

**Bible Quiz
Fellowship
Quiz Master's
Handbook**

NOTES ON QUIZ MASTERING

by Jack Hager, Family Life Ministries (famlifejack@yahoo.com)

The Quiz master - Purpose

The purpose of the quiz master is to oversee the quizzes to which he/she is assigned. This entails asking questions, listening to answers, and determining points, errors, or fouls to be awarded.

That is the “bare bones” definition of quiz master. But there is much more to it. The quiz master should be an encourager, teacher, facilitator, intermediary, tension breaker and so much more. There is no “gift” of quiz mastering, but it is not an easy job, either.

In a very real sense the quiz master on the local level can make or break a quiz, a quizzier, a team, a season.

At Nationals the task becomes even harder as the quiz master must put aside his home ministry idiosyncrasies and conform to the rules of the National tournament. Added to that is the responsibility and duty to be impartial, which can become difficult as you see your “home” teams throughout the tournament.

The quiz master must know the rules, enforce the rules, in some cases define the rules, and at the same time bring positive impact to each quizzier, coach, and team.

The buck stops with the quiz master! Therefore it is imperative that the coaches, quizzers, and fans realize that the quiz master is in charge. Like any aspect of youth ministry, the line between “friend” and “boss” can be difficult to discern.

The Nationals Quiz master must be committed to providing the best, most equal and consistent service to each and every quizzier and coach. At each quiz site the quiz master is the ruling authority. Thus it is guaranteed the quiz master will offend, hurt, and be, at least temporarily, disliked. Quiz masters should thus leave any “thin skin” at home and toughen up.

The Quiz master - Procedure

The quiz master is responsible for every aspect of the quiz. This may involve setting up and/or tearing down the quiz site (chairs, quiz pads, etc.), as well as keeping watch over the questions on breaks so that quizzes are not left lying around.

The quiz master should review the quizzes to ensure proper pronunciation, to check for obvious typing errors, and so forth.

At Nationals much work has been put into producing quizzes, but it is still probable the questions will contain mistakes. WHEN IN DOUBT, TAKE A TIME OUT!

At each quiz the first thing that should happen is that the seats are checked. Have all the quizzers sit, call on each one to stand up to make sure his seat light is working. If there is a problem, try to fix it by checking connections. Failing that, contact the tournament trouble shooter or hospitality table.

Assuming the seats are working, do a few practice jumps. Then announce that the next jump is for prayer, award the opportunity, and let the teen pray.

The Nationals quiz master must work in concert with the other two table officials. The scorekeeper and timer can help watch for fouls, improper communication, etc. It is imperative that the quizzers get twelve minutes of actual quizzing per quiz! If you need to check something, stop the clock.

The clock should run only during actual quizzing. Instruct your timekeeper to start and stop the clock on your command, "time in" or "time out." As you work together you may develop your own working style; as long as it benefits the quizzers, go for it.

Asking Questions and Deciding on Correctness:

Obviously the vital factor in asking questions is being understood. Speak clearly, distinctly, and loudly enough to be heard. (You may sometimes have to remind the audience to be quiet...start friendly, but do what it takes... "noisy children are like good intentions; they should be carried out immediately").

Try to keep the same pace. We are all different, but do all you can to be consistent in the manner in which you ask questions. Ideally it should be one continuous speech, "Question, according to Luke 8.44 when...) It is disconcerting to the quizzers if we take a pause after "question," or after the scripture reference, or anywhere for that matter. You don't need to speak as rapidly as some, or as slowly as others, but try to maintain your same pace.

Find a way that you can read the question and also observe the lights! Rolling the papers of questions in such a way that you can hold it directly under the lights works well.

As soon as you see a light do all you can to stop speaking.. Stop mid syllable if at all possible. Do not do the quizzer a favor if he jumps on the reference by giving him the first word! We are all human (though some

quizzers and coaches may question that) and can make mistakes, but do all you can to stop as soon as you see the light come on.

Nationals quiz masters must remember that kids have worked hard and a lot of time and money is involved. Perhaps you give words at the local level, perhaps you have other traits of grace...do not use them at regionals or nationals.

Recognize the quizzer (number two, buzzards). The quizzer has five seconds to say something, twenty seconds to answer an interrogative, and thirty seconds to finish a quote. The timekeeper begins keeping time the moment the quizzer is recognized!

It is helpful to write the quizzer's answer down, or to at least jot down words of which you are not sure. The answer you have on your paper may be "temple" and the kid says "God's temple" or "His temple" or some such. Jot that unconfirmed word down, call a "time out" when the quizzer is obviously done or time runs out, and look it up! We are here for the quizzers...therefore, always remember "when in doubt, take a time out and look it up!"

