

Bible Quiz Fellowship

Guidelines to making questions

Purpose for this guide:

The purpose of this guide is to standardize the process of evaluating possible questions for use in quizzing. This guide will not be all-inclusive, as it is impossible to anticipate every situation that may arise in making questions. Use of this guide, however, will provide some “ground rules” for tournament officials who are attempting to decide whether a particular question is “bad” or “good.” Quizzers formulating and answering questions during a quiz are not required to abide by these rules.

Quizzers may, however, find these rules useful when formulating questions. It is our hope that these rules will reduce the “guesswork” involved when a quizzer knows the first word of a question, and is attempting to formulate the rest of the question.

Guidelines

- 1. Every question must have an interrogative, and that interrogative must be placed within the first three words of the question, otherwise a helping verb should be used to place the interrogative as early as possible in the question.**

Ex. Bad: 1 Cor. 1:12 One of you says what?
 Correct: What does one of you say?
 Bad: 1 Cor. 1:18 To us who are being saved, what is the power of God?
 Correct: What is the power of God to us who are being saved?

- 2. When a verb is the first word of a question, the next noun, phrase or clause in the verse after that verb should be the answer to the question.**

Ex. Bad: 1 Cor. 11:25 Do this when? *This question should not be used. Since “do” is a verb, the next noun should be the answer (i.e. this). The question, “Do what?,” however, has no meaningful content and can be left out. If the question must be used, then “When should you do this?” would be preferred, but in the text, the “you” is not supplied until the dependent clause – whenever you drink it. Since there is no shortage of questions from that verse, this question should not be used.*
 Correct: 1 Cor. 4:5 Judge what?

- 3. When a preposition is the first word of a question, the next phrase or clause after that preposition in the verse should be the answer to the question.**

Ex. Bad: 1 Cor. 1:18 To us who are being saved, what is the power of God? *Since the question starts with the pronoun “to”, the answer should be “us who are being saved.” The question should then be “To whom ...” but that question was also given in the practice questions. To get at the answer “The message of the cross,” the question should be phrased as follows.*
 Correct: What is the power of God to us who are being saved?

- 4. Use a preposition as the first word of the question whenever possible.**

Ex. Bad: 1 Cor. 1:21 Why was God pleased?

Correct: To do what was God pleased?
Bad: 1 Cor. 3:18 When should he become a fool?
Correct: If what should he become a fool?

5. **If the sentence in the text is a question, no questions should be made from the sentence, even if the text answers them. This especially applies to rhetorical questions, where the answer is assumed but not directly stated.**

Ex. Bad: 1 Cor. 1:13 Is Christ what? Divided. *Since the text actually asks the question "Is Christ divided?", it is improper to simply rephrase the question that appears in the text. This is always true, but is especially true when the text provides no direct answer, since a quizzier is not allowed to use (or assume the presence of) words that are not in the text.*

Correct: There are no correct examples, since no questions should be formed using questions from the text itself.

6. **Generic pronouns (He, She, I, you, we, they) should not be used as answers to questions, unless they are modified (I, myself), or there are no other questions that can be made from that reference.**

Ex. Bad: 1 Cor. 2:3 Who came to you? I
Correct: 1 Cor. 1:10 To whom do I appeal? You, brothers
This rule is a matter of opinion. There is no rule of grammar or quizzing that prohibits answers that are generic pronouns. Perhaps I simply do not like them, but I sense that most quizzers are surprised when we use them.

7. **Questions must be complete sentences, and must be lifted from complete sentences or clauses within the text (i.e. every question must have a verb that was supplied by the text).**

Ex. Bad: 1 Cor. 3:21 No more what? *Grammatically, this is a sentence fragment, not a question at all.*

Correct: *In this case, there is no "correct" way to formulate a question, since the verse does not supply a verb. Both the subject and the verb are understood, but not stated. If they were provided, the text would read something like this: "So then, (you let there be) no more boasting about men!"*

Bad: 1 Cor. 3:22 Whether what? *This is also a sentence fragment. In this case, the rest of the sentence is provided in the text. The question should read as follows:*

Correct: Whether what are all yours?

8. **Information that the text provides, but which does not change the meaning of either the question or the answer may be provided in the written questions, but should be included in parentheses.**

Ex. Bad: 1 Cor. 1:5 How have you been enriched? (In every way) in all your speaking and in all your knowledge. *I believe that the phrase "in every way" is actually a better answer to that question, but clearly the addition of "in every way" changes the meaning of the answer, therefore, it should not be in parentheses.*

Correct: How have you been enriched? In every way, in all your speaking and in all your knowledge. *Please note that this invalidates the next question in the series of practice questions.*

Alternate: In what have you been enriched in every way? In all your speaking and in all your knowledge. *I do not like this question because of the double use of the pronoun "in," but this follows the "preposition first" rule. I would still reject the next question in the practice questions, since "every way" is not really a "what." "Every way" answers the question "how," "Speaking and knowledge" answer the question "what," but they modify "every way," rather than "enriched," and thus it is difficult to make a good question.*

9. **These guidelines should provide us with a basis for making grammatically sound questions. This does not imply, though, that every grammatically sound question should be used. Tournament officials must also consider whether a question a). is theologically sound, b). is consistent with the meaning of the text, c). uses the correct interrogative and d). can be answered using only the words the text actually provides, plus a few helping verbs.**

Ex. Bad: 1 Cor. 1:26 By what were not many of you? Wise by human standards.
Correct: By what were not many of you wise? Human standards.
Bad: 1 Cor. 7:29 Who dies? Her husband. *The text does not actually say her husband dies, but rather "If her husband dies..." This is a conditional phrase and should not be used as the basis of a question.*
Bad: 1 Cor. 9:5 Whom don't we have a right to take along? A believing wife. *This question is wrong on two accounts. First, it violates the rule against using questions lifted directly from the text, and second, it actually says the opposite of what the text is trying to say. The point of the text is that "we" DO have a right to take a believing wife along with us!*