



# tips for the trenches

so you're  
a youth  
volunteer  
now...

A Truth Matters  
Ministries Resource  
by Brody Jespersen

## {3} *That's a Good Question*

You've been there, sitting across from a desk or table from someone and they've struck you with a question that catches you a little off guard, and you respond with, "That's a good question". These types of questions are compelling, lead to self-reflection, and open the door for discussion in a new and unique way.

Youth workers are constantly given the opportunity to engage with students, and nothing squishes those interactions more than poor questions. Let's get out of the way what I mean by poor questions: questions that lead nowhere, simply put they are questions that can be answered simply with a yes or no. "Do you like school?" "Are things good at home?" "Are you spending time with Jesus?" etc. On the surface they seem like important things to ask, but kids can hide behind them – "yep, I'm spending time with Jesus (when I listen to you speak once a week in youth)" "Yep, things are good at home (in comparison to how things were last week)", etc.

On the other hand, Jesus was a master at asking good questions. His questions were penetrating, revealing, compelling, leading and totally relevant.

- Addressing wealth in Matthew 16 he asked *"What good will it be for a man if he gains the whole world, yet forfeits his own soul?"*
- Addressing judgment in Matthew 7 he asked *"How can you say to your brother, 'Let me take the speck out of your eye,' when all the time there is a plank in your own eye?"*
- Addressing pride in Luke 22 he asked *"For who is greater, the one who is at the table, or the one who serves?"*

For most of us, good questions are going to take some effort. Before we go for that one-on-one, or before we start our small group time, we need to plan out and prepare the questions we want to ask. A good series of questions are going to lead a student (or a small group) somewhere. After you meet with a student or have a small group time, the hope is that they leave both feeling heard and also energized. You will know where you want to lead them (or you should) whether it is to an application in a small group, or towards some personal action in their own lives (they need advice or help with \_\_\_\_\_.)

The following is a simple structure that might help you in formulating your process of good questions.

Start with questions that lead to trust. Take some time asking questions that students will feel safe answering. These are not necessarily going to move them anywhere but will pave the way for you to take them on the next journey. These are questions like "What's the subject in school you love the most?" "Which subject do you dread?" "Are you a cat person or a dog person and why?" etc. Let them get comfortable.

Next, move to questions that lead to reflection. These are the questions that help them process and verbalize their feelings. Again, you should know where you are wanting to take the students in this one-on-one or small group time. Questions like "How does it make you feel to be failing math?" or "What's going on in your heart when you are fighting with mom and dad?" Give them space to answer these questions honestly. Your role after asking is only to shut up and listen.



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Now move to questions that lead to possibility. These are questions that are going to give them the opportunity to come up with solutions to their struggles, or envision a course of action. Questions like "What do you think would be something you could try doing at home to build relationship with your mom?" or "What would need to change for you to have more time for God?" Let them imagine the possibilities, because once you lead them from here to the next step, they will be empowered with the reality that they came up with the solution.

Lastly, move to questions that lead to action. They have shared with you what's happening and how it is making them feel. They have shared with you some ideas that they think could help them, and now you need to call them to action. "So what are you going to do this week?" or "What is the first thing you are going to take off your plate to give you more time"? Let them decide and then remind them that you are going to follow up with the action step they have chosen.

My hope and prayer for you is that you will have deeper and more meaningful interactions with your students as you become more prepared and proactive with your questions.