

Asking Good Questions

As you prepare your questions for a civic reflection discussion, there are several questions to ask yourself about the resource you are using:

- Where, as you review this piece, do you have questions?
- Where does your mind stop, or pause, as you move through it?
- What large themes or big questions come to mind?

3 Types of Questions

As you prepare your questions, it can be useful to think about different types of questions.

Remember to *start* with the small questions and *build toward* the larger implication questions.

Clarification (What's going on?)	Interpretation (Why? What do you think about what's going on?)	Implication (So what? How does this relate to you, your community, or your service?)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Why does the man stand in the middle of the road? • As literally as possible, what do you notice first when you look at this image? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Should the driver have stopped to pick up the man in the road? Why or why not? • Why does the narrator of the video characterize the homeless as an "invisible people"? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Where do you see your own community reflected in this image? • Can you relate to this idea of leadership – have you been called to respond in a similar way?

Good Questions are...	Examples
Short and clear	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Why does the man stand in the middle of the road? • What do you notice first in this image?
Open-ended with multiple possible answers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What do you think about the woman staying instead of leaving?
Directed at the group rather than a particular person	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • So, what do other people think? When you picture the "saviors" that Smith describes, what do they look like? Act like?
Questions that connect or draw upon the thoughts or ideas of the people in the room	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • So Kelli thinks that optimism is overrated and Adam thinks that optimism is essential. I'm interested to know -- what does optimism look like in <u>your</u> work?
Questions to avoid are...	Examples
Questions that require special expertise or outside knowledge to answer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Why did Jane Addams, given her personal and professional history, choose to write about social settlements?
Questions that put participants on the defensive	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What percentage of your time do you spend doing service? Why not more time?
Questions that <u>lead</u> people toward a conclusion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When I watched this video, I thought that the man was a good leader. Why is he a good leader?
Questions that point to a <u>single answer</u> instead of multiple interpretations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do you like this story? • Is this a good or bad example of leadership?