

# now that's a question!

By nature, I'm a "talker"—extroverted, outgoing, and vocal. But I've learned a great skill most "talkers" never pick up. By no means have I mastered this skill, but I've become a decent...question-asker.

I was first introduced to the art of asking good questions by Bob Thune, a senior pastor I served with in Nebraska. In my mind, he's the Yoda of question-asking. Most of what I learned from him came by watching him do his thing. But I once asked him why he asked so many questions. He said good questions...

- help you listen well, which is the most important principle of good communication,
- show genuine concern for the other person,
- make others recognize their importance,
- make listeners into learners, and
- help listeners to see the bigger picture.

Over the past five years or so, I've strived to become a better question-asker. I doubt I'll ever reach Yoda status, but I believe I've become a young Jedi.

Here are some steps that have helped me boost my question-asking skills.

**1. I ask my family a lot of questions, especially at dinnertime.** My wife or I usually ask questions like:

- What was the best thing about your day?
- What happened today that was special?

- How is \_\_\_\_\_ doing?

We're trying to create an atmosphere where conversation flows naturally, so we ask questions that can't be answered with a simple yes or no.

**2. On special days, such as birthdays or holidays, I always ask family members special questions.** It's become so common in our house, it's almost comical. Once I start in, everyone rolls their eyes and says, "Here we go." But their smiles tell me they love it (at least, that's how I interpret them). Some of my favorite special-occasion questions include:

- What was the best thing about this past year?
- What was the most difficult thing about this past year?
- What are you looking forward to the most about next year?
- What are three things you hope to accomplish or experience next year?
- How can I be a better parent (spouse) next year?

**3. In youth ministry, nothing tells a teenager you care more than asking a good question.** Some teenagers may not know how to answer a really good question, but they'll eventually warm up. If you're wondering how to get started, try these ideas.

- **Ask kids where they're F.R.O.M.** This simple acronym gives a basic-questions outline.

**F=Friends and Family**—Who's your best friend? What's he/she like? How many people are in your family? What do

you like best about your family? What do you like least about your family?

**R=Recreation**—What are your hobbies? How do you like to spend your free time? Why do you enjoy doing \_\_\_\_\_ so much?

**O=Occupation** (Remember, many students see school as their "job")—What jobs have you held so far? Do you like your current job? What subjects do you excel in at school? Are you planning to go to college? If not, what's your plan for after high school? If so, what degree do you want to pursue? What do you think you will do for a living?

**M=Memories**—What's your favorite memory from youth group? What's your favorite childhood memory? What's your favorite memory from last year? What do you want to be remembered for in life?

● **Use question-asking resources.** Check out great question-asking books, including *Tough Questions* and *JumpStarters* (both from Group Publishing, Inc.).

● **Use "special day" questions (see above) with teenagers.** Hang out at Starbucks or Taco Bell with a teenager on their birthday and fire away. ■