

## Di121 Effective Communication

### *Lesson Di121-16 Method: Using Questions & Answers*

You might think learning is just receiving knowledge from your teacher. Every subject has facts to memorize. Then exams indicate what you have learned. Sometimes learning about the mistakes of the past enables you to avoid those same errors yourself. When Jesus trained his disciples he did something different. He taught them by asking them questions. Then he responded to their answers. He used questions to enable people to understand their own hearts and desires. This lesson discusses an account of Jesus using a question to help someone see truth more clearly.

One day an expert in the law stood up to test Jesus. “Teacher,” he asked, “what must I do to inherit eternal life?”

“What is written in the Law?” Jesus replied. “How do you read it?”

Jesus refused to give a simple answer to this skeptical scholar. Instead he asked him a question about something he already knew well. Jesus asked him what Moses said in the law. Jesus used the question to see where the man was in relation to God. So we observe that spiritual questions do not always demand immediate answers. You may ask another question to gain more insight into a person’s intent. At the same time you can help someone see their real need.

So the expert answered, “‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind’; and, ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’”

“You have answered correctly,” Jesus replied. “Do this and you will live.”

But he wanted to justify himself, so he asked Jesus, “And who is my neighbor?”

He gave a good answer which Jesus accepted. Yet this scholar wanted to test Jesus further. Why did he ask? He also wanted to “justify himself.” Perhaps in his heart, he knew he did not love all his neighbors that way. Jesus told him a story to help him know who God considered his neighbor.

Jesus began: “A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, when he was attacked by robbers. They stripped him of his clothes, beat him and went away, leaving him half dead. A priest happened to be going down the same road, and when he saw the man, he passed by on the other side. When a Levite came to the place and saw him, he also passed by on the other side. But a Samaritan, as he traveled, came where the man was; and when he saw him, he took pity on him. He went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he put the man on his own donkey, brought him to an inn and took care of him. The next day he took out two denarii and gave them to the innkeeper. ‘Look after him,’ he said, ‘and when I return, I will repay you for any extra expense you may have.’ Which of these three do you think was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?”

The expert in the law replied, “The one who had mercy on him” (Luke 10:25-37).

Jesus answered the important question about eternal life by telling a story. This story revealed new truth to this legal expert. Jesus ended his story with a troubling question. He asked which of the three men had acted as the true neighbor. The lawyer realized that his definition of “neighbor” needed a drastic change. His neighbor was not just the Jewish family who lived next door. They were good people who believed and behaved just as he did. But Jesus was implying that his neighbor was a person he might meet anywhere. A neighbor was anyone who needed mercy shown to them. It was not about people like him, but about his response to people in need. The lawyer realized he had not kept God’s law, because he had not really loved people with needs. With God’s definition of loving his neighbor, he fell far short of his goal of having eternal life.

Then Jesus told him, “Go and do likewise.” He still had the opportunity not only to know God’s word, but also to put into action what he had learned.

Using questions and answers is a method that invites the listener to consider new information. It often makes one see oneself more clearly. It helps the person answering the question to discover truth on his own, rather than just being handed an answer. The method often helps a teacher to share truth with young people too. It gives the teacher an opportunity to suggest the proper response to their new information. It challenges the hearer to look at something in a new way.

This story is **important** because it shows how Jesus used a question to change someone’s thinking through understanding new truth. The Bible does not tell us whether the scholar acted on Jesus’ direction, but he may have eventually changed his mind about Jesus and become a believer.

The **main truth** of this lesson is it shows that Jesus used questions and answers to help people understand more deeply their relationship to God and his truth.

Let’s **review** this lesson—

1. What communication approach did Jesus use with a lawyer who asked him about eternal life? [Pause]
  - A. If you said, “Jesus used a story and then a question to make him think,” you are right.
2. In the story of the Good Samaritan, what quality did he show to the dying man that the two Jewish leaders had not shown? [Pause]
  - A. If you said that the Good Samaritan showed mercy to the dying man, you are correct.
3. Why did Jesus use questions to teach both his disciples and seekers? [Pause]
  - A. If you said that Jesus used questions to help disciples and seekers see themselves more clearly, you are correct.

Your **assignment** for this lesson is to memorize the story and tell it to someone who has not heard it before. Then ask them this question, “If Jesus met with you this Sunday at your church, what question would he ask you?” Answer: The question Jesus might ask you would deal with groups of people in your community who still need to experience God’s mercy through you or your church.