

Breaking Small Group “Ice”

The first few minutes of small group meetings are vital. A good icebreaker can cut away social barriers and promote open sharing throughout the rest of the meeting. It can also bond the group in ways you never expected. Icebreakers are an adventure in getting to know another person. You could even go so far as to say they are a way of showing love by building interest in each other’s life experiences and personality.

RULES OF THUMB: GOOD ICEBREAKERS . . .

- Take 10-15 minutes at the beginning of a group discussion.
- Are low-key and non-threatening—never embarrassing!
- Are ones that everyone can answer and get the whole group involved, especially the quiet person who needs encouragement to talk and the experience of hearing his or her own voice in the group.
- Can enrich the discussion by connecting with the topic at hand. For example, before discussing the Bible passage about Jesus quieting the storm on the sea, ask the group to tell about a boating experience they’ve had.

SOME THINGS TO REMEMBER . . .

- Since you asked the question and have had time to think about it, it’s a courtesy for you to answer first.
- Whoever answers the icebreaker first sets the tone for the group.
- Be sensitive about how much time you take answering the question because others will follow your lead!
- People need to share at a surface level before they can go deeper. As the group grows closer over time, icebreaker questions can grow deeper.
- Give people the freedom to “pass” (i.e. not answer the question).
- Icebreaker questions can be used outside of small group discussions. Try one at a family gathering or with your spouse on a date!

TO ADD VARIETY . . .

- You can write different questions on slips of paper and then have each group member draw one and answer it.
- You might divide your group into two’s or three’s. You might separate men from women.

On the next few pages, look through the icebreaker questions and ideas to find those that are a good fit for your group. Also check out Garry Poole’s *The Complete Book of Questions*, with 1001 icebreaker questions that are arranged by category and level of intensity. It’s available through the Q Place store.

ICEBREAKER QUESTIONS

1. Who is one person who has had a significant impact on your life and why?
2. Where would you like to be five years from today? Doing what?
3. Five years ago, how would your parents/siblings/friends have described you?
4. Today, how would your parents/siblings/friends describe you?
5. What word would describe your day today? Why?
6. Which quality of God do you appreciate today and why?
7. What is something good that happened to you today (or this week)?
8. Who is one person who has encouraged you greatly in your life? How did this person encourage you?
9. What would you like people to write for your obituary and why?
10. What day of the week represents how you feel right now, and why?
11. What quality in your life would you like to strengthen and why?
12. Describe one of your greatest achievements and why you consider it great.
13. What three words would describe your relationship with your mom, and why?
14. What three words would describe your relationship with your dad, and why?
15. What terrain (valley, mountain...) would best describe how you feel now? Why?
16. What three words would you like close friends to use to describe you, and why?
17. What car would you use to describe your week? Why?
18. If you could visit any country in the world, which would you visit, and why?
19. If you were going into a bomb shelter and could take one book, excluding the Bible, what would it be?
20. If you could have five minutes to talk with anyone in the past, who would it be and what would you talk about?
21. If you could have been with Jesus at any one of his miracles, which would it have been, and why?
22. If your parents had one more child, would you have liked to have a brother or a sister? Why?
23. What characteristic do you think that you have as a result of your position in the family? Why?
24. If you could be any kind of doctor, what kind would you be? Why?
25. Which encounters with people do you like most: one on one, small group, or large group? Why?
26. When you hear the national anthem, what do you think of?
27. Are you a morning person or a night person? Why?
28. If you could change one thing about you, what would it be? Why?
29. What's one of your favorite holidays? Why?

30. What kind of flower would you use to describe yourself? Why?
31. What two qualities do you value in your closest friends? Why?
32. If you had to choose one word that defines you and your life, what would it be?
33. What was the best time of your life?
34. What are the biggest misconceptions people tend to have about you?
35. Where would you like to be ten years from now?
36. What do you value most in a friend?
37. What do you value most in a man? What do you value most in a woman?
38. Share a favorite childhood experience.
39. Recall a close childhood friend. What did you like to do together?
40. Recall someone who was special to you as a child. Why was that person special?
41. What were you doing twenty years ago?
42. What do you like to do with your hands (crafts, garden, musical instrument . . .)?
43. Between the ages of 7 and 12, where did you live and how many siblings lived in the home with you?
44. Between the ages of 7 and 12, what mode of transportation did you have and what's a memory connected with that?
45. Between the ages of 7 and 12, who was most significant in your life?
46. When did God become more than a word to you?
47. Why did you first start coming to this group?
48. What first attracted you to your spouse?
49. Why did you fall in love with your spouse? What do you appreciate about him/her now?
50. What is your middle name and why were you so named?
51. What dreams and aspirations do you have for the future?
52. What do you like best about your house or apartment?
53. What is one of your happiest childhood memories?
54. If you could pick one area to achieve in, what would it be (music, politics, sports, science, art)? What would you like to achieve in that area?
55. Describe one thing that annoys you.
56. Describe one fear.
57. Describe a gift you've received that surprised you.
58. What is one thing you want most for your children (or for those close to you)?
59. What tangible thing do you wish there was more of?
60. What one truth do you wish someone had told you before marriage?
61. What famous living person would you like to spend a day with and why?
62. Describe one of your fondest memories of an event or period of time as an adult.

