



Questions to Connect:

For Dating and Going Deeper

by Bob & Enne Goss

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Why??? Our grandson began asking this question before he was even eighteen months old – over and over and over! Clearly, all humans are born with an insatiable need to know. However, as we grow and mature, are hurt and build walls, this makes us far more interested in ourselves than in others. But does our sole self-interest lead to deep and meaningful relationships? Do we really listen to others, or do we have a preconceived notion about what they are going to say? Do we formulate our answer before we truly hear theirs, because we must defend ourselves and strike first?

We have already asked several questions here. As parents for thirty years and as a high school English and Bible teacher for twenty years (Enne), we have learned how to ask questions to help our children and my students come to their own conclusions. Questions can be enlightening, leading to greater understanding, but they can also be emotionally charged.

One day, during a journal assignment, I noticed a student quietly crying. After class, I approached and asked if everything was okay. The question was, "Describe your first memory," a seemingly innocent prompt, but this student's first memory was watching the father throwing the mother down the stairs. I felt terrible! How could I have known this would open an old wound? As you read the following questions, keep in mind that some may be uncomfortable to answer, even if they seem harmless or trivial.

What is the point of asking questions? To find out the other person's background, perspective, values, goals, priorities, wounds, and dreams. The right questions have the power to break down barriers and foster vulnerability. But what are the right questions?

Never ask yes/no questions. In our marriage, we learned early on that monosyllabic answers don't spur further conversation. We had to learn not only to ask good questions, but to answer with honesty and vulnerability.

Never ask a question if you aren't willing to hear the answer. When we were recovering from Bob's adultery, I wanted to ask detailed questions about the relationship. He assured me he would be honest; however, he also wanted me to be sure I wanted to hear potentially painful answers. I decided to be very careful what I asked so that I would not carry unnecessary, hurtful images. Ask yourself, is the answer to a question necessary for growth in the relationship?

When you meet someone, what kinds of questions do you ask? Do you think of the end in mind, or do you just want to have fun without any commitment? Have you ever found yourself further down the road than you thought the relationship would take you and then wondered how you arrived there?

I (Enne) dated a guy my parents didn't approve of. Since I was in college, I did not heed their advice. However, one day, my dad asked a pointed question, "Imagine it's ten years from now and you wake up next to him on a Saturday morning. Neither of you have brushed your teeth and you roll over and look him in the face. Do you want to be married to him?" That terrified me to the point I broke up with him. I am eternally grateful for his wisdom.

Here are some questions you may want to ask yourself before pursuing any relationship:

Have I set a standard for my relationships?

Where do I see this relationship going?

What are the red flags?

What are the deal breakers?

Could I live with this person for the rest of my life if he/she never changes?

Now that you have asked yourself crucial questions, the first chapter will get you started.

I. ICE BREAKERS

These questions may seem insignificant, but they can certainly lead to deeper issues. These will help you understand background. They may even help you decide early whether the relationship should go further.

How do you like your coffee/tea?

If you could travel anywhere, where would you go?

What is your favorite meal at your favorite restaurant?

What kinds of animals do you like?

What is your favorite genre of:

Books? _____

Music? _____

Movies? _____

TV shows? _____

Food? _____

What were your favorite activities in:

Elementary school? _____

Middle school? _____

High school? _____

College? _____

Would you rather read a book or hike a mountain? _____

What is your favorite:

Flower? _____

Candy? _____

Movie? _____

Ice cream? _____

Color? _____

Sport? _____

Art? _____

Music? _____

Landscape? _____

Climate? _____

Play structure at the park? _____

Weather? _____

What was your first car? _____

What was your first trip? _____

II. GOING DEEPER

These questions will help you decide if a relationship is on a healthy path. They will give perspective on values, priorities, goals and dreams.

What is important to you regarding:

Money? _____

Possessions? _____

Family? _____

Friends? _____

Job? _____

School? _____

Church? _____

God? _____

How has your spiritual formation affected your perspective as an adult?

What do you like to spend your money on?

What do you feel guilty about or regret?

Would you rather eat good food or have meaningful conversation?

How do you share your feelings when you are:

Sad? _____

Glad? _____

Mad? _____

How does Road Rage affect you?

Would you rather go out of the country on a vacation or stay in?

What is your philosophy of short-term missions?

Do you think about your money staying local or benefitting certain people/corporations?

What is your Love Language?

Are you an Introvert or an Extrovert?

Recycle or not? Why?

What makes you feel:

Warm and Cozy? _____

Cool and Refreshed? _____

Angry? _____

Happy? _____

Exhilarated? _____

Relaxed? _____

Content? _____

Loved? _____

Hated? _____

Criticized? _____

Valued? _____

Worthless? _____

Intelligent? _____

Stupid? _____

Who from history would you like to have coffee with and why?

How do you respond to authority? _____

What do you think about premarital sex? _____

What do you think about gender issues? _____

What do you think about abortion? _____

What was the political stance in your home growing up? _____

Where do you stand on politics now? _____

How were birthdays celebrated when you were growing up? _____

How do you want to be celebrated now? _____

How were holidays celebrated in your home? _____

How would you like to celebrate them now?

III. HEADING TO THE ALTAR

These questions help with thoughtful consideration of marriage. At the beginning of our engagement, I gave Bob the ring back for a weekend while I considered whether I wanted to marry someone who had already had sex. While we believe God created sex as a beautiful gift for married men and women, we also believe in the forgiveness of sins and redemption of souls.

What have been your emotions lately? _____

Why do you love me? _____

Have you lost anyone close to you? _____

How did that impact you? _____

Where are you in your spiritual journey? _____

Do you want to have children? _____

How do you feel about how your parents raised you? _____

How does that affect your perspective of raising kids yourself? _____

What do you wish I knew about you? _____

What do you wish I knew about your family? _____

How do you compare yourself to others? _____

What are the negative words you say to yourself? _____

What are the positive words you say to yourself? _____

What do you think you need to resolve before marriage? _____

What do you dread the most regarding the future? _____

What are you most looking forward to in life? _____

How do you see yourself contributing to society? _____

How do you see yourself stronger as a married person? _____

What are you most concerned about marriage? _____

What are you most hopeful about marriage? _____

CONCLUSION

We hope this helps you get to know the people in your life. While we emphasized a dating/marriage relationship, most of these questions can be asked in any connection. Bob made it a point to “date” each of our kids as they were growing up. Asking them questions not only gave us insight into their hearts and minds, it also helped them form their own beliefs, values and opinions.

Jot down a few of these the next time you go to coffee with a friend. Better yet, ask your spouse on a date specifically to explore his/her heart. We are surprised at how many couples only know each other on a surface level.

Just the other night, we miscommunicated to the point that Enne felt scolded and mistrusted, while Bob felt uninformed. The good news is that we were able to recover within an hour, rather than the situation escalating and being blown out of proportion. Even after 34 years of marriage, we are still learning things about each other, so pursue connections in your life!

If you have great questions we haven't mentioned, contact us at BobGoss.com to share your ideas and stories.

