

Historic Accountability Questions

Question sets from the Methodist class and band meetings, the catechisms, and The Essential Call

Chapter Five traced how the church has kept itself honest through small, accountable groups. These are some of the questions those groups actually asked. Don't use them all at once. Choose two to four for a season and ask them every meeting.

The Class Meeting (John Wesley, 18th century)

Each week, roughly twelve Methodists met under a lay leader around one recurring question:

| How is it with your soul?

Ask it slowly and wait for a real answer. It is often all a group needs.

The Band Meeting (Rules of the Band Societies, 1738)

Smaller, same-sex "bands" went deeper. The Rules directed that four questions be asked at every meeting:

1. What known sins have you committed since our last meeting?
2. What temptations have you met with?
3. How were you delivered?
4. What have you thought, said, or done, of which you doubt whether it be sin or not?

Before joining a band, a person was asked questions like these:

- Do you desire to be told of your faults?
- Do you desire to be told of all your faults, and that plain and home?
- Is it your desire and design to be on this, and all other occasions, entirely open, so as to speak everything that is in your heart without exception, without disguise, and without reserve?

From the Catechisms, Asked Personally

- "What is your only comfort in life and in death?" (Heidelberg Catechism, Q. 1). Can you answer it in your own words this week?
- "What is the chief end of man?" (Westminster Shorter Catechism, Q. 1). Where did you glorify and enjoy God this week, and where did you not?

From The Essential Call

- Where did you fall short this week, and where did you see God at work?
- What happened when you tried last week's step?
- What is Christ asking of you right now that you are resisting?
- Are you abiding, or performing?
- Who are you investing in? Who is investing in you?

A Weekly Set by Theme

Scripture	What did God show you in His Word this week? What did you do about it?
Prayer	How is your prayer life, honestly? What is crowding it out?
Temptation	Where were you tempted? How did you respond?
Relationships	Is there anyone you need to forgive or ask forgiveness from?
Home	How are you loving and leading the people under your roof?
Witness	Who outside the church have you spoken with about Christ?
Integrity	Have you been completely truthful in your answers today?

Using These Well

- **Gentleness.** Restore one another "in a spirit of gentleness," bearing burdens together (Galatians 6:1-2). Accountability is not policing.
- **Confidence.** What is confessed in the group stays in the group, within the limits in the Discipler's Guide.
- **Same-sex for depth.** Keep band-level questions for men with men and women with women.
- **No contests.** Confession is not a competition for the most dramatic story or the cleanest record.
- **End with the gospel.** "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins" (1 John 1:9). Then pray.