

Easy to Use Focus Group Feedback Questions for Church Strategic Planning

- Jim Baker

A key component of any strategic planning process is to secure feedback from stakeholders. For churches this usually includes Bible Study Teachers, Ministry Leaders, Staff and Church Governance Leaders such as Deacons and Elders.

But it can also include specific demographics such as Young Marrieds, New Members, Prospects, Single Adults and Students.

Feedback is typically received in two ways, through written surveys distributed and returned electronically or in facilitated focus groups or teams.

The first set of questions listed below, are designed to be distributed, completed and returned electronically. The second set of questions, are designed to be used in facilitated focus group settings.

Use these to receive comprehensive feedback from your congregation as a foundation for your strategic planning process.

GOD ORDAINED OPPORTUNITIES

“What are the unique needs and opportunities for ministry in our Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria and World?”

1. What are the unique needs in our City? In our County? In our Region?
2. What ministry opportunities do the industries and businesses specific to our community offer?
3. What ministry opportunities do prominent community events offer?
4. What are the unique ethnic groups in our area that present an opportunity for ministry?
5. What other unique demographic or mosaic groups are there in our area that provides an opportunity for ministry?
6. What is the most significant change in our community in the last decade and what need or opportunity does that create?
7. Because of our specific location and facilities, what solutions and opportunities could we provide that no other church in our area can do as well?
8. What people groups have God placed upon our hearts.
9. What “hot issues” are the local media covering that might be an opportunity for ministry?
10. What international opportunities has God placed before us?

CONGREGATIONAL POTENTIAL

“What are the unique resources, strengths, gifts and capabilities that God brings together in us?”

1. Who comes to our church? Who do we reach most effectively based on such factors as ethnicity, age, gender, life stage, and spiritual maturity?
2. What spiritual gifts, passions and abilities seem to be prominent in our church?
3. How do new members talk about what attracted them to our church?
4. Why do people drive by other churches to come to our church?
5. How do other church staff and denominational leaders describe our church? What are we known for?
6. What stories or circumstances illustrate our congregational potential?

7. What ministry has had the biggest Kingdom impact?
8. What innovations/strategies have proved to be defining moments in our church's history?

GUIDING PASSIONS

“What particular focus most energizes and deeply moves our leadership?”

1. What passions do our leaders most frequently express?
2. What visions are burning bright in the heart of our leaders?
3. What strategies do our leaders most frequently reference?
4. What is the focus of our leader's prayers?
5. What missional language and vocabulary do our leaders frequently use?
6. What shortcomings of the church bother our leadership most?
7. What stories or circumstances illustrate the guiding passions of our past and current leaders?

PERSONAL REFLECTION

1. What has God revealed to you about His purposes for our church?
2. What adjustments does our church need to make to more closely align ourselves with God's purposes?
3. What evidence do you see of the Holy Spirit working in our church?
4. What are your hopes and dreams for our church?
5. What are your concerns for the future of our church?
6. How have you seen prayers answered through our worship, discipleship, service and connecting strategies?
7. Recall ways God has blessed our church through worship, discipleship, service and connection.
8. Is there a God's sized goal that is beyond our human abilities to achieve that God is calling us to pursue to His glory?

PRAYERS

1. Pray that together we will clearly hear and understand what God says to us and that we will be committed to obeying Him.
2. Pray that God will give the gift of discernment to our leaders so that they may understand God's will and correctly interpret it to our church.
3. Pray that God will call laborers into the harvest fields of our cities, nation and world.
4. Pray that God will raise up our church to be a true house of prayer for all people and all nations.
5. Pray that God will bring revival to our church that creates a deeper concern and compassion for those who are lost and have yet to believe in Christ Jesus.
6. Pray that God's will, desire and vision will be so clear that no one can deny it or disobey it!

TEAM ASSIGNMENT - SCANNING: CURRENT STATE OF OUR CHURCH

This is a team activity. Your assignment is to work as a team to develop a presentation for the large group that describes what our church is like today. You can use the information that is provided for your team related to facts and figures about growth, size, budget, staffing, programs, etc. In addition to this information, use your own observations and perceptions of life at our church today.

Get to work quickly and take an hour to discuss various aspects of our church's life today. Someone should serve as a scribe for the group, using the flipcharts to capture your discussion.