We are not involved in "outcome based quizzing." Our "hoop" is high, the rules are tough and should be strictly enforced to reward the quizzer who knows the material well. Words that are not in the cited verse make the question an error. Remember, the context is the cited verse! If the verse says "the man" and the next verse says, referring to the man, "Paul," "the man" is the only acceptable answer.

There are, however, times when the quiz master must make a decision about "minor" words such as "a," "an," "the," etc. If the answer is "temple" and the quizzer says "a temple" or "the temple" it may be ruled correct. The context determines the outcome. If the verse is referring to a specific temple, the word "the" should be used, for example. Much of this is judgment, and quiz masters may disagree. In fact, you may find yourself awarding points one time and not another. Again, this is because we are human. But strive to be consistent, and, when feasible, explain your ruling. **YOU DO NOT NEED TO EXPLAIN EVERY DECISION; BUT TO BE HELPFUL TO COACHES AND QUIZZERS YOU MAY WANT TO EXPLAIN SOME. REMEMBER TO STOP THE CLOCK WHILE YOU ARE DOING THIS.**

Absolutely NO mistakes are allowed in a "quote." (Remember that a quizzer, responding to a quote, may go back and repeat part of the verse, but any mistake of any nature mandates an error be given). **IF YOU HAVE A QUOTE QUESTION AND THE QUIZZER JUMPS ON THE REFERENCE, FOR EXAMPLE 13.8, YOU STOP AND SAY 'NUMBER TWO, BUZZARDS, FINISH THE QUESTION.' THE QUIZZER MAY**

THEN SAY 13.8, OR HE MAY NOT; BUT HE MUST SAY ‘QUOTE’ BEFORE HE SAYS ANY OF THE VERSE. HE MAY NOT RECITE THE VERSE AND ADD ‘QUOTE’ AT THE END. THE WORD QUOTE IS PART OF THE REFERENCE! (otherwise the quizzer would, in effect, get two tries). In some questions/answers there is material in parenthesis. This material is included to let you be aware that the stuff is in the verse. In some questions you will see OR or (OR).. which simply means either of the answers is acceptable. In some questions you will see an AND or (AND) which means both parts are needed for a “full and complete answer” and, thus, credit, as opposed to an error.

Problem Areas:

Specific problems crop up from time to time. Again, consistency is the key. If all quiz masters adhere to proper procedure the quizzers and coaches are helped rather than surprised.

The quiz master is not obligated to answer any questions from coaches or quizzers. In some instances it may be helpful to all if a question is answered. But never answer a question like, “Can I ask if that last question was a quote?” Some quizzers who perceive themselves to be tricky will ask that question after you have to throw a question out for whatever reason. Do not answer it.

Those who write the questions are given a bit of latitude in that they can add helping verbs, change the tense of words, etc. to make the questions appear more in line with general English usage. But it is important to remember that many quizzers, especially the exceptional ones, do not study or even read the questions, they simply learn the material. So if a quizzer jumps early, and you say “finish the question,” their response does not have to be specifically, exactly like the question you have on your sheet. The question writer may have changed the words, but the quizzer who only studies the material doesn’t know that, so he may give you improper English (although it is hard to say anything is improper in a language that spells pneumonia with a “p”!), but that is okay as long as the important details/words are included. You may have a real love for proper grammar etc., but this is a Nationals Bible Quiz Tournament, not an English grammar competition.

SOME SPECIFIC EXAMPLES:

This is not exhaustive; but is a sampling of problem areas noticed in the past.

“Do” is one of the words often added to questions that does not appear in the cited verse. Thus the question in front of the Quiz master might say “To do what is the man called?” Quizzer jumps early, says “To what is the man

called?” That is correct; “do” is an added word that does not have to be in the question (also forms of the word, “does” etc.)

”A” versus “the”...This depends on the context. “a” temple is different than “the” temple, as the latter is specific. The context determines whether the article (a, an, the etc.) must be in the answer.

”Who” and “what”...are angels whos or whats? Let’s not get too theological here, but let’s accept both. Is “the church” a “who” or a “what”? Probably not worth fighting about, definitely not worth an error. A specific instance, Col 1.7, You learned it from Epaphras, our dear fellow servant, who is a faithful minister of Christ on our behalf. Let’s say the question begins, According to Colossians 1.7, Who was Epaphras? A quizzer leaps to his/her feet at the reference, you say “Finish the question,” and the quizzer says “what”? DO NOT automatically give an error, he may be on the right track but is using “what” instead of “who”? Our question may say “Who is Epaphras?” with the answer being “our dear fellow servant who is a faithful minister of Christ (on our behalf)”. The kid jumps on the reference and says “What is Epaphras?” and then provides the answer. THIS IS RIGHT! In fact, arguably, “what” is better than “who” in this case. DO NOT AUTOMATICALLY ASSUME A QUIZZERS QUESTION IS WRONG BECAUSE HE USES THE WRONG INTERROGATIVE!

