



Question-Able™ Discipleship

Using Questions to Grow as a Disciple

What's in a Question?

The path of the disciple always starts with a question. That question, whether explicit or implied, is the question Jesus asked of Peter, “Who do you say that I am?” To respond as Peter responded, “You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God.”¹ is the initial step in becoming a disciple of Christ. But the questions, neither His nor ours, will not end there. In many ways the questions we have will provide direction and guidance about our faith and its object. The use of questions as a tool for passing on faith is not new. The Four Questions of a Passover Seder that arose from the Temple period to Jesus’ use of questions in teaching and debate, to the Society of Friends (Quakers) queries and advice, the use of questions for faith formation has long been a part of the Christian religious experience.

A question means that there is something of enough importance to us to be worth engaging: a thought, an idea, a person. The importance of a question can be simple and immediate, as in, “Does this establishment have a rest room?” or profound and life altering and, as in, “What does Jesus expect of me?” Questions are bi-directional and point us toward dialogue with people, facts, concepts, and experiences, all of which are the stuff of which our Christian journey is made. While we do not always find the answers we are looking for, the service questions perform in motivating us is invaluable.

In the end, when our earthly journey is over and we stand before Christ, He will ask the final question: Did you know me? Our journey as a disciple will provide our answer.

Question-Able™ Discipleship

Because questions are a natural and essential part of life and engaging the world, **Question-Able™ Discipleship** is presented as an approach to assisting disciples in their growth toward maturity in the Christian faith. Its methodology embraces asking questions as a spiritual discipline and is applied to Christian discipleship for three reasons:

- First, asking questions encourages engagement, not only with content, but with other people and experiences. Much of what is currently being done regarding discipleship is focused more on transmitting content than encouraging dialogue that encompasses scripture, other members of the faith, and experience. The use of questions is a means to encourage a proactive discipleship.
- Second, using questions as an instructional tool provides a solid foundation for assisting disciples in their callings as theologians. To paraphrase Erasmus, to be a disciple is to be a theologian.

¹ The biblical passage from which this exchange is drawn is Matthew 16: 13-19 and is quoted using the New Revised Standard Version.

Developing questions as a skill set assists in providing a theological “toolbox” for discerning and understanding God’s presence and guidance.

- Third, encourage disciples in the understanding that their faith is *a dynamic relationship* with a living God who is active and present in their lives, not a static set of “rules” or “beliefs” to which they must adhere.

The approach can be adapted to almost any curriculum, but is specifically designed to be used in conjunction with the Network for Theological Education’s Digital Experience Platform (DEP). The DEP provides discipling resources to individuals and groups on a subscription basis. The Network provides training on how to use Question-Able™ Discipleship in your ministry setting, large or small.

The Methodology

Question-Able Discipleship is an approach to equipping and supporting people of faith as they engage their spiritual journeys to become mature followers of Jesus Christ. What makes the approach distinctive is the material is rooted in the understanding that these journeys are marked by asking questions, not by pretending there aren’t any. The quality of the answers one finds, is directly related to the quality of the questions, themselves.

It stands to reason, then, that asking questions about faith issues is an important spiritual discipline. So, those engaged with Question-Able™ discipleship learn and practice:

- 1) How to formulate good, substantive questions,
- 2) How to find answers to those questions, and
- 3) How to evaluate the answers you find.

For their faith journeys, disciples need a toolbox with which they can build up their faith, not a rigid set of statements that can weigh them down like bricks as they seek to understand and obey Christ.

NTE does recommend that groups who use the material start with the course ***How to Read the Bible***. It is based on the book ***The Story of God, The Story of Us: Getting Lost and Found in the Bible*** by Sean Gladding. This course serves as an introduction to both the Question-Able™ Discipleship approach and the Bible, itself. It is based on the book ***The Story of God, The Story of Us: Getting Lost and Found in the Bible*** by Sean Gladding.

All facilitation support materials can be obtained through the Network for Theological Education.

Simply put, Question-Able™ Discipleship teaches disciples how to ask questions. Specifically, disciples are taught how to formulate good questions, how to seek answers to those questions, and how to evaluate the quality of the answers they receive. Classes are led by facilitators who encourage the questions, provide guidance, and keep discussions moving forward and on topic. Both facilitators and disciples are encouraged to make use of the resources available of the Network’s Digital Engagement Platform. The objective is to facilitate a dialogue with the scriptures, addressing applications to real life

situations, but also providing clarity on key Christian concepts. Training for facilitators is available through The Network.

Groups can be formed anywhere, for any time, and in any place. Affinity groups may also be formed to hone in on the applicability of biblical teachings and theological concepts to specific areas such as vocation, literature, or public service. The approach and the NTE material do not indoctrinate in a specific theological perspective, such as Calvinism or liberation theology, but can be used to look at any of those topics. Groups can spend as long as they wish on a specific set of materials, so it is easy to make allowances for missed sessions or special events.

The Question-Able™ approach comes out of the Network's deep commitment to discipleship. We think you will find it an exciting and challenging approach to building disciples.