

Ten Ways

TO TALK WITH SOMEONE ABOUT THEIR FAITH



Whether you are a pastor, an elder, a deacon, a chaplain, a parent, or another caring church member, asking about a person's spiritual well-being does not need to be intimidating or invasive.

Here are 10 questions you can ask to start a deep but inviting conversation with a person you care about. These questions can also be excellent conversation and story starters for intergenerational groups, youth groups, and other gatherings!

1 HOW HAS YOUR WALK WITH GOD CHANGED IN THE PAST FEW YEARS? WHAT OCCASIONED THESE CHANGES?

We are all called to encourage others in their faith and help deepen their love for Christ and his church. This almost always works best when you start with personal questions of faith rather than talking about church in general. If you're a church leader, asking this question can also give you insight into the impact of faith-forming practices such as worship services, prayer, preaching, small groups, and service opportunities.

2 IN WHAT SITUATIONS OR PLACES DO YOU FEEL MOST ALIVE AS A CHILD OF GOD?

This question helps people think imaginatively about how they meet God. Their answers will often include not only worship services but also listening to music and podcasts, small group interactions, enjoying creation, family devotional times, and personal devotions.

3 WHO IN YOUR LIFE (PAST OR PRESENT) HAS GIVEN YOU A TASTE OF GOD'S LOVE?

So many people view their relationship to God in the context of keeping rules and not wanting to offend God. Legalism is often close to the surface and keeps people from experiencing the deep love of Christ for them. Reveling in God's grace, God's undeserved favor, and God's love for us is a posture we want to encourage among all God's children.

4 CAN YOU RECALL A WORSHIP SERVICE THAT PARTICULARLY BLESSED YOU? WHY DID IT MAKE SUCH AN IMPACT ON YOU?

These questions help people to internalize and verbalize their formative experiences in worship. Their answers can also help you see how various individuals connect with God best.

5 WHAT RELATIONSHIPS AND ACTIVITIES HELP YOU KNOW THAT YOU BELONG TO JESUS AND TO YOUR CHURCH COMMUNITY?

Knowing deep down that we belong—“body and soul, in life and in death”—to Jesus is a basic need for all followers of Christ (Heidelberg Catechism, Q&A 1). Every church ought to consider ways to deepen that sense of belonging. You might also ask some follow-up questions that reflect a lack of belonging, such as

- * Who do you think has difficulty belonging at our church because of barriers preventing them from being a part of our community?
- * What steps do you take to help others feel that they belong at our church?

6 WHAT EXPERIENCE IN THE PAST YEAR HAS BEEN PARTICULARLY CHALLENGING TO YOUR FAITH?

This question is designed to give people an opportunity to share openly about their disappointments with God and their struggles with faith or with the community of faith. The following are some follow-up questions that can help you take this conversation deeper:

- * What do you think God feels (or thinks or is doing) in you as you experience this situation or relationship?
- * How is your view of God changing because of this experience?
- * How do you think God is inviting you to respond to this?

7 HOW HAVE YOU EXPERIENCED HOPE IN YOUR LIFE IN THE MIDST OF CHALLENGES?

Difficult times and brokenness often remind us to pin our hope in Christ alone, who has promised never to leave or forsake us. Ask people how they have experienced hope through people or events at church. Encourage people to take a long view of their challenging situation (for example, a serious illness, a wayward child, a wish to be married, infertility as a married couple, loneliness), helping them to see their life as part of God's unfolding kingdom.

8 HOW HAS OUR CHURCH HELPED YOU DISCOVER YOUR STRENGTHS AND GIFTS, AND HOW HAVE YOU BEEN ABLE TO SERVE OTHERS WITH THOSE ABILITIES?

Asking this question gives you the opportunity to thank people who have used their gifts in various ministries or programs. While we often forget to thank people, doing so indicates that we have noticed their contributions.

9 WHAT LONGINGS DO YOU HAVE FOR YOURSELF, YOUR FAMILY, YOUR COMMUNITY, OR YOUR CHURCH?

This is a deep question that provides opportunity for people to share their heart with one another. It's a question we don't often ask each other, but it's one that can start a deeply meaningful conversation.

10 HOW CAN I PRAY FOR YOU?

If you're asking these questions in the context of a pastoral or elder visit, ending with prayer is always appropriate and appreciated. If you're engaged in a more casual conversation with someone you know well, you might pray with that person on the spot or assure him or her that you will remember their concerns in your daily prayers.

The Faith Formation Ministries team is available to consult and brainstorm with you on these ideas and more. We'd also love to hear your faith formation stories so that we can share them with others. You'll find our contact information at crcna.org/FaithFormation.



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