

WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION

- Some housekeeping matters:



We will be recording this workshop

We will be working with the assumption that not everyone is comfortable with various tools associated with zoom so we will do a practice session.

We would ask that everyone mute their microphones and only turn them on when they want to speak

Please feel free to make comments in the chat box as we go along.

There will be no major break so if you need a cup of coffee or stand up and stretch just do it!

We will make use of break out groups which will be random groups. The purpose of the break out groups is threefold: they help to build relationships so when you go into a group begin by introducing yourself and the congregation you are part of. Make sure everyone in the group gets a chance to speak once before anyone speaks twice. We learn as much from each other as we do from those presenting. Each group will be assigned a facilitator but if you feel uncomfortable with the task you

can ask that someone else in your group do that. The facilitator just makes sure everyone gets a turn to speak.

We will be using a tool called google forms. The link will be placed in the chat box; you will click on the link and it will take you to the form. You will complete the form and click submit. We will do a practice one now.



For God alone my soul
waits in silence;
from him comes my
salvation.
He alone is my rock and
my salvation,
my fortress; I shall
never be shaken.

(Psalm 62)

Ask for someone to read



OPENING PRAYER

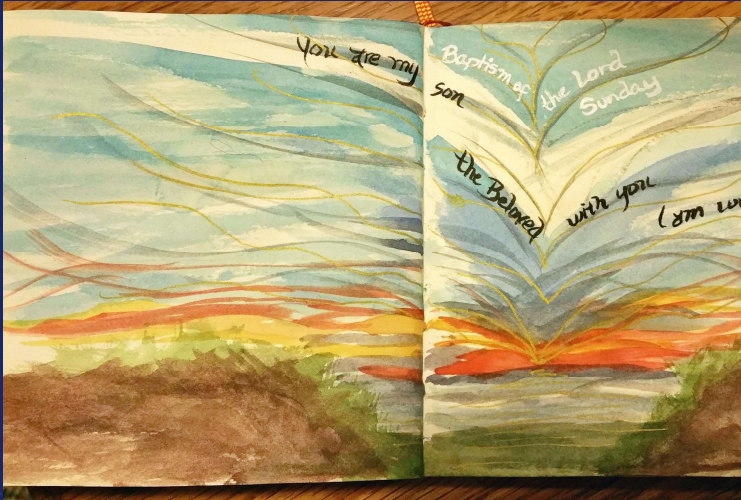
Gracious God, we give you thanks for the gift of this new day. We thank you for your grace and mercy to us in Jesus Christ. We thank you **that** you hold this world in your love and grace and that you are at work to make all things new. We thank for the words of Jesus who promised that when the Advocate, the **Holy Spirit**, whom the Father will send in my name, would teach us all things and remind us of everything he had taught.

We have much to learn. Help us in the day to learn from you and to learn from each other that we might know in ever greater depth the abundant life that Jesus promised. And that we might be faithful witnesses to that abundant life.

For Christ's sake. Amen.

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For Christ's sake. Amen.



A SONG OF PRAISE





- 1. Beginning with Questions

New ways forward often come when we change the questions we have been asking.

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You don't have to spend much time in reading the Bible to know that it is full of questions. And many of those questions are meant to probe deeply into our understanding of God and our understanding of what it means to be in relationship with God. While some questions are simply for information like the wise men's question: "Where is the child who has been born king of the Jews?" Some are born out of personal doubt like John the Baptist's question of Jesus: "Are you the one who is to come, or are we to wait for another?" But many are transformative like God's question to Adam: "Where are you?" Or Jesus' question to Peter: "Who do you say that I am?" Or "Peter, do you love me?" Some questions are easy to answer and some take a life time and are never answered fully.

The point of this first section has three assumptions. The first is that the questions we ask matter. The second is that while most of the questions we deal with in congregations are important, there some questions we

tend not to ask, and we should. The third is that asking the right questions can be the pathway to something new.

1. How do you do it?

- This question assumes that what needs to be done is just around the corner and all I need is a little more information or a new methodology or new technique.



This question assumes I already know the issue and the answer to the issue. All I need to know is the technique that solves the problem. For example, How do you get more young people to church? This how question assumes the number one problem the congregation must address is 'young people' and that the answer to that question is 'getting them to church'. When we pose the "How do you do it?" question too early, we fail to examine our assumptions.

