

Compared to: What really matters to me?

- Rushing to the 'how' question runs the danger of not examining what really fundamentally matters?
- It means asking 'What do I really want to say 'no' to?'

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?'

"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

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)

What Commitment Am I Willing to Make?

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

E.g. Acts...boldness

“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)

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.

E.g. Mark DeVries and youth ministry discussion

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."
- "What is the transformation in me that is required?"

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.)

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.”

“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)
E.g. Neh’s prayer

How Do We Measure It?

- This question arises from our culture that says, 'unless you can measure it, it doesn't count'.

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?"

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.

It means that we might settle for imitation when what is really needed is invention. 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.

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.
- Tradition as an anchor or as a rudder

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, Lesslie Newbigin.

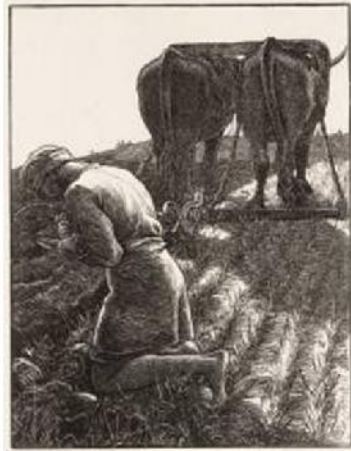
Striking a Balance

- The goal is to balance a life that works with a life that counts but we have to start by identifying the life that counts.

Acting on what matters is taking an active stance, “one whereby we declare we are accountable for the world around us and are willing to pursue what we define as important, independent of whether or not it is in demand, or has market value.” (Block p.7)

Two Realities

THE KINGDOM OF GOD



THE CALL OF THE CHURCH



Jesus didn't spend most of his time talking about the church. He spent most of his time talking about the kingdom of God. That was his primary concern. The reign or rule of God in the world that was true to the character of God. It was something of great price and something that we should seek first before anything else in life (Matt. 6:33) It was mysterious and therefore something easily missed. It had strange subjects: prostitutes, children and the poor seemed to be prime candidates. It had a lot to do with healing, physically and spiritually and especially in terms of relationships. It would be a struggle for others, especially the rich and the righteous (self). It would take a new set of eyes to see it, even rebirth. It was something that God was doing. So Jesus could make comments like, "I only do what the Father shows me." My meat is to do the will of God. Others who also did the will of the Father would find themselves related as brothers or sisters. Even using the name of Christ could not come ahead of doing the will of God. It was sustenance like food. It was also something that God was doing. So the key words about the kingdom were words like "It is interesting to listen to the words used to discuss the church's relationship to the kingdom of God. It is not uncommon to hear such concepts as 'the church is responsible to build the kingdom of God', or 'the church is to extend God's kingdom in the world', or 'the church must promote the work of the kingdom of God', or 'the church is to help establish God's kingdom in the world'. These images of build, extend, promote, and establish stand in sharp contrast to the biblical language used to define the relationship of the church to the kingdom of God. The biblical language places emphasis on our response to God's redemptive reign. The words most commonly used are receive, enter, seek, and inherit.[1]