Use the following questions to stimulate your team discussion:

- How would we describe the size of our church today? How does the church break down on various demographic variables?
- How would you describe the growth that our church has experienced in the last five years? Do we know where the growth has come from? What subgroups within the church have grown fastest?
- How would you describe the various ministries and programs of our church in terms of size, participation, and other variables? What are the areas that seem to have the greatest challenges due to size, growth, etc.? Are there programs or areas where lack of participation is a challenge?
- How would you describe the way in which financial resources at our church are utilized? How would you break down the budget in terms of how it is allocated?

- What are other things related to the current state of our church that ought to be pointed out and considered as we plan for the future? If you had to briefly summarize how our church “looks” today in a few phrases, what would you say?

After you have discussed the above questions for an hour, take an additional 15 minutes to prepare a 5-7 minute presentation for the large group, using 2 or 3 flipchart pages at most. Someone should be prepared to give your presentation to the large group.

TEAM ASSIGNMENT - SCANNING: STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES OF OUR CHURCH

This is a team activity. Your assignment is to work as a team to develop a presentation for the large group that describes the strengths and weaknesses of our church today. Use your observations, perceptions and experience to identify specific strengths and weaknesses that should be considered as the church develops its plans for the future.

Get to work quickly and take an hour to discuss this topic. Someone should serve as a scribe for the group, using the flipcharts to capture your discussion.

Use the following questions to stimulate your team discussion:

- What are the key areas, ministries, or aspects of church life that are working very well?
- Where are we most effective in our mission? Where do we seem to be making the greatest impact?
- What are areas where we aren't as effective or haven't made as much progress?
- In those areas where we aren't achieving as much as we would like, what are potential reasons? What could we do to increase our effectiveness in those areas?
- In considering our strengths and weaknesses, are there other things that need to be brought to the attention of the large group?

After you have discussed the above questions for an hour, take an additional 15 minutes to prepare a 5-7 minute presentation for the large group, using 2 or 3 flipchart pages at most. Someone should be prepared to give your presentation to the large group.

TEAM ASSIGNMENT - SCANNING: **THE CULTURE AND COMMUNITY AROUND US**

This is a team activity. Your assignment is to work as a team to develop a presentation for the large group that describes the culture and community that surrounds our church. Use your observations, perceptions, knowledge and experience to identify specific aspects of the culture in which we live and characteristics of the community around us that should be considered as the church develops its plans for the future.

Get to work quickly and take an hour to discuss this topic. Someone should serve as a scribe for the group, using the flipcharts to capture your discussion.

Use the following questions to stimulate your team discussion:

- What are important attributes of the culture in which we live that seem relevant for our church? How has it changed in recent years? How do we see it changing in the future?
- How would we describe the community(ies) in which we live? What are unique characteristics or needs in our community that seem relevant for our church?
- What are the implications of the answers to the above questions? What does the leadership of our church need to consider in response to the culture and community around us? What is critical if we want to have the greatest impact possible on our community?

After you have discussed the above questions for an hour, take an additional 15 minutes to prepare a 5-7 minute presentation for the large group, using 2 or 3 flipchart pages at most. Someone should be prepared to give your presentation to the large group.

TEAM ASSIGNMENT - SCANNING: **THE CHURCH AROUND US**

This is a team activity. Your assignment is to work as a team to develop a presentation for the large group that describes trends, best practices, and other things that other churches are doing that seem relevant for our church. Use the information you scanned before today, as well as the knowledge and observations of your team members to identify specific programs, practices and approaches other churches are using that should be considered as our church develops its plans for the future.

Get to work quickly and take an hour to discuss this topic. Someone should serve as a scribe for the group, using the flipcharts to capture your discussion.

Use the following questions to stimulate your team discussion:

- What are specific practices that other churches are using that seem relevant for us? What are new models or approaches that are emerging that may be useful for us to consider?

- What are learnings from the experiences that team members have had in other churches? What have you seen in other churches that seemed to be especially effective?
- What are the implications of your answers to the above questions? What specific recommendations does your team have about approaches or practices that our church should consider?

After you have discussed the above questions for an hour, take an additional 15 minutes to prepare a 5-7 minute presentation for the large group, using 2 or 3 flipchart pages at most. Someone should be prepared to give your presentation to the large group.

