



ORIENTED
to **LOVE**

Crafting Dialogue-Nurturing Questions

Ask OPEN-ended questions. These require more than a yes/no or simple informational answer. The goal is to go deeper. Open-ended questions reflect a genuine desire not just to learn information but also to understand it, to see through the other's eyes / experience.

- **Avoid questions that start with the verbs DO and BE**—*Is it fair that ...? Do you think that...?*
- **Try starting with HOW or WHAT, going for insight rather than information:** *What are your views on...? How do you feel about...? Help me understand how you came to your understanding of...*

Avoid LEADING questions. Leading questions often seek to confirm one's own view rather than increase understanding of the other's view. They often suggest a particular response, putting respondents on the defensive rather than opening them up. They can also push respondents to deal with limited options or to be influenced by the asker's views:

- *When your son came out to you, were you angry or just sad?* (limited choices)
- *How did you deal with the shame you must have felt when you realized you were gay?* (assumes the presence of shame)

In continuing discussions:

- **Avoid** questions that
 - imply judgment (*How could you do that to a brother in Christ?*),
 - give advice (*You could always leave the church—why don't you do that?*)
 - offer analysis (*I can see that didn't work out too well for you—how could you have handled it better?*)
- **Pursue** questions that
 - aim to understand the person's story, feelings, beliefs, and the reasons behind their beliefs (*What factors led to your decision to leave that church, and how do you feel about that decision?*)

Ask **clarifying questions** to confirm what you think you understood (*I think I heard you say XYZ—How accurate is that?*).

Ask **probing questions** to understand more deeply (*What outcomes has your decision led to? What role has suffering played in your faith journey?*).

Here are a few examples from past Oriented to Love dialogues that *show how we went from dialogue-dampening questions to dialogue-nurturing questions*:

Proposed version:		Final version:
Do you think the awkwardness/discomfort you felt as you were trying to discern your sexuality was connected to God’s conviction in any way or because most people are heterosexual and minorities often feel out of place?	→	What emotions and internal reactions did you experience as you went through the process of discerning your sexuality? What, if any, spiritual conviction did you experience during the process?
As someone who interprets Scripture through a liberal lens, are you willing to give up on what it means to be made in God's image, male and female?	→	What do you think it means to be made in God’s image, male and female? How do you see the image of God reflected in men, in women?
Do you believe you are living out the Golden Rule and the “greatest commandment” by denying the same rights and privileges you enjoy in relationship and marriage to those who are of a different sexual orientation?	→	If you are against same-sex unions, how might you live out the Golden Rule towards all members of the LGBTQ community—both those in same-sex relationships and those who choose celibacy?

Oriented to Love is a program of Christians for Social Action

