

What questions should your students respond to?

Answer: I'm not sure.

Longer answer: I'm not sure. But I know Christian school students should consider difficult questions like "If God is good, why does He allow suffering?" and "How do you know?" And I know that Christian school students should consider questions like these while they are in a nurturing Christian environment. From what I hear, students don't have positive experiences when they first encounter questions like this in a non-Christian environment.

Back to your question, "What questions should my students respond to?" I say I'm not sure what questions your students should respond to because there's no definitive list. Why isn't there a definitive list? Because the list of key questions your students should respond to depends on a variety of factors, including:

- **Who your students are.** What are their hopes and dreams? What do they talk about with their parents? Do they come from Christian or non-Christian homes? Do they attend church and do family devotions?
- **Where they live now and will live in the future.** What does the culture they live in value and not value? Are they citizens of the country in which they live? How likely are they to live their adult lives in their country of citizenship?
- **The challenges they face and will face.** How are they affected by wealth, power, technology, and mass media? How are they affected by various religions? How does the culture respond to Christians who use a biblical perspective?
- **What they already know about a biblical perspective and how well they can use a biblical perspective.** Do they understand how the world was created? How well do they understand and share the plan of salvation? To what extent do they understand and apply the biblical principles found in the 10 Commandments and the Sermon on the Mount? How well can they apply a biblical perspective to issues like self-fulfillment, drug abuse, terrorism, poverty, pollution, euthanasia, national debt, homosexuality, deforestation, stem cell research, AIDS, discrimination, and exploitation?

To identify the questions your students should respond to, ASK: Ask • Seek • Keep

Ask:

- Ask students, "What questions do you want to think through?"
- Ask parents, "What questions do you want your children to respond to?"
- Ask graduates, "What questions do you wish you had been asked?"
- Ask youth pastors, "What questions are teens facing?"
- Ask Christians in the workplace, "What are the crucial questions for Christians in your field?"
- Ask teachers, "What key questions should students respond to?"

Seek God's help. Pray about which questions you should ask your students to help them understand and use a biblical perspective. While you can't ask every question there is and your students can't respond to every question there is, God can guide you to what questions He wants your students to consider.

Keep lists:

1. Social issues: ecology, sexuality, technology, war
2. Religions: Animism, Buddhism, Hinduism, Islam, Shintoism
3. Worldviews: theism, pantheism, monism, deism, nihilism, existentialism, modernism, post-modernism
4. Values: honesty, integrity, faithfulness, stewardship, respect, justice, mercy, humility
5. Questions: Where did evil come from? If God is good, why do we suffer? If you say Jesus is the way, aren't you being intolerant? How do you know the Bible is true? What is the relationship between Christian faith and science? How should wealth and power be used?

By asking others, seeking God's help, and keeping lists, you can identify questions your students should respond to. Start today.

Start by asking me, "What are 10 key questions you want students to respond to?" Here goes:

1. Who is God?
2. Who am I?
3. What's the problem?
4. What's the solution?
5. How can I be in but not of the world?
6. When do I wage war and wage peace?
7. How should I use my body?
8. How should I use wealth?
9. How valuable is life?
10. What's the "good" and how can I do "good"?

That's my list—for students at my school.

Now ask yourself: "What are 10 questions I want my students to respond to?" Write down your 10 questions.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____
8. _____
9. _____
10. _____

So, what's the real question? It's not "What questions should my students respond to?" It's "What questions are my students going to respond to today?"

Remember, success is your students increasing their understanding and use of a biblical perspective by responding authentically to a good question. Success is *not* you identifying a good question or even you asking your students a good question. But you have to identify and ask a good question before your students can authentically respond to it.

Bonus: Your students are going to be asked difficult questions. Prepare your students to respond effectively. How? Teach them to do 7 things:

1. Trust God and His Word.
2. Remember that all truth is God's truth.
3. Relax. Just because they don't have answer, doesn't mean that there isn't one.
4. Affirm the person asking the question by saying, "That's a good question."
5. Show an interest in the question by asking questions about the question: What do you mean? Why is this question important to you? How would you answer your question? How do you think I would answer your question?
6. Be honest when they don't know. Say, "You probably already thought about this. I'd like to share thoughts worthy of your question. To do that, I need time to think. If you're willing to talk later, I'm willing to think about your question before we talk again."
7. Build relationships, not debates. If someone presses your student on a difficult question, coach them to politely say, "When I talk with others, I work to build relationships, not debates. When you keep asking me what I think, I feel like you want to build a debate. Did I misunderstand?"