



3 DISCUSSION STARTERS FOR YOUTH GROUPS

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You ask a question. They stare back quizzically at you. You ask another question. Silence. You awkwardly try again. Embarrassed shuffles and whispering. You give up and move on.

How do you get young people engaged in meaningful conversation and discussion? It's not always easy. Building relationships is important. Asking the right questions is important. Check out my free eBook ['Creative Bible Study Methods for Youth Leaders'](#) for more ideas on forming good questions to facilitate discussion.

Sometimes a simple activity or discussion starter helps to encourage interaction. The 3 discussion starters here are general in their application. I've not linked them to a particular theme or teaching topic. Use 'Consequences', 'Getting to know you?' and 'What's puzzling you?' to provide an opportunity for your group to give their thoughts and opinions and to ask their own questions. Find out more about what they really think! What's important to them? Where do they struggle with the Christian faith? Use these discussions to provide a launch pad for further conversations and bible teaching.

Find more free [discussion starters](#), [themed youth evenings](#) and [reflections on the future of youth ministry](#) on my Insight blog.

CONSEQUENCES

A simple discussion starter based on the party game of consequences i.e. his name/ her name/ where they met/ he said/ she said/ where they went/ what they did/ and the consequence was?

This exercise assumes your young people have some background knowledge about the life of Christ. Invite them to sit in a circle of 9 people and give everyone a piece of paper and a pen. If you have a large group, break into two or more circles.

Explain that you are going to play the game consequences and ask a series of 9 questions. They write their first answer at the top of the paper and then fold it so that the answer cannot be seen. The paper is then passed to the person on their right. This is repeated for each question, until all 9 questions are asked. If someone can't answer a question they simply write a question mark, fold the paper over and pass it on.

1. Where was Jesus born?
2. What was his job?
3. How old was he when he died?
4. How long ago did this happen?
5. Something Jesus did that people at the time liked.
6. Something he did which shocked people.
7. One thing that makes people want to follow him now.
8. One thing that puts people off from following him now.
9. One question you would like to ask him if you had the opportunity.

Don't worry if the first four questions seem obvious. If your group knows the answers, they can show off their knowledge.

When everyone is finished, put all the papers in the centre of the circle. Ask each person to take a different one to the one they put down. Give a moment for them to open the paper and look at the answers. Go through the questions one by one, each time asking a few people to read the answers on the paper.

The first four factual questions can be covered quickly. If appropriate, add other pieces of information about the life of Jesus to help fill out the picture.

The later questions (5-9) are used to encourage a time of discussion. Use a whiteboard or flip chart to record the different answers.

For example, ask if anyone has a different point of view or opinion to a particular answer, and why? Does anyone want to add something else? Add your own comments to the discussion and ask supplementary questions. One of your group may like to say why they want to follow Jesus. The responses to the final question could prompt a wider discussion on a particular topic or link to a follow-up session called, 'Things I'd like to ask Jesus?'

GETTING TO KNOW YOU

This discussion starter will help your young people to express their opinions, thoughts and feelings and learn more about each other. It can also help you discover more about your group and their views. Use the questions to create further opportunities for individual conversation, group discussion and links to your study programme.

Prepare a pack of 52 index cards. This is to include 20 'challenge' cards, 20 'getting to know you' cards, 6 questions cards, and 6 blanks cards. The challenge cards are more reflective or personal. If you wish, add your own questions to make them more appropriate to your group or to make links to a teaching topic.

Write out a question on each card. Put the 'challenge' and 'getting to know you' cards into different piles and mix 3 question and 3 blank cards into each pile. The cards are placed downwards so that the players cannot see the topic before they pick up the card.

Divide the groups into 8-10. Ask them to sit in a circle. Make more question packs for a larger group. Each person throws a dice. For even numbers the player picks up a 'challenge' card. For odd numbers they pick up a 'getting to know you card'. They read out their question before giving their own comments on the topic. Ask them to speak for no more than two or three sentences on each topic.

If a player picks up a 'question card' they can ask someone else in the group a question. If they pick up a 'blank' card they can either pass or comment on any topic of their choice.

The activity should last no more than 40 minutes and played at a reasonable pace, balanced against giving time for serious thought and comments.

GETTING TO KNOW YOU QUESTIONS

- My favourite meal is..? Why?
- My favourite band is..? Why?
- Who would you take to a desert island? Why?
- My favourite TV show is..? Why?
- If you could change your name, what would it be?
- My worst habit is..?
- If you could go anywhere in the world, where would you go? Why?
- Who's your favourite cartoon character? Why?
- What's the weirdest thing you've ever eaten?
- If you were an animal, what would you be and why?
- My favourite sport is..? Why?
- My favourite movie of all time is..? Why?
- My favourite colour is..? Why?
- If I gave you \$10,000, what would you spend it on? Why?
- If your house was burning down, what three objects would you try and save?
- Describe the most unusual thing that's happened to you?
- Name a gift you will never forget?
- Something I've always wanted to do is..?
- What is your favorite time of day? Why?
- For what are you thankful?