63. What do you like best about your work?
64. Do you feel fulfilled in your work? Why or why not?
65. What do you admire most about your parents?
66. What has brought you the most joy in the last five years?
67. What was the best gift you ever gave? What was the best gift you ever received?
68. Where were you living between the ages of 7 and 12? What were winters like then and how was your home heated during that time?
69. What was the center of warmth in your life when you were a child? (It could be a place in the house, a time of year, a person.)
70. When did God become a “warm” person to you, and how did it happen?
71. What responsibility would you gladly give up? What would you not give up?
72. What is something you appreciate about the way your parents raised you?
73. What is something you have learned since becoming a parent?
74. What is one thing that has surprised you about parenthood?
75. What is your favorite time of the day and why?
76. What is one meal you enjoy cooking?
77. Who is your favorite artist (i.e., musician, painter, poet, writer) and why?
78. What did your parents want you to do/be when you grew up? What did you want? What did you end up doing and why?
79. What was your favorite part-time job?
80. What was your favorite junk food as a kid?
81. If time and money were no object, what new skill would you learn to do?
82. What were the last 2-3 books you read?
83. If time and money were no object, what type of ministry or volunteering would you like to be involved in?
84. What advice do you wish you’d had when you had young children?
85. What’s your dream job?
86. What has been the most challenging thing about being married or single?
87. What has been the most rewarding thing about being married or single?
88. What new sport, activity, or hobby would you like to learn?
89. Where do you hope to be spiritually at the end of this group?
90. If you could ask God one question and you knew he would answer right away, what would you ask and why?

TEN QUESTIONS FOR AN ANNUAL CELEBRATION

91. What is one of the funniest things that happened to you last year?
92. What is one of the most frightening things that happened to you last year, and how did you overcome the fear?
93. To whom did you get closer last year? Or to whom did you want to get closer?
94. What is one of the most important lessons you learned last year?
95. What was one of the biggest risks you took last year?
96. What goal would you most like to achieve this year?
97. Where would you like to travel this year?
98. If you could live one day over again from last year, which day would it be and why?
99. What hobby would you like to take up this year?
100. If you could learn from any teacher in the world, past or present, with whom would you study this year?

OTHER KINDS OF ICE BREAKERS

1. **Guess who?** — Pass out slips of paper. Write one word that describes you best on the slip of paper. Turn in papers, mix, and everyone guess who fits the descriptions. Alternate question: What is something you wish you could do?
2. **Keys** — Have everyone pull out their keys. What is the least important key and what is the most important key? Why?
3. **Crayons** — Have different crayon colors in a basket. Without saying why, ask everyone to choose a color. After everyone has chosen, tell why you picked that color. What color would you color God and why?
4. **Coat of Arms** — Give a blank outline of a coat of arms to each person. Fill with:
 - Three people who mean the most to you or who have been the most influential in your life.
 - Something that few people know about you.
 - What you like to do in your spare time.
 - Something you are good at.
 - Personal motto that fits your life.

Explain your coat of arms to the group.

5. **Dice** — Choose six different questions that are appropriate for the group. Roll one die, and then answer the question that corresponds to the number on the die.
6. **Fact or Fiction?** — Each person tells two lies and one truth about themselves. The group guesses which are lies and which is the truth.
7. **Valentine's Questions** — Print this list of questions on a sheet of pink or red paper. Let each person choose any question and respond.
 - What are you passionate about?
 - What is something that few people know about you?
 - What do you appreciate about each person in the group?
 - Who are two or three people you've loved most?
 - Finish this sentence: "To me, God's love is . . ."
8. **Christmas, Valentine's, or Closing Celebration** — Let everyone choose a piece of colored construction paper, trace one hand and cut it out (or just use plain sheets of paper). Write your name on your paper and pass it to the person next to you. Write one or two things on each person's paper that you appreciate, admire, or notice positively about that person. Keep the papers moving. If you're taking longer to write, pass papers to someone who is waiting, but be sure to write on each paper before everyone leaves. Keep your paper as a gift.