Other questions may be specific, and if the quizzer jumps and begins to say “when” when the question is a “what,” it may make sense to immediately “award” an error instead of letting him/her finish. Why? To make them feel bad? No, but to get as many questions in as possible. Getting as many questions in as possible should be a paramount goal of a quiz master! Thus again it is emphasized “when in doubt, take a time out and look it up!” with an emphasis on “take a time out.” Yes, in a tournament this size we need to keep on track as much as possible, but again our concern is more for the kids than for our schedules; so take a time out and check it out! Perhaps we can trust the Lord to honor our commitment to doing all we can for the quizzers by allowing our schedules to mesh?

MORE SPECIFIC EXAMPLES (From the book of Luke):

12.59 When will you not get out? Until you have paid the last penny. A teen jumps on “when”, says “When will you get out?” Answers “not until you have paid the last penny” THIS IS CORRECT!

11.14 Who was amazed? The crowd. A kid jumps on reference, says “What was amazed?” the Crowd THIS IS CORRECT!

19.39 Rebuke whom? Your disciples. A kid jumps on Rebuke, says “Rebuke what?” answers your disciples. THIS IS CORRECT!

5.11 On where did they pull their boats? On shore. A kid jumps on reference or on “on”, says “On what did they pull their boats? On shore. THIS IS CORRECT!

21.8 How will many come? In my name. A kid jumps on reference, says “In what will many come? In my name THIS IS CORRECT!

10.31 Who happened to be going down the same road? A priest. If kids says “he,” he is not automatically wrong as “he” is in the verse; give a quizzer the time to say “a priest”, but don’t verbally tell him you need more information.

10.34 Where did he take him? To an inn. A kid jumps on where, says “Where did he took him?” to an inn; yes, it is bad English, but it is the word used in the verse THIS IS CORRECT! QUIZZERS ARE NOT RESPONSIBLE FOR WORD CHANGES MADE BY QUESTION WRITERS

THERE ARE SOME VERSES THAT HAVE CONTRACTIONS IN THEM THAT THE QUESTION WRITERS HAVE DECONTRACTED! THIS IS A BUMMER FOR THE QUIZZERS WHO NEVER LOOK AT QUESTIONS.. .THROW THEM OUT IF CHALLENGED

7.38 Where did she stand? Behind Him at His feet weeping. Weeping should be in parenthesis as it is not necessary to answer the “where”

OTHER ISSUES:

If you call on number 3 buzzards and number 3 bluebirds begins to respond, don’t penalize 3 buzzards for 3 bluebirds mistake. Offer 3 buzzards a chance to respond (stop the clock!)...if he chooses to try, it is either an error or correct. If he feels there has been too much time, too much confusion, THROW THE QUESTION OUT (3 bluebirds gets a foul regardless of what 3 buzzards does).

When in doubt, stop the clock, ask the kid to repeat (don’t ask, “Did you say...just tell him to repeat the answer (CLOCK IS STOPPED!) Some are soft-spoken, some don’t enunciate, some have speech difficulties...we don’t want to embarrass anyone, but neither do we want to give anything away. If necessary, ask them to spell the answer!

REGARDING CHAPTER TWENTY All questions from chapter twenty should be read, “Question, according to twenty, verse ___” to avoid confusion with chapters 21-28.

Quiz Master's

Frequently Asked Questions

by Jim Cicchese (jimc@teens4christ.com)

How should I read the questions?

This is the biggest point of distinction between any two quizmasters. Some read very fast, others slowly, some memorize the question, and others must roll up the paper so they can see the lights. Here are some guidelines for reading:

1. Always watch the lights when you are reading, so you can stop immediately when a light comes on.
2. Never try to “trick” a quizzer into jumping without words.
3. Make it your goal to read every question the same way – don’t pause between words (especially before the first word of the question), and don’t try to “force out” the first word of the question. If you are consistent at any speed, the quizzers can adjust to you.
4. Stop reading the instant a light comes on. If a quizzer wants to try to answer a question with no words (or even guess at the reference), that is his/her privilege – don’t deny that privilege!
5. Enunciate every syllable clearly – a quizzer may only get to hear one syllable from you, so make sure you said it clearly. Believe it or not, you do not get significantly more questions in a quiz by reading faster when you are only reading the first word of the question anyway.

What if I am catching a lot of people with no words?

