

## Four Questions Every Young Leader Should Answer

The leader in trouble is not the one who doesn't have all the answers; **it is the one who doesn't know the right questions.**

As a young leader I craved answers. I had just graduated from Asbury Theological Seminary, was recently married, and had little experience as a leader. There was so much I didn't know. We all crave answers. We need to make things happen. You find yourself moving fast and when you don't know what to do it slows you down. You want someone wiser and more experienced to help you clear the fog and keep moving forward. To a degree, that is normal and good. But it lacks long-term development and depth. A good answer is valuable and helps you keep moving forward, but it doesn't necessarily help you think and grow.

A coach that asks the right questions of you is often more helpful in the long run than the one who provides the answers you seek. As an executive pastor and leadership coach, there are times when I need to provide answers, but candidly I think I'm of **greater value when I ask my team the right questions.**

What makes a question good? Is it the question itself? Not necessarily, **the art is asking the right question at the right time.** That said there are a few essential questions that all leaders, and especially young leaders should ask themselves. Here are four of those questions for you.

- **What do you want?**

The most frustrated people in the world are those who don't know what they want. They are the most difficult to lead and often do not possess an inner peace or genuine happiness. Leaders who don't know what they want are dangerous. Instead of serving the people they, (unknowingly and without malice), use them in an attempt to discover what they want from life. That pursuit is often preceded or paralleled by attempting to discover who they are. Candidly, they need people rather than lead people. You don't have to know the full depths of that answer when you are in your twenties, nor are you locked into one answer for your entire life. But the sooner you have a solid grasp of knowing what you want, the better you will lead and live.

- **Who do you listen to?**

When Jesus came to the region of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, "Who do people say the Son of Man is?" 14 They replied, "Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, Jeremiah or one of the prophets." 15 "But what about you?" he asked. "Who do you say I am?" 16 Simon Peter answered, "You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God." 17 Jesus replied, "Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by flesh and blood, but by my Father in heaven. (Matthew 16:13-17)

You don't have to be a biblical scholar to understand this passage of Scripture. Who you listen to matters. Who are the people that speak into your life? Do you give them permission to tell

you the truth? Are you receptive and responsive?

- **Can you discern the difference between a wrong turn and a wrong direction?**

All leaders make mistakes. If you don't make mistakes, you are playing it too safe and therefore not leading. The important thing is to not make the same mistake twice. Making a mistake is a wrong turn, making the same mistakes repeatedly is heading in the wrong direction. Mistakes are temporary. The wrong direction can result in an epic failure. The difficulty is that in the daily grind it's hard to tell which is which.

The best way to avoid heading in the wrong direction is to possess a clear picture of the vision and keep your heart and mind focused there. Distractions, pressures, problems and difficult people can take you temporarily off course, but if you keep your eyes on the big picture you won't lose your sense of the right direction.

- **What trades are you willing to make?**

Life is a series of trades. Because time, energy and resources are finite, you must make choices. Your worldview and belief system shapes your trades as well. Over the course of time those choices or trades determine your leadership effectiveness, quality of life, and ultimately, your legacy.

A classic set of trades that pastors make is what it takes to grow a small church to a large one. You can't have it all. There is something special about the warmth and closeness of community in a small church. There is something powerful about the leadership and programming of a large church. As a leader you trade either way.

In order to make good trades, you have to know what you want. You need to listen to God and wise counsel. You need to be willing to make mistakes but keep heading in the right direction – and then just keep praying through the trades trusting that God is guiding your steps as a leader.

### **Are you asking the right questions?**

Read more from Dan [here](#).