

THE BIG IDEA

Most people believe they ask a lot of questions in the 1st 5 minutes. Bryan's own research says otherwise: the average person asks one, and it is usually a routine "How are you" or a reactive "What about you." J.R. argues the quality of your life is set by the **quality of your questions**, and every question you ask a stranger is either a gift or a missed one.

THE GOLDEN RULE

Generic questions get generic answers. Thoughtful questions get thoughtful ones.

J.R. calls it "as predictable as an election in a one-party state." It is the reason vanilla small talk produces vanilla relationships, and why the first move toward trust is simply asking a question that took a little more intentionality than "How's it going?"

THE FRAMEWORK AT A GLANCE

LEVEL 1 • SETUP	LEVEL 2 • DEEPER
FOUR ESSENTIALS Wisdom, curiosity, humility, and courage. The four ingredients every good question needs; skip one and the question falls flat.	SHIFT VS. SUPPORT RESPONSE A shift steals the spotlight back to you. A support response keeps it on them. Illuminators default to support.
LEVEL 1 & 2 QUESTIONS The first two of J.R.'s four trust levels: info questions (name, time) and interaction questions (how do you feel about that). The safe entry ramp for the first five minutes; levels three and four go deeper as trust builds.	THE WAY QUESTION & 2QM "What About You" plus a genuine follow-up. The first question is fine. The second is where the real answer lives.
DIMINISHER VS. ILLUMINATOR Every room has both. Diminishers make people feel small and used. Illuminators make people feel curious about and valued.	INCISIVE QUESTIONS Fifteen words or less. Trim the fat out of a question and it hits harder and lands faster.

WORD & CONCEPT DEEP DIVE

01 SHIFT RESPONSES STEAL THE SPOTLIGHT

It is not grabbing the mic and turning their weekend into your weekend. It is noticing where the spotlight lands after they answer. Sociologist Charles Derber called it a shift response versus a support response. A shift steals the ball a teammate was dribbling: they mention a lake house, you mention you hate water skiing. Diminishers default to shift. Illuminators default to support.

ELITE MOVE:

Before you speak, check where your next sentence points the spotlight. If it points back at you, hold it and ask one more question about their answer instead.

"That's great, I didn't know you had a lake house. What do you love most about it?"

02 THE FOLLOW-UP IS WHERE THE JUICE IS

It is not the first question that matters most. It's whether you ask a second one. J.R. says the first question is fine, but the follow-up is where you actually get the good stuff. He teaches the simplest possible follow-up: the WAY question. What. About. You. Three words that hand the floor back and keep conversational pickleball going.

ELITE MOVE:

After any answer, add one more layer before you talk about yourself. Use "tell me more," "what else," or the three-word WAY question.

*"Tell me more about that.
What about you?"*

03 TRIM THE QUESTION, SHARPEN THE IMPACT

It is not a longer, more thorough-sounding question. It's a shorter, sharper one. Researcher Ram Charan calls it an incisive question: fifteen words or less. J.R. reviews his own Zoom transcripts and counts the words in every question he asked, then trims. Cutting the word count doesn't weaken the question. It sharpens it.

ELITE MOVE:

After a coaching call or meeting, pull the transcript and count the words in your questions. If one runs past fifteen words, cut it in half without losing the point.

"Does it feel like eleven years?"

3 ACTION ITEMS

1 Write Down Every Good Question You Hear

Don't trust your memory. The moment you hear a great question, type it into your phone. As the proverb J.R. cites goes, the dulllest pencil is sharper than the sharpest mind.

2 Ask The WAY Question Before You Talk About Yourself

Catch yourself mid-sentence before you shift the spotlight back to you, and ask "What about you?" instead.

3 Check Your Talk-to-Listen Ratio

Before your next meeting or coffee, aim to let the other person talk 60% of the time. If you're dominating, ask a level two question and go quiet.

“

Better questions.
Better answers.
Better lives.

