



One Question that Can Change a College Student's Life

Michael Kelley

Director of Discipleship and Groups Ministry, LifeWay Christian Resources

College is a time for questions. Students are inundated with questions from professors about their lectures, from parents about their lifestyles, from new relationships about their backgrounds – questions everywhere. All the time. And if we are doing collegiate ministry, we ought to be masters of asking questions. But our questions should go beyond the simple "get-to-know-you" variety. They should go deeper.

In fact, I believe there is one question, if we ask it rightly and at the right time, that can literally change the life of a college student. That's definitely a different kind of question than "what dorm do you live in?". It's the kind of question that forces introspection. That forces someone to think about the world and about themselves. That leads someone to know God, and themselves, better. And this question is surprisingly simple for all the power it holds:

Why do you ask?

Now the first thing you might notice about this question is that you only really ask it in response to another question. Fortunately, college students aren't just asked a lot of questions – they also ask a lot of questions. Many of them for the first time are making their own choices. Budgeting their own money. Discovering their own faith. And all those things lead them to questions – for most of them, the kind of hard, deep, troubling questions they've never had to ask before.

So someone comes to you and asks a question like that:

- How do you know the Bible is true?
- Why is Jesus the only way to God?
- Does my sexual preference really matter if I believe in Jesus?

These are hard questions, and because they are, we might be tempted to short-circuit the process and just give a quick answer. But what if instead of just answering their question, even if we know the answer, we ask a question right back:

Why do you ask?

This resource is available to all collegiate ministries. Please use it for your ministry but not for commercial purposes. We ask that you retain the BCNet header.



By asking that question, you show someone else that you're not just interested in dispensing information; you're interested in them as a person. And you're not just helping them find an answer; instead you're leading them on a journey of self-discovery.

But to truly ask that question, and to do it justice, you have to be willing to listen more than talk. You have to actually care more about the person than you do about showing how smart you are by giving them the information you seek. You have to be more committed to them than you are to answering their question.

For all those reasons, I think this question can not only change someone's life – I think it's one of God's favorite questions back to us when we come to Him seeking information. It seems to me that God is far more interested in who we are than what we know. He's more interested in developing us as Christ-followers than just passing out divine nuggets. And so He takes the time, effort, and energy to make us think, consider, process, and develop instead of just passing out information.

Isn't it worth the same time, effort, and energy for us to follow His example?