Compared to:
What really
matters to
me/us?

- Rushing to the 'how' question runs the danger of not examining what really fundamentally matters?

E.g. How do you reach more young people? But the real question is do young people really matter to us? Do we really care about the issues they face? Then perhaps we

would simply want to invite them to talk so we could listen. That's very different than asking 'How do you get more young people into the church?' Saying yes to what really matters to me means asking: What have I said yes to that I did not really mean? Or what have I been afraid to say no to?

“The first (step) is continually clarifying what is important

to us. We often spend too much time coping with problems along our path that we forget why we are on the path in the first place. The result is that we only have a dim, or even inaccurate, view of what's really important to us.” Peter Senge, *The Fifth Discipline*, p. 141

When we know what is important to 'us' when are then able to ask 'what is important to others?' When we are moved to engage with young people or seniors or single parents or people newly widowed, we are then able to ask the next important question which is 'What matters to them?' When we ask this question, we place ourselves in the position of becoming learners. What do we need to learn about the issue that matters most to me? For example, a congregation could say, 'We want to reach a new part of the population.' The first question would be 'Why?' Why do you want to reach this part of the population?' What need are you trying to meet?' Are you trying to meet your need—more people in the congregation? Or are you trying to meet a need that they have? How do you know that is a

need for them? What have you learned about the part of the population you want to reach that assures you that you have both the passion, wisdom, and resources to meet that need or you are willing to gain the wisdom and resources needed?’

This is a fundamentally important question for a congregation because it may be the central question for transformation in a congregation. As William Sloan Coffin wrote: “Most church boats don’t like to be rocked; they prefer to lie at anchor rather than go places in storm seas. But that’s because we Christian view the Church as the object of our love instead of the subject and instrument of God’s.” (Quoted in *Doing the Math of Mission*, by Gil Rendle p. 19).

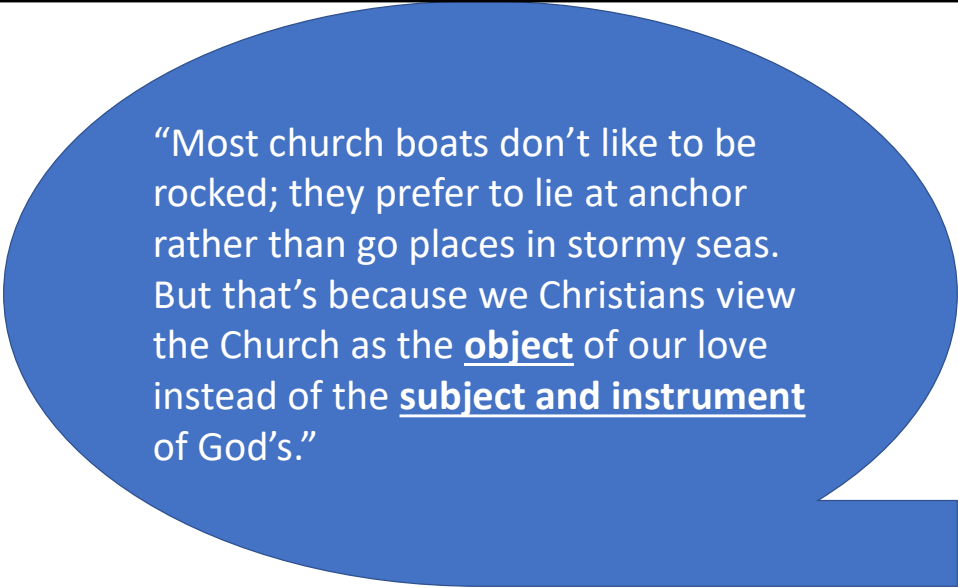
Take the example of Nehemiah:

1 The words of Nehemiah son of Hacaliah. In the month of Chislev, in the twentieth year, while I was in Susa the capital, **2** one of my brothers, Hanani, came with certain men from Judah; and I asked them about the Jews that survived, those who had escaped the captivity, and about Jerusalem. **3** They replied, “The survivors there in the province who escaped captivity are in great trouble and shame; the wall of Jerusalem is broken down, and its gates have been destroyed by fire.”

