

# GOSPEL SHEPHERDING

## ASK GOOD QUESTIONS

*The purpose in a person's heart is like deep water, but a person of understanding will draw it out. Proverbs 20:5*

### HOW DO I ASK GOOD QUESTIONS AS A GOSPEL SHEPHERD?

- We must be led by the Holy Spirit! It's his job to bring conviction, and he is the primary shepherd. He alone knows the depths of a person's heart, and he will guide us as we lovingly pursue people with good question. Pray before, during, and after any shepherding conversation, asking the Spirit to speak.
- Often the Spirit will provide great questions immediately after a conversation. Write these down for future reference.
- Ask lots of questions throughout the conversation, especially in the beginning. We like to say, "Ask 10 questions for every pronouncement."
- Ask open ended questions that can't be answered with a "yes" or "no", as these questions do not provide much information, and can leave room for us to make a lot of assumptions about the answer.
- Sometimes the best question is not a question. "Tell me more..." is a great way to invite a person to tell more about what's going on in a their heart.

### SOME GOOD QUESTIONS TO USE

The following is adapted from Paul Tripp, Instruments in the Redeemer's Hands, p. 170-178

What? Ask people to define their terms. "What did you mean when you said...?"

- How? Ask people to clarify what they mean with concrete, real life examples. "How did that situation unfold? Give us some more detail."
- Where? and When? Ask people to provide more information about the details and the order of events. "Where were you when this happened? When did this happen?"
- How Often? Ask people to describe the frequency of their struggles. Ask them about themes and patterns. "How often do you do this?"
- Why? Ask people to explain why they responded as they did in a given situation. Ask the person to share their reasons, values, purposes, and desires. "Why were you feeling frustrated?"

## A WORD ABOUT “WHY?”

“Why?” is a great question because it helps uncover the motives of the heart. We sometimes refer to “Why?” as the Why Shovel, because it helps us dig around to get to the root of a problem. However, a few cautions should be noted.

“Why?” can sound condescending, judgmental, and even rhetorical (a question that’s asked where the answer is so obvious that the question itself helps prove a point). “Why on earth did you do that!?” clearly implies that the person asking the question thinks a poor decision was made. The question does not invite an honest, vulnerable response.

Also, “Why?” is sometimes used as a one-word question, which can sound accusatory, and does not invite an open dialogue. If a wife says to her husband, “I’m feeling sad and frustrated,” and he responds by simply asking, “Why?”, she is likely to perceive that he is upset because she is feeling sad, and wants to hear her reason so he can refute it.

“Why?” can be a powerful tool that must be wielded with wisdom and the sensitivity of the Spirit.