

The Art of Asking Good Questions

Giving expert assertions, directive opinions or unrequested advice is epidemic not only in society around us, but in our churches as well. The art of asking good questions that encourage church planters to focus on solutions is essential. How do we help church planters be open to new possibilities, opportunities and perspectives? How do we help them bring about change? This session will unpack these questions.

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- I. Jesus as Master of riddles, parables, provocations and questions
 - A. What are the qualities of Jesus' questions?
 - B. What asking questions allows him to do or to avoid?
 - C. Why would someone who knows everything ask any questions?
 - D. What is the power of questions?
 - E. How you can change another person?

- II. Typology of questions
 - A. Closed and open questions
 - B. Instructive questions
 1. leading questions vs. neutral questions
 - C. Descriptive or content oriented questions and problem focused questions
 - D. Evaluation/ accountability questions

Paradox: The more a coach attentively listens to situation details and the more a coach becomes "in tune" with CP's emotions, the more that coach will risk getting stuck with the person in the same exit-less situation

"It is useless to search in the same way, place or direction as the church planter has already done. It is useful however, to help the CP "reconfigure" or reboot his or her way of defining the issue, of considering the problem, or of visioning a desired situation. Consequently, a coaching approach is to question the CP's frame of reference. Coaching questions that are considered to be powerful are precisely those that jolt CPs into reconsidering the way they understand or define a

problem, perceive an issue or envision a future. Coaching questions are not presented to elicit more information from the CP but rather to provoke the CP to think, create, feel or react differently about the issue at hand.”

E. Constructive questions

1. Questions to “set the stage”
2. Questions focused on future desired situation - Ideal Solution Coaching Questions (also in social and relational contexts)
3. Future Projection Coaching Questions
4. Strategic or powerful coaching questions (aim to surprise CPs or put them “off balance” in order to provoke the emergence of new perspectives on their problems, objectives, issues and dreams.
5. Paradoxical Coach Questions
6. Questions to Change person’s Context
7. Metaphorical questions and parables
8. Miracle questions
9. Questions focused of resources and exceptions
10. Think small questions
11. Questions related to future behavior change and who observes it
12. Questions focused on expected benefits or conclusions.
13. Using of scales
14. Last 10 minutes question

Too many, too long, too complicated

When coaches offer too many, too long and too complicated questions, (of which many are invariably problem-focused) they will reveal that they are indirectly or unconsciously trying to process the issue in order to propose solutions, obtain recognition, justify their presence, pushing to accelerate CP’s problem solving, etc. Even if these numerous, lengthy and inappropriate questions are motivated by a positive desire to help, they only get in the way of CP’s autonomy. When coaching, fewer, shorter and simple questions are considered most useful and most effective. So as we shall see, coaching questions are often minimalist questions.

III. Question examples

- A. What results do you wish to accomplish today?
- B. How do you want to begin this work?
- C. Where do you stand now?
- D. What could be your next step?
- E. What do you want to do with your remaining time?
- F. How would you like to conclude this session?
- G. What do you plan to implement, back on your job, before your next coaching session?
- H. What is your ideal outcome?
- I. What is your best possible scenario?

- J. If you really dared to formulate your deepest hopes, what would you say?
- K. What is your ultimate possible goal?
- L. If the situation were perfect, what would it look like?
- M. What is your highest possible goal? The one you wouldn't even dare share with me.
- N. If you project yourself several years forward and imagine the problem is totally solved. Can you describe it. (THEN) What have you done to reach that satisfactory outcome?
- O. Imagine yourself in five years when everything is exactly as you wish. How have you changed from what you are today? (or) Can you describe your environment? (or) can you make an inventory of your successes ?, (THEN) How have you achieved this?
- P. Pretend that you have solved your issue in the most satisfactory possible way, what is the final result?(or) Can you describe how you feel ? (THEN.) What did you do to get there?
- Q. If you didn't spend so much time banging your head on the wall in front of you, where is the door that opens towards your future?"
- R. Can you tell me, in one short sentence, what your really fundamental life objective is, beyond all this information?
- S. What could be your first smallest step in the right direction?
- T. What would be a first easy act that would get you started down the right path?
- U. What is the first smallest possible immediate change for you?
- V. What would you do if this apparently difficult problem was really an opportunity to start considering very important changes?
- W. How could you react to this apparently « negative situation » if it was really a solution to a lot of your problems?
- X. What must you start changing in yourself to welcome this apparently disruptive event, in the positive way it really deserves?
- Y. If this problem was actually an opportunity for you to grow, what would you start changing in yourself?

IV. Personal exercise:

- A. Try to imagine having a dialog with your friend in a coffee bar, where you wouldn't be allowed to give any advice, expert knowledge or comments about your friend's answers. And still you would be supposed to help you friend to get solution to some personal issue, problem or to get new insight about his life. Write down your own method – 10 questions or inputs that you would use at the beginning or during such conversation. Try to cover all phases of a dialog.