CHALLENGE QUESTIONS

- What three major problems do you think young people face today?
- What do you feel about the poor in the world?
- If you could ask Christ to change one problem in the world today, what would you like him to change?
- If you could change anything about yourself, what would you change? Why?
- Which two people are closest to you and why?
- What do you find most difficult about the Christian life?
- What important beliefs have you changed your mind on since following Jesus?
- How would your life be different if you knew Jesus was returning in six months time?
- If you had this week over again what would you do differently?
- What was the best thing that happened to you this past week?
- What type of person would you most likely want for a best friend?
- If you could have any question answered, what would it be?
- What is the hardest thing you have ever done?
- When was the last time you prayed?
- When was the last time you admitted you were wrong? Why is it so hard to do?
- If you had a time machine that would work only once, what point in the future or in history would you visit? Why?
- How would others who know you very well describe you?
- What do you most like about your parents?
- Which person from the Bible do you most identify with?
- What have you learned recently from another person?

WHAT'S PUZZLING YOU

This discussion starter includes a couple of puzzle activities as an introduction to asking the question, 'What's puzzling you.' This kind of starter is good for a small group, or 'non-sporty' group, or for use in a home where more active icebreakers won't work well. Puzzles can really engage some groups and drive them crazy 😊

Lots of other puzzle ideas can be easily 'Googled.' Adding simple coin puzzles, optical illusions and games like 'Jenga' can create a complete themed puzzle evening.

After the puzzles and games introduce the question, 'What's puzzling you?' Do you have questions about God, Jesus, the Bible, Church, the Christian faith? Things which you don't understand, confuse you, or just 'bug' you.

Allow the young people a few moments to think about a question they want to ask. Perhaps something they have never understood, or an issue they struggle with. The questions are then written on slips of paper (anonymously) and placed into a hat or bag. Take a short break. Review the questions and select several you want to begin with. Acknowledge and affirm ALL the questions.

Encourage comments on each question from other young people in the group. What do you think? Do others find this difficult too? Add your own comments, experiences and bible passages to help understanding.

If you don't know the answer – go away and find out. Don't bluff 😊. Promise to find out more. This can mean a lot to a young person asking about a genuine question of belief.

Some questions could also be used as primers for further Bible study. Why not let your group set some of the teaching agenda!

PUZZLE PAGE

Each box represents a word or well-known phrase. But what are they?

What's your score?

ANSWER TABLE

Mind over matter	Six feet underground	High chair	Sandbox
I understand	Tricycle	Man over board	Hole in one
Read between the lines	Split level	Put on weight	Pin up
Glance backwards	Neon lights	Cheek to cheek	Just between you and me
Life after death	On the last lap	Down wind	He's beside himself

1. <u>MIND</u> MATTER	2. <u>GROUND</u> FEET FEET FEET FEET FEET FEET	3. CHAIR	4. SAND
5. <u>STAND</u> I	6. CYCLE CYCLE CYCLE	7. <u>MAN</u> BOARD	8. OHONLEE
9. R E A D	10. LE VEL	11. <u>PUT</u> KILOGRAM	12 N I P
13. ECNALG	14. <u>KNEE</u> LIGHTS	15. CHEEKKEEHC	16. J U YOU AND ME S T
17. DEATH LIFE	18. <u>ON</u> LAP LAP LAP	19. W I N D	20. HES/HIMSELF

RIDDLE PAGE

1. Some months have 31 days; some have 30 days, how many have 28 days?
2. John Smith was born on December 27th, yet his birthday is always in the summer. How is this possible?
3. What belongs to you but others use it more than you do?
4. The more there is, the less you see.
5. If a blue house is made of blue bricks and a yellow house is made of yellow bricks and a red house is made of redbrick, what is a green house made of?
6. Divide 40 by half and ad five. What is the answer?
7. What comes once in a minute, twice in a moment, but never in a thousand years?
8. The more you take, the more you leave behind. What are they?
9. What goes up and never comes down?
- 10.A woman give an astronaut £1.The woman is the astronauts sister, but the astronaut is not the woman's brother, why?
- 11.You can't keep this until you have given it.
- 12.What question can you never answer "yes" to?

1. 12	7. The letter M
2. He lives in the Southern Hemisphere.	8. Footsteps
3. Your name	9. Your age
4. Darkness	10. Sister
5. Glass	11. A promise
6. 85	12. Are you asleep?

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