In a tough, national-quality quiz, this is normal. In fact, if you never catch anyone with no words, you are probably doing something wrong. Good quizzers will “push” you by jumping earlier and earlier until you catch them with no words. If you never catch them, they will eventually start jumping when they hear the name of the book!

A word of caution is in order here, though. If you catch a lot of people with no words, it may be that you are “pausing” inconsistently between the reference and the first word of the question. If you suspect this is happening, ask one of the other table officials to check you out.

How do I know when an answer given to an interrogative question is correct?

To be correct, a quizzer must supply the correct interrogative (or, rarely, a correct substitute), the correct question and the correct answer. These do not need to be in a particular order, and they need not be letter perfect, so long as the meaning is unchanged and only the words found in the verse are used (and possibly helping verbs).

One common way to change the order is this: A quizzer may choose to give the interrogative, then the answer, and then the question. That is OK. So long as you can clearly distinguish what is the answer and what is the question, the answer is still correct. This is not a grammar contest. The most important things for you to judge are: “Did the quizzer ask and answer (more or less) the SAME question as the one I have in front of me?” and “Did they give me all the information I needed?” Ultimately, a great deal of judgment is called for on this issue. Do your best to make the right decision, listen to the other table officials, listen to any challenges that may be made, and then decide. Don’t waste a lot of time trying to decide, as that only delays the quiz. As the quizmaster, once your decision is made, it is, by rule, the right decision. There is no need to argue it or justify it further. If you think you may be wrong, check with tournament officials later so that you get it right next time.

The judgment of referees and officials is part of every game, and even in professional sports, judges sometimes make bad calls. Bad calls provide a growing opportunity for both you and the quizzers.

What if a quizzer says a word, and I am not sure if it is in the reference or not?

If, while answering, a quizzer adds a word that sounds like it might be in the reference, write it down on your sheet of questions, and wait for the quizzer to finish. When the quizzer’s time expires, call time out and look it up.

DO NOT stop the quizzer in mid-answer to look it up, as that puts an unfair burden on the quizzer to try to remember what has been said, and it also gives the quizzer extra time (while you are looking it up) to remember the rest of the verse.

If the quizzer says a word you are sure is not in the reference, you may immediately rule the answer an error and go on with the quiz. If you are wrong, though, and they challenge it, you will have to throw the question out, so don't rule the answer an error unless you are fairly sure.

Do I answer when a quizzer asks “What was that question?”

NO and YES

NO: Your first priority as a quizmaster is to keep the quiz moving. If you are running behind schedule, it may be appropriate never to tell quizzers what a question was. If quizzers are disrupting the quiz by constantly asking what the question was, you may decide to stop answering. If a quizzer wants to know whether a question was a quote or not to try to gain some advantage on the next question, you should not answer. If a captain is making a “stab in the dark” to try to find some justification for a challenge, you should not answer.

YES: If time out has been called, and you are not behind schedule, there is no great problem in telling a quizzer what the question was. This will help the quizzer (which is always a good thing to do). In addition, you are human. You may make mistakes in your rulings from time to time. Explaining your ruling allows the captain a chance to offer a challenge if you really did make a mistake. Captains or coaches may often legitimately need to know what a question was in order to frame their challenge properly.

Should I ask a quizzer whether they said a particular word or not?

ABSOLUTELY NOT! The correctness of an answer is determined by what the table officials heard, not necessarily by what the quizzer said.

This mistake is most commonly made on quote questions. Example: A quizzer quotes the verse, the quizmaster awards twenty points, and the opposing captain challenges. The captain claims that a word was omitted.

The quizmaster asks the quizzier who originally quoted the verse, “Did you say that word?” The quizzier says no. The quizmaster believes the quizzier, so the error is awarded. WRONG! If the quizmaster (or some other official) heard that word, then the points stand, *regardless of whether the quizzier actually said the word!*

Surprising? It’s true, though, and here is why: Imagine if you did not hear a particular word, and you awarded an error, would you trust the quizzier who challenged and said, “I really did say that word?” No. You would have to let the error stand.

What message are we sending if we “believe” a quizzier only when it costs them an error? We are, in effect, saying, “I only believe you are telling the truth because I can see that it hurts you. If it helped you instead, I would not believe you were telling me the truth.” This is the wrong message to send.

In addition, quizzers often can’t be certain whether they said a word or not, so they may take the error, rather than to risk giving the appearance of lying. Until we get instant replay, then, the only recourse for a table official is to rule based on what the officials at the table actually heard.

What is surprising about this policy is that it generally “breaks” about evenly. Quizmasters seem to hear words that were not spoken about as often as they miss words that were spoken. It all averages out in the end.

I have read and understand this Quiz Master's Handbook in its entirety.

Signed _____