

Iron Sharpens Iron

A guide to accountability conversations that help believers grow closer to God and each other

As iron sharpens iron, so a man sharpens the countenance of his friend.

PROVERBS 27:17

AT A GLANCE

BIG IDEA	We grow best when other believers know our lives and ask us honest questions. Good questions, asked with love and humility, help each other walk closer to God in every area of life.
SCRIPTURE	Proverbs 27:17 · Galatians 6:1-2 · Hebrews 3:13 · James 5:16 · Ecclesiastes 4:9-10
BEST FOR	Adult leaders, volunteers, and mentors meeting in same-gender pairs or small groups; a student version is included for youth leaders to use with teens
USE IT	Meet weekly or every other week. You don't need every question every time; choose the areas that matter most right now.

Why we need each other

Two pieces of iron rubbed together both come away sharper. In the same way, believers who are honest with each other help each other grow. Hebrews says, "exhort one another daily... lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin" (Hebrews 3:13). Sin grows in secret; it loses power in the light (James 5:16). "Two are better than one... For if they fall, one will lift up his companion" (Ecclesiastes 4:9-10).

This guide gives examples of questions that help Christians get into each other's lives, and so get closer to God. Remember to talk about all the major areas of a person's life, not just the "spiritual" ones.

Six guidelines for a good conversation

1. Take the initiative

People aren't always eager to dig into their struggles. Many will wait to see if you ask. So ask.

2. Ask open questions

Avoid questions that can be answered "yes" or "no." Ask "how" and "what" questions that invite real answers.

3. Go first

Share honestly about your own week, your struggles, and your sins. You are setting the example. It's okay to share weakness along with your willingness to repent.

4. Prepare and pray

Think through the other person's needs ahead of time, pray before you meet (and with them), and get wise counsel when you need it.

5. Ask the hard questions, then listen

Ask the tough and obvious questions. If it's still unclear, ask more. Listen to understand, and don't jump to conclusions.

6. Look for the heart behind the action

A teen gets an F on a paper. Why? Laziness, rebellion, procrastination, confusion, or being unprepared? Help each other see the heart issue, not just the result.

KEEP IT SAFE AND CONFIDENTIAL

Meet with someone of the same gender. Keep what is shared private, unless someone is in danger or a child is at risk; then involve your pastor and the proper authorities. The goal is always restoration, "in a spirit of gentleness, considering yourself lest you also be tempted" (Galatians 6:1).

Questions for adults

RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD

- How have your times in the Bible gone this week? Were you consistent?
- Are you enjoying your quiet times, or do they feel like a duty?
- How were your prayer times? How many days this week did you really connect with God?

MARRIAGE

- How would you describe your relationship with your spouse this week?
- Have you been praying together? How is that going? If not, why?
- Are you getting enough time together?
- What "bumps" did you hit, and were they resolved quickly?
- Did your spouse challenge you on anything this week?

INTIMACY IN MARRIAGE

- Are you and your spouse making time for intimacy and romance?
- Is there any tension or withholding in this area that you need to talk through?
- Has there been enough affection outside the bedroom?
- Are you guarding your eyes and heart (1 Corinthians 7:3-5; Matthew 5:28)?

CHILDREN

- Are you having discipling times with your children?
- How are they doing in school and with friends?
- Have you had to correct them this week? How did it go?
- Are you praying with them?

HOME

- How are attitudes about chores and shared work at home?
- Are laundry, groceries, and meals under control, or a source of stress?

WORK

- How is your job going? Any big projects or challenges?
- How are things with your coworkers and your boss? Any conflicts?
- Are you doing your work "as to the Lord" (Colossians 3:23)?
- Are you in over your head? Would help with time management be useful?

FINANCES

- Are you spending your money wisely?
- Have you fallen behind on any payments?
- Are you giving generously and saving for the future?
- Is anything about money stressing you out?

SCHEDULE

- Does your schedule feel under control?
- Are you spending your time wisely?
- Are you in a personal Bible study right now?
- Are you opening your home to anyone this week?

FELLOWSHIP

- Are you feeling loved and cared for in your group?
- Have you done anything to encourage someone this week?
- Are you building a close friendship with someone in the group?

DISCIPLING OTHERS

- How was your time with the people you are discipling?
- What are they working through right now?
- What character issue are you helping them grow in?

EVANGELISM

- Who have you met or talked with about Jesus this week?
- What was hard, or easy, about sharing your faith?
- Who are you praying for by name?

Questions for students

Youth leaders can adapt the same approach for teens. Meet in same-gender pairs or small groups, follow your church's child-safety policy (meet in public or visible places, and let parents know), and keep it warm and encouraging.

GOD

- How has your time with God been this week?
- What is something God taught you or showed you?

FAMILY

- How are things at home with your parents and siblings?
- Have you honored your parents this week, even when it was hard?

SCHOOL AND WORK

- How are your classes going? Any you're struggling with?
- Have you been honest in your schoolwork?

FRIENDS

- Are your closest friends pulling you toward Jesus or away from Him?
- Is there anyone you need to forgive, or ask forgiveness from?

ONLINE AND MEDIA

- What have you been watching, playing, and scrolling?
- Is there anything on your phone you wouldn't want your parents or me to see?

PURITY

- How are you doing guarding your eyes, thoughts, and relationships?
- Is there anything you need to bring into the light?

SHARING YOUR FAITH

- Who are you praying for who doesn't know Jesus?
- Did you have a chance to talk about God with anyone this week?

REFLECT

1. Who in your life asks you honest questions? If no one does, who could you ask?
2. Which of the six guidelines comes most naturally to you? Which is hardest?
3. Why does going first and sharing your own struggles make a conversation safer?
4. Which area of life do you tend to avoid talking about? Why?
5. How can our team build a culture where this kind of sharpening is normal?

TAKE IT HOME

Choose one trusted, same-gender believer this week and ask if they would meet with you regularly. Agree on confidentiality, pick three or four question areas to start with, and set a time. Pray for each other between meetings.

As iron sharpens iron, so one friend sharpens another.

From fifty years of youth ministry by **Ron Whittam**. Share freely with your students and leaders. · The Youth Ministry Living Room · qrprogramming.com/livingroom

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