



Bill Belew, Co-author with my 11-yo daughter, Mia of The Giant Forest

144 Questions for Your Kids

At the end of each chapter in The Giant Forest there are three questions each for all of the 48 chapters = $48 \times 3 = 144$ questions.

No. My co-author, Mia, and I didn't ask and answer for each other all of these questions.

But ... we did talk through many of them.

I don't know a parent, though I am sure there are some, who wouldn't like to have better communication with their children.

The problem with most parents, and I say this from the perspective of having kids old enough to be the parents of my daughter's classmates, is that parents want to talk to their kids about important 'stuff' without ever having talked to their kids about what's important to them, their kids.

Kids will listen to you if you have taken the time to listen to them. That is, you have showed them how to listen.

Parents want to ask their preteens, early and late teens hard questions when they have never really established the lines of communication. Too often parents wait till it's too late to try to have meaningful talks with their kids.

Many of the questions the reader will see at the end of the chapters are questions/discussions that Mia and I had at some point. Quite often, after/while we were writing the chapter at hand.

I recommend that parents read the book together with their children.

No. Parents and children don't need to sit next to each other and read out loud. However, while your son or daughter is reading a chapter, you the parent can be doing the same. When it's dinner time, the story becomes the discussion point ... as well as what is going on in the kids' lives.

Parents will find out what is happening in their children's lives without asking. Kids will learn to share as deeply as their parents share also.

One of Mia's favorite questions for me is, "Tell me a time when you got in trouble." Or some variation of that. I should write a book. Oh, wait! I did. Just not the book about how I got in trouble ... yet.

I think it was Teddy Roosevelt who said he discovered the secret to getting his kids to listen to him. "Find out what they want to do and tell them to do that." A corollary perhaps. If you want to spend time with your kids, find out what they want to do and do it with them.

If you want to have good talks for a very long time with your kids, start when they are

Grab a pencil. Everyone listens better when they take notes ... or just doodle.

Start by listening. Then talking, reading, asking, sharing ... and end by listening again. Really listening.

Discussion Questions

1. Have you ever felt betrayed by someone you really trust?
2. Have you ever betrayed someone that trusted you?
3. Who do you consider the most reliable person that you know?
4. Do you have any questions you'd like to ask God? What are they?

5. What question do you wish God would ask you?
6. Do you have friends who think they are better than everyone else?
7. Do you think your friends are always honest with you?
8. Are you always completely honest with your friends?
9. How do you identify who is your true friend?
10. Who is the most loving person you know?

11. Is there anyone that you think you simply could never love?

12. Have you ever experienced unexpected consequences because of some kindness you showed?

13. Do you sometimes make fun of others or see your friends tease others?

14. How do you feel when you think someone is making fun of you?

24. What's your first impulse when you find yourself in big trouble?

25. Do you know anyone who has a hard time 'fitting in'?

26. Have you ever felt like you didn't belong?

27. Who is the most reliable friend you have?

28. Have you ever gone on a venture even though you were not sure what to expect?
29. Have you ever been surprised/disappointed by something you looked forward to?
30. What kind of legacy do you think you would like to leave?
31. Have you ever felt that you were being threatened physically?
32. What are you most afraid of?

38. Have you ever felt like you missed out a golden opportunity?

39. Do you think it is better to wait for opportunities or to try to create new opportunities of your own?

40. What's the biggest problem you have ever faced?

41. Have you ever faced a problem that you thought was way too big for you?

42. Who do you turn to when you are in over your head?

43. Do you know anybody who always seems to be on a different page than everyone else?

44. Do you sometimes help people who can't figure things out?

45. Who helps you when you have problems you can't solve?

46. Have you ever received help from an unexpected source?

47. Have you ever had to say 'thank you' to someone you didn't want to?

48. Have you ever thought a problem was bigger than it really was?

49. Do you know anyone who is very slow but still very smart?

50. Have you ever thought someone was not very bright, but they really were?

51. Would you rather be really fast and get fair results, or really slow and get top results?

52. Have you ever felt like God wasn't listening to your prayers?

53. Have you ever received something very differently than what you were wishing for?

54. Have you ever been glad to NOT get what you had hoped for?

55. Have you ever made a mess of things even though you were trying to help?

56. Has anyone messed up a plan of yours even though they were trying to help?

57. Have you ever wondered whether you were actually helping or hurting someone?

58. Have you ever refused help, then wish you hadn't?

59. Do you know of a time when a very tiny push made a big difference for you?

60. Have you ever almost blindly trusted someone even you thought you shouldn't?

61. Do you know anybody who would give up everything to protect you?

62. Is there anybody that you would give up absolutely everything to protect?

63. Have you ever felt safe but not safe at the same time?

64. What's the most terrible smell you have ever experienced?

65. How do you decide when something very unpleasant is about to happen?

66. Have you ever tried to get out of a predicament only to find yourself in a worse spot?

67. Have you ever been completely bewildered about the way something has turned out?
68. Have you ever thought that something was impossible, but yet it wasn't?
69. Is there something that at one point you thought you simply would not, could not ever do ... but then found yourself doing it?
70. What famous person would you like to be named after?
71. When do you act really silly?