4 When I heard these words I sat down and wept, and mourned for days, fasting and praying before the God of heaven.

Nehemiah is moved by the despairing situation of his people. With the walls of Jerusalem decimated, the people are not safe, they are suffering. The question of what really matters to us is the question of what human hope or problem speaks to our hearts or breaks our hearts. E.g. of the woman who created the Voices of our City choir made up of homeless people in San Diego.

Congregations tend to do too many things so that they never really become good at any one thing. Congregations should ask, “What are we known for in our community?”



“Most church boats don’t like to be rocked; they prefer to lie at anchor rather than go places in stormy seas. But that’s because we Christians view the Church as the object of our love instead of the subject and instrument of God’s.”

Quoted in Doing the Math of Mission, by Gil Rendle p. 19. When we ask the question, What really matters to us? the answer might be more revealing than we would want to admit. In many cases the honest answer might simply be ‘the building’.

A short aside: e.g. Ian Thomas: a facility only has one purpose – to facilitate.

2. How Long Will it Take?

- This question implies that we expect change to occur in a reasonably short amount of time: weeks, months, but not years.

“The question, How Long?
Drives us to actions that
oversimplify the world.” (P. Block, p. 17
The Answer to How is Yes)

“The most important effect of
the How long? question is that

it drives us to answers that meet the criteria of speed. It runs the risk of precluding slower, more powerful strategies that are more in line with what we know about learning and development. We treat urgency like a performance-enhancing drug, as if calling for speed will hasten change, despite the evidence that authentic transformation requires more time than we ever imagined.” (p. 18 Block)

In a book called *Worship and Mission after Christendom*, the author asked the question, How was it that the early church survived the first 300 years. It is easier to see how it survived when it was embraced by the empire. His answer was two things: the early church believed patience was an attribute of God and therefore should be an attribute of God's people, and the mission of God was incarnational and so the mission of the church would also need to

be incarnational. Patience in scripture is not inactivity. It is an active waiting on the Spirit and seeking the will of God.

No one who began the journey to the promised land would have ever imagined it would take 40 years to get there.

In an interview with a US prisoner of war from the Vietnam War said that the main difference between the prisoners of war who survived

and those who did not, was that those who survived assumed that they would be there for a long time so they dug in to persevere. Those who believed it would only be a short time, gave up hope when that didn't happen.

This is not a call for apathy, but it is a call for perseverance.

Read through the book of Nehemiah and you will see the challenges that come during the

building of the wall that no one anticipated. They have to rework the plan as they go along.

Compared to:
What
Commitment
Am I/Are We
Willing to
Make?

- Courage is required whenever the context is uncertain. The greater the uncertainty, the greater the commitment required.

“The question of commitment declares that the essential investment needed is personal commitment, not money, not the agreement of others, not the alignment of converging forces supportive of a favorable outcome. For anything that matters, the timing is never quite right, the resources are always a little short, and the people who affect the outcome are always ambivalent. These conditions offer proof that if we say yes, it was our own doing and it was important to us. What a gift.” (Block 29) “Every project of consequence or personal calling will require more of us than we originally imagined.” p.29

Peter Senge writes that you need to differentiate between compliance and commitment.

Commitment requires courage. Deep commitment can only come after you have inwardly come to terms with what matters.

E.G Moses in Exodus 33 – when the people sin and God rebukes them, Moses offers his own life in place of the people. When it looks like everything is lost and God says that God will not accompany the people any further, Moses sets up a tent of meeting and goes to prayer. A question the church must ask is What spiritual commitment am I willing to make. Public worship is not enough.

3. How Much Does it Cost?

- If this question comes too early, we may end up avoiding what we value most because the issue of cost takes precedence.

Compared to: What is the
price I am/We are willing to
pay?

E.g. Mark DeVries and youth ministry discussion

The price we are willing to pay is directly related to what matters to us.

Where your treasure is there will be your heart also.

4. How Do You Get Those People to Change?

- This question assumes the real challenge is to change the other: if only they would be....
- “People resist coercion much more strenuously than they resist change.”

