



[How to Ask Great Questions](#)

Karen Lee Thorp

★★★★☆ (4.5 stars)

Buy this book if you want to:

- *Learn the nuts and bolts of constructing concise, powerful questions*
- *Work with small groups and want to increase facilitation skills*

How to Ask Great Questions is a guide to the art of constructing powerful questions that get to the heart of a matter. With a plethora of examples and practical tips, the author talks through how to develop open and closed questions, what leading questions are and how to avoid them, how to ask questions that delve into meaning instead of just soliciting information, and much more. The best feature of this book is that it takes a scenario, then provides example after example of what kinds of questions you might ask and what the effect of that question might be. It's a great tool for learning or reinforcing the bedrock asking skills coaches depend on.

While this volume is written toward small group discussion leaders, the basic asking principles she covers also apply broadly in the coaching realm. For instance, the application questions she gives as examples (“What can I do to become a more compassionate person by this time next year?”) could as easily be questions to define a goal. Or to give another example, her questions for drawing out feelings (“How do you respond emotionally to what Paul is saying here?”) can easily be reconstituted for coaching (“How do you respond emotionally to what is going on in your life right now?”) Generally, you'll have to translate the context of the questions from small group Bible study to life coaching. So this is not a book with lists of questions like [Asking to Win](#): it is a book about the *construction* of questions.

It's also interesting to see in a book that is not about coaching and written by someone who's not (to my knowledge) a coach, just how much application of coaching skills there is to an area like small groups. Asking for significance (“What's the most significant thing that is going on here?") is in here, as is asking about the best and worst, using the word “challenge” instead of “problem”, the progression of questions from less vulnerable to more vulnerable, etc. There is a principle you can recognize from coach training on every other page.



Summary

This book is a great read and a great reference for aspiring coaches or coaches who want to sharpen their asking skills. The only thing that keeps it from a 5-star rating is the need to translate the questions over to the coaching realm. But that may even be a benefit: it forces you to think and take responsibility for doing the translating instead of just being spoon fed. I highly recommend this book.

Reviewed by:

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