

Five Questions for Transformation

Answering these five questions, in order, is the first step toward transforming congregants into devoted Christians.

1.) What kinds of people does God want us to produce in this body of believers?

The biblical answer to that question is "Go and make disciples." But what does a disciple look like? What target are we aiming for? In my church and in others I have consulted, I have watched congregations become electrified as they define these traits and then begin to own responsibility for imparting them. Identifying the target traits gives meaning, energy, and clarity of vision—in short, purpose—to the church's efforts.

We should know what type of disciple we intend our services and programming to create.

We do this well We do this poorly

2.) What kinds of experiences do we need to have in order to become those kinds of people?

Too often we start with this step, without asking the first question. When we do, programming is usually a matter of what we did last year, what we did at our last church, an idea that sounds nice, what we can afford, or the pastor's newest whim. Planning our programming around the traits God wants us to produce in believers lends purpose and urgency to our ministries. It also provides a bonus: we now have a reason to say no to things that don't fit.

We should plan our programming around our discipleship needs.

We do this well We do this poorly

3.) What kinds of leaders (plural) are needed to provide those kinds of experiences?

When they answer this question, churches realize they need several passionate, gifted, and trained leaders to provide "those kinds of experiences."

We should identify leaders to help us develop disciples.

We do this well We do this poorly

4.) What kind of pastor is needed to train those kinds of leaders?

One church may need a coach, another may need a shepherd, and another may need an executive. But by asking question three, and then question four, a church can learn to rightly divide the duties of pastors and lay leaders. And when a resident pastor asks what kind of pastor is needed to train his church's leaders, it invites him to analyze his or her gifting, time allocation, skill development, and continuing education opportunities.

We should determine which responsibilities should belong to the pastor and which to lay people.

We do this well We do this poorly

5.) What kinds of experiences does the pastor need to have in order to be that kind of pastor?

This fifth question has helped me determine my own priorities. If given a choice between seminars on coaching or on making pastoral calls, I choose the former, because that's the kind of pastor this church needs, and that's the kind of experience I need to be that kind of pastor.

We should help our pastor determine and develop his or her own gifts.

We do this well We do this poorly