This fights against the reality that we have little success changing others and that the focal point needs to be on changing ourselves. Ironically, it is when we change that we have the greatest impact on changing others. It ignores the more important question: “What is the transformation in me that is required? Or, What courage is required of me right now?” (p. 21 Block) (Moses, Nehemiah e.g.)
E.g. The prayer for changing the world

Compared to:
How Am I
Contributing
to the
Problem I Am
Concerned
With?

- This is the willingness to assume that I have had something to do with where we are at present.
- “What keeps us stuck is the belief that someone or something else needs to change before we can move forward.”
- “What is the transformation in me that is required?”

“When we get stuck, and are not acting on what matters, it is usually because we have defined ourselves out of the problem. What keeps us stuck is the belief that someone or something else needs to change before we can move forward.” (Block p. 31)

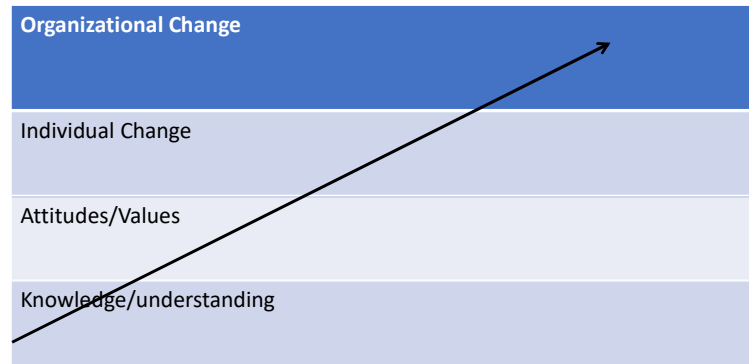
This is the question that calls us to ‘let go’. This letting go is not ‘loss’ so much as it is a finding of ourselves. We let go of the created self to find the creative self. Unless a grain of wheat fall into the ground in cannot bear fruit.

E.g. Neh’s prayer

⁴When I heard these words I sat down and wept, and mourned for days, fasting and praying before the God of heaven. ⁵I said, “O LORD God of heaven, the great and awesome God who keeps covenant and steadfast love with those who love him and keep his commandments; ⁶let your ear be attentive and your eyes open to hear the prayer of your servant

that I now pray before you day and night for your servants, the people of Israel, confessing the sins of the people of Israel, which we have sinned against you. Both I and my family have sinned. ⁷ We have offended you deeply, failing to keep the commandments, the statutes, and the ordinances that you commanded your servant Moses. ⁸ Remember the word that you commanded your servant Moses, 'If you are unfaithful, I will scatter you among the peoples; ⁹ but if you return to me and keep my commandments and do them, though your outcasts are under the farthest skies, I will gather them from there and bring them to the place at which I have chosen to establish my name.' ¹⁰ They are your servants and your people, whom you redeemed by your great power and your strong hand. ¹¹ O Lord, let your ear be attentive to the prayer of your servant, and to the prayer of your servants who delight in revering your name. Give success to your servant today, and grant him mercy in the sight of this man!"

Inner to Outer



“The essence of leadership is to shift the inner place from which we operate both individually and collectively.”

The knowledge is not necessarily something new. It could be something forgotten that needs to be brought back to people’s minds.

E.g. Isaiah 40: 28-31.

²¹ Have you not known? Have you not heard?
Has it not been told you from the beginning?
Have you not understood from the foundations of the earth?

Of course they have heard. Of course they have known. But they have forgotten. So Isaiah reminds them:

He does not faint or grow weary;
his understanding is unsearchable.

²⁹ He gives power to the faint,
and strengthens the powerless.

³⁰ Even youths will faint and be weary,
and the young will fall exhausted;

³¹ but those who wait for the LORD shall renew their strength,
they shall mount up with wings like eagles,
they shall run and not be weary,
they shall walk and not faint.

It is a knowledge of God that shapes an attitude of waiting which leads to personal transformation of renewal and action which impacts the whole nation.

“the success of an intervention depends on the interior condition of the intervener.”

Quote by Bill O’Brian, late CEO of Hanover Insurance quoted by Scharmer
p. 7

Attitude is about becoming increasingly aware of the inner place from which we operate

Quote is from p. 11 Scharmer

How Do We Measure It?

Our commitment to measurement is borne out of our anxiety. It is proof to our doubt.

