



BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS IN A SMALL GROUP

BUILDING TRUST

Trust develops as people get to know each other. When people come to a new group, they inwardly ask themselves if they will fit in and find relationships.

Storytelling questions are a way to help people develop trust. They make people feel welcome by inviting them to say, "This is who I am." The hearers, in turn, say to themselves, "Now that I know who you are, I see that we are both human, with commonalities and areas of uniqueness."

SHARING STORIES

How do you get small group participants to share their stories? Ask storytelling questions.

- *Who was God to you when you were a child?*
- *What has been one of the best compliments you have received as an adult?*
- *What does Easter mean to you personally?*

These are storytelling questions—ones that ask people to tell the stories of their past, their present, and their future.

PRINCIPLES OF STORYTELLING QUESTIONS

Use one-sentence questions that give people permission to be personal and talk about themselves while deciding how much to disclose. One sentence is enough for simplicity. Talking about oneself means telling a piece of one's story.

Here are six principles of good storytelling questions:

1. A good storytelling question should invite at least one sentence in response.
2. Storytelling questions follow a progression from less vulnerable to more vulnerable.
3. The safest stories for most people to tell are about the past.
4. It's important to design storytelling questions that everyone in the group can answer.
5. A question that asks for positive information is almost always safer than one that invites negative information.
6. Make sure that your storytelling question is relevant to the task or theme of the group.