do you think the Bible is worth bringing into this discussion? Do you believe God’s Word is worth considering?”*
- **Read a scripture.** Read or have them read the passage you want. Instead of telling them what you think the passage means, ask them questions about what they think the passage means and how it might apply to their life: *“What does this passage say to you? Does this passage speak to you in anyway? Does this passage apply to your situation right now? How are you lining up with this passage right now?”*

Using the Bible along with directive listening is a powerful method of influencing other Christians to realign their attitudes and actions with Christ. Directive listening, especially generative questioning, is the best way to follow Paul’s instructions to Timothy.

The Lord’s servant must not quarrel; instead, he must be kind to everyone, able to teach, not resentful. Those who oppose him he must gently instruct, in the hope that God will grant them repentance leading them to a knowledge of the truth. 2 Timothy 2:24-25