

PROBING AND PIERCING QUESTIONS

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From Larry Osborne: “Zero-Basing” Questions¹

At North Coast Church, one of the most powerful tools we’ve used to help us keep our eyes on the target and regularly make the adjustments needed has been a process called “zero-basing.” A zero-based meeting or retreat gathers a small group of key leaders and simply asks:

- What would we do differently if we were starting all over?
- If there were no backlash to worry about, what would we drop?
- What would we start?
- What would we change?
- How does the reality of our ministry match with our stated vision and goals?
- What would we do differently if our only boundary was a radical commitment to the Great Commission?

From Larry Osborne: Innovation Questions²

To identify the programs, processes, and policies that are most ripe for innovation and change, step back and ask yourself, “What frustrates me most?”

- What is it that drives me crazy?
- What are we doing that makes absolutely no sense?
- What processes and programs seem to take lots of work, but bear no fruit?
- What traditions are we putting up with simply because it has always been done this way?
- What is the one problem that if we could solve it, most of our other problems would go away?
- What’s broken that seems to be unfixable?
- What problems are we living with because everyone says, “That’s just the way it is”?

From Craig Groeschel: Questions to Stir Vision³

- Why does your organization exist? (If you can’t answer this clearly, I’ll bet you an overpriced latte that there are a few things your organization should stop doing immediately.)
- What can your organization be the best in the world at? (Borrowing from Jim Collins in *Good to Great*.)
- If you could do only one thing, what would it be?
- If you left your organization tomorrow, what would you hope would continue forever?
- What breaks your heart, keeps you awake at night, wrecks you?

From Bill Hybels: Questions to Clarify Vision⁴

- Have you yielded yourself fully enough to God?
- Have you asked God to unveil his vision for your life, or are

you asking him to bless a plan that you've already come up with? We must come to God with empty hands and an open heart and ask, "What is your vision for my life?"

- Have you fasted?
- Have you prayed?
- Have you been quiet and waited on God in solitude?
- Have you cleaned up sinful patterns in your life?
- Have you weeded out the distractions and ambient noise that would keep you from hearing what God is trying to say to you?
- Have you read avidly?
- Have you traveled widely?
- Have you visited a variety of ministries around the world?
- Have you exposed yourself to the kaleidoscope of visions that God has given to others so that you can be inspired by the variety of options?
- If not, get out there! See what God is doing!

Questions from Andy Stanley⁵

1. Do we have a transferable mission or vision statement?
 - Do our members and attendees know why we exist?
 - By what standard do we measure our success as a church... really?
 - Which of these three drive the majority of our decisions: reaching people, keeping people, or paying the bills?
2. What have we fallen in love with that's not as effective as it used to be?
 - What do we love doing that's not really working?
 - What's off limits for discussion?
 - Do we have any "old couches" that need to be thrown out?

3. Where are we manufacturing energy?
 - What are we promoting that we secretly wish we didn't have to attend?
 - What would we love to quit doing but continue to do because we fear the consequences of change?
 - What are we doing programmatically that we would never dream of inviting a friend to attend?

4. If we all got kicked off the staff and the board, and an outside group (a group of leaders who were fearlessly committed to the mission of this church) took our place, what changes would they introduce?
 - What's the first thing they would do?
 - Who would they replace?
 - What would they refuse to fund?

5. What do we measure?
 - Is there a natural relationship between what we measure and our mission?
 - Are there things we should be measuring that would give us a more accurate read of how well we are accomplishing our mission?
 - What are we afraid to measure?

6. What do we celebrate?
 - Is there a natural relationship between what we celebrate and our mission?
 - Are there things we should be celebrating that would help reinforce our mission?
 - Do we celebrate anything that reinforces a behavior that shouldn't be reinforced?

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7. If our church suddenly ceased to exist, would our community miss us? If so, why? What value do we bring to our community? How do people outside our church view our church?