It overshadows the more important question, “What measurement would have meaning to me?”

There is another way of looking at this and it is from Gil Rendle’s book called *Doing the Math of Mission* in which he separates counting from measuring. Counting, he argues, is our focus on our resources and our activities. In the church we spend most of our time on counting.

Measuring is looking at the change we want to make. Measuring focuses our attention on the difference we wanted to make. Counting would say we have 10 people in our bible study group. Measuring would ask, “What difference did it make?”

Compared to:
What
measurement
would have
meaning to
me?

- This allows me to move into a world of imagination and creativity rather than predictability and control.

Almo shoes: Success is what you stand for in the world

⁹ And this is my prayer: that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight, ¹⁰ so that you may be able to discern what is best and may be pure and blameless for the day of Christ, ¹¹ filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ—to the glory and praise of God. Phil 1:9

Gil Rendle in his book *Doing the Math of Mission* argues that congregations spend most of their time counting, that is focusing on what they have and what they do. Rendle argues that the church needs to shift from counting to measuring, that is focusing on the difference they are trying to make and the benchmarks that identify that difference.

Another way of asking what measurement would have meaning for me? is to ask, What difference are we trying to make and how would we

know we made that difference? Without any benchmarks, everything becomes acceptable.

How Have Other People Done It Successfully?

- This question assumes that because something is working somewhere else that my context is the same and therefore it can be transplanted successfully.
- There is a difference between imitation and imagination.

It means that we might settle for imitation when what is really needed is invention or imagination for our own context.

The real purpose of looking at what others have done is not imitation, but to give us hope that we too might be able to dream of something new.

That's not to say we can't learn from others. We just can't take the easy road of copying them.

Compared to: What Do We Want to Create Together?

This is a question of freedom. We don't simply need to copy someone else. We don't simply need to take on the next fad. We are free work in the direction we sense the Spirit may be directing us. But we have to keep in mind how large the word 'we' is. It is not just the session, it is not just the congregation. It must include all the communities in which we live and to have integrity it must include all the structures to which we belong.

- Congregation
- Session
- Community
- Presbytery
- Mission of God
- Scripture
- Holy Spirit



Bonus
Question:
What is the
Crossroad I
Am At?

- This question forces us to ask, “Is what has made us successful in the past, still suitable for the future?”
- One of the greatest obstacles to change is success.

“Our crossroad represents an as yet unfulfilled desire to change our focus, our purpose, what we want to pursue.” p.31

Newbigin, commenting on Mark 2:18-22: “But we also know that religion is generally a conservative force in society. Almost by definition, religion is what binds society to the past, to the given traditions and the established ways. This has been true of Christianity in history too. At many times and places the Church has seemed to stand simply for that which is about fifty years out of date....Any proposal for change arouses a violent fear and anger which are plainly pathological in character. It is obvious that this kind of clinging to the past is something totally different from the religion of Jesus. Anyone who behaved in the way that Jesus is reported to have behaved in this text would be quickly excommunicated from most of our churches. We surely ought to be much more seriously concerned than we usually are by the colossal difference between the pattern that Jesus set, and the way our church life is normally

conducted.” (p. 19) The Good Shepherd,

An
Example



Putting it Together

- How do you do it? What really matters to me?
- How long will it take?...What commitment am I willing to make?
- How much does it cost?...What is the price I am willing to pay?
- How do you get others to change?...What is my contribution to the problem I am concerned with?
- How do we measure it?...What is the crossroad that I am facing?
- How are other people doing it successfully?...What do we want to create together?
- What is the crossroads I am/we are at?

Google Forms

- Click on the link in the chat box and mark the answers most appropriate to your congregation from your perspective. Click submit when you are finished. You have five minutes for this exercise.
- Your name will **not** appear with your answers.

Break Out Groups



In your break out groups go around the group and respond to two questions: What questions are your congregation spending most its time on? Is there a question you wished it would spend more time on.

When people come back from the break out groups ask, “Where there particular questions that seemed more important than others?”

Moving Forward

- Choose one or two questions to work through with your session. Choose the questions that right now are most significant for you.
- When you have worked through the top two questions, look to see if there is a third question you want to explore.



- Meeting the challenges inherent in change