- J.R. Briggs

Author, *The Art of Asking
Better Questions*



CARRY FORWARD QUESTIONS

1. How can I add value to the person in front of me?
2. Am I about to ask a shift question or a support question?

FEATURED GUEST

J.R. BRIGGS

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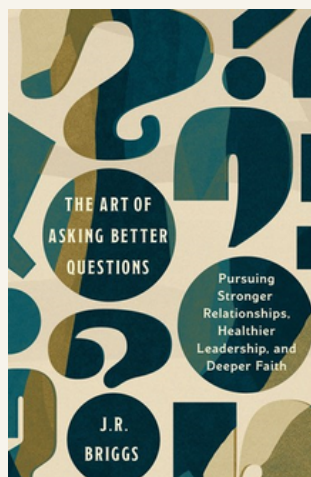
J.R. Briggs (DMin, Missio Seminary) is the founder and director of Kairos Partnerships, where he coaches and equips leaders across more than 40 denominations and organizations throughout North America. He spent over fifteen years in pastoral roles in mega-churches, church plants, and house church networks before starting Kairos in 2011. He is an affiliate faculty member at Mission Seminary and a guest instructor at Friends University.

His newest book, *The Art of Asking Better Questions*, grew out of his doctoral research on question-asking, three factors from his own life, and a study of how Jesus used questions in the gospels. He also hosts the Resilient Leaders Podcast, released every Tuesday morning in twelve minutes or less. He lives with his wife and two children in the greater Philadelphia area.



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- Organization: <http://kairospartnerships.org/> →



FEATURED RESOURCE

THE ART OF ASKING BETTER QUESTIONS

Pursuing Stronger Relationships, Healthier Leadership, and Deeper Faith

Guided by the way Jesus used questions, J.R. Briggs lays out four levels of questions and four essential ingredients, wisdom, curiosity, humility, and courage, that separate a good question from a great one. It is a practical field guide for anyone who wants their conversations to build trust rather than just fill time.

GET YOUR COPY

- Amazon: [The Art of Asking Better Questions](#)

BONUS DEEP DIVE

THE SCIENCE OF THE BOOMERANG

In the episode, Bryan and J.R. traded a term for a habit almost everyone has done without noticing: asking a question, letting someone answer, then hijacking it to talk about yourself. Researchers call it “boomerasking,” and here is what the research actually says about what J.R. taught.

[1] Boomerasking backfires. Harvard researchers Brooks and Yeomans (2025) found people who ask a question, let their partner answer, then answer it themselves believe they leave a good impression. Their partners disagreed: boomeraskers were rated as less sincere, exactly the shift response J.R. described in disguise.

[2] Follow-up questions are the mechanism. Huang, Yeomans, Brooks, Minson, and Gino (2017) found across three studies of live conversation that people who ask more questions, especially follow-up questions, are consistently better liked by their partner. It is not the first question doing the work. It's the second one.

[3] Curiosity lights up the brain like a reward. Kang and colleagues (2009) scanned people with fMRI while they read trivia questions and found curiosity activated the same caudate regions involved in anticipating a reward, a neurological explanation for why a good question makes someone's brain, as J.R. put it, “light up like fireworks.”

[4] Disclosure builds liking in both directions. Collins and Miller's (1994) meta-analysis of self-disclosure research found that people like those who disclose to them, disclose more to those they already like, and grow to like people they've disclosed to. A well-asked question opens the loop; a good follow-up keeps it running both ways.

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The Wick in the Candle of Learning: Epistemic Curiosity Activates Reward Circuitry and Enhances Memory

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J.R. Briggs — Leadership Coaching, Consulting & Speaking

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BY BRYAN BUCKLEY

THE 1ST 5 MINUTES

J.R. Briggs' follow-up habit, the WAY question, is the practical engine behind 2QM, the Two Question Minimum from The 1st 5 Minutes. Bryan's framework gives you the entry tool for those first sixty seconds. J.R.'s work gives you the deeper science of why the follow-up question, not the first one, is what actually builds the relationship. Use them together: OQ to notice what's worth asking about, and the WAY question as your go-to 2QM follow-up.

Get the Book → bryanbuckleyspeaks.com



TURN YOUR 1ST 5 MINUTES INTO YOUR COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE — LEVERAGE OR LOSE IT.

Bryan Buckley is the leading authority on the 1st 5 Minutes of a business conversation — 5X author, speaker, corporate trainer, and podcast host. He helps sales professionals and leaders develop, deepen, and master their business communication skills so every conversation counts.

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