72. When do you feel very content?

73. Do you think animals have emotions?

74. What animal would you like to be able to talk to?

75. What question/s would you like to ask your pet?

76. Have you ever ignored good advice only to find yourself in a worse situation?

77. Has it ever turned out well for you after you reluctantly followed someone else?

78. How do you know when you have made a good decision?

79. Have you ever pretended to be someone you are not?

80. Are you able to admit easily when you are wrong and need help?

81. Do you have the experience of first fearing someone/something, then trusting them?

82. Have you ever been confused by simple directions?
83. Have you ever had a hard time getting someone to understand you?
84. Have you ever felt unloved?
85. Have you ever found yourself in a really tight spot?
86. Have you ever been angry at someone for no good reason?

87. Do you have something about yourself that you would really like to change?
88. Have you ever let someone down?
89. Has anyone, your parents or your kids, ever let you down?
90. Do you have a world that you like to imagine you are a part of?
91. Have you ever tried to make an old enemy a new friend?

92. Have you ever wanted to do something even those around you told you not to?

93. How do you decide when to give up and when to continue on an idea?

94. Do you have a best friend?

95. Is there anything you would not do for your best friend?

96. Have you ever gone to great effort to help out a friend?

97. Have you ever been at a loss as to what to do?
98. What do you need before you completely trust a new friend?
99. Have you ever felt you were foolish for trusting someone too soon?
100. Which do you think is stronger - love or hate?

101. Have you ever forgotten to say 'Thank you!?'

102. Have you ever wished for help from someone who was usually there, but at the time wasn't?

103. Have you ever felt sorry for yourself?

104. Have you ever had to dig deep to find power to get out of a tight spot?

105. Have you ever gone from one difficult situation to another more difficult one?

106. Have you ever lost a friend and didn't know why?

107. Have you ever overheard something that you wish you hadn't heard?

108. How hard will you try to restore a friendship?

109. Have you ever felt left out of a group activity?

110. Have you ever purposely left a friend out of an activity?

111. Have you ever been thankful that things did NOT go the way you went?

112. How do you feel when someone tells you a secret?

113. How do you feel when you learn someone close to you has kept a secret from you?

114. Who do you trust with your deepest secrets?

115. Have you ever thought you understood a situation completely only to learn too late that you had completely misunderstood?

116. Have you ever pretended to be someone you are not?

117. How do you decide when you should be completely transparent with your friends?

118. Have you ever been paralyzed with fear?

119. Have you ever done something that at one time you could not have imagined doing?

120. When you are desperate for help, who is the first person you turn to?

121. Have you ever thought things could not get worse, only for them to get worse?

122. What's the biggest challenge you have ever faced?

123. Have you ever regretted making a promise that you were later afraid to keep?

124. Have you ever finally given up on a plan only then to have something work out?

125. Have you ever had to make a choice between things that were equally important to you?

126. How long will you wait for someone you deeply love to return to you if they have gone away?

127. When is the most tense time you have ever experienced?

128. Have you ever completely misunderstood what two people were doing or saying to one another?

129. Have you ever found yourself in the position where the decision of another will determine your immediate welfare?

130. Have you ever found an answer to your prayers only AFTER you had completely abandoned hope?

131. Has help ever come to you from a place you had not possibly imagined?

132. Have you ever offered help to someone who would not expect it?

133. When you cannot talk to a family member, who do you tell your deepest concerns?

134. What are the qualities you like most about your closest friend?

135. Have you ever found friendship and kindness from unexpected places?

136. Is it possible for a situation to be serious and funny at the same time?

137. What is the funniest situation you have ever witnessed?

138. Have you ever laughed uncontrollably?

139. Have you ever seen a friend in a new way after having gone through a difficult situation?

140. Have you ever found that the way out of a predicament was the way you least expected?

141. Do you think friends grow closer together in good times or in hard times?

142. Who do you go to first when you need help? Friends or family?

143. Have you ever been completely fooled?

144. Where is your favorite place to explore for new adventures?