TEAM ASSIGNMENT – SCANNING: THE DIGITALIZATION OF THE WORLD

This is a team activity. Your assignment is to work as a team to develop a presentation for the large group that describes the implications for our church of the digitalization of the world. Use the information you scanned before today, as well as the knowledge and observations of your team members to identify ways that technological change is impacting the church, as well as ways that our church can utilize these changes to increase and enhance its impact.

Get to work quickly and take an hour to discuss this topic. Someone should serve as a scribe for the group, using the flipcharts to capture your discussion.

Use the following questions to stimulate your team discussion:

- What are key changes and developments in technology in recent years that are impacting individuals, families, communities, society, and even the church? What are the major shifts in how people communicate, learn, work, and play?
- What are the opportunities that digitalization presents for our church? How can we use technology to enhance the effectiveness and impact of the church? How can it change the ways we communicate and connect internally and externally?
- Are there ways we can help our congregants and others as they cope with the ways technology is changing their lives?
- What are the challenges that digitalization presents for the church? What do we need to prepare to respond to?

After you have discussed the above questions for an hour, take an additional 15 minutes to prepare a 5-7 minute presentation for the large group, using 2 or 3 flipchart pages at most. Someone should be prepared to give your presentation to the large group.

TEAM ASSIGNMENT – SCANNING: OPPORTUNITIES FOR OUR CHURCH

This is a team activity. Your assignment is to work as a team to develop a presentation for the large group that describes the key opportunities for our church to increase and enhance its impact and effectiveness. Use the knowledge, observations and experiences of your team members to identify ways that our church can seize on opportunities that may be present.

Get to work quickly and take an hour to discuss this topic. Someone should serve as a scribe for the group, using the flipcharts to capture your discussion.

Use the following questions to stimulate your team discussion:

- What are unique aspects of our church that present opportunities to have an impact on the kingdom? Are there special resources, skills, gifts, or other capabilities our church has been blessed with that position us to have even greater impact in the future? How do we capitalize on these blessings?
- What are the key opportunities you see for our church in the future to maximize its impact on the community and the world? What are the BIG ideas that you think we should consider? What would be the potential impact of these BIG ideas?

After you have discussed the above questions for an hour, take an additional 15 minutes to prepare a 5-7 minute presentation for the large group, using 2 or 3 flipchart pages at most. Someone should be prepared to give your presentation to the large group.

TEAM ASSIGNMENT – SCANNING: CHALLENGES AHEAD FOR OUR CHURCH

This is a team activity. Your assignment is to work as a team to develop a presentation for the large group that describes the key challenges ahead for our church. Use the knowledge, observations and experiences of your team members to identify challenges, threats, risks and other things that may have a negative impact on our effectiveness and impact as a church.

Get to work quickly and take an hour to discuss this topic. Someone should serve as a scribe for the group, using the flipcharts to capture your discussion.

Use the following questions to stimulate your team discussion:

- What are the greatest challenges ahead for our church? Are there things about the way we function today that may be problematic in the future? Are there ways in which our growth and success have made things more difficult for us?
- What are potential threats or risks for our church in the future? What trends, threats, or developments inside or outside the church that could limit our effectiveness or impact?

- How do we prepare for or minimize the negative impact of these threats or risks?
- Are there ways we can turn these threats or risks into opportunities for our church? How?

After you have discussed the above questions for an hour, take an additional 15 minutes to prepare a 5-7 minute presentation for the large group, using 2 or 3 flipchart pages at most. Someone should be prepared to give your presentation to the large group.

TEAM ASSIGNMENT:

VISIONARY OBJECTIVES AND STRATEGIES

This is a team activity. Your assignment is to work as a team to identify visionary objectives and strategies concerning a specific component of our church's mission statement.

Get to work quickly and take an hour to discuss the area that your team was assigned. Reflect on what you've heard throughout the day so far, as well as your own thoughts, observations, experiences, and perspectives. Be bold in your ideas. Use the flipcharts to capture your discussion.

Use the following questions to stimulate your team discussion:

- For the mission statement component your team was assigned to discuss, what are the critical ideas about ways we can maximize our impact and effectiveness in this area?
- What do we most want to accomplish in this area? How would we describe the broad, long-term outcomes we hope to achieve? What would it look like if we achieve what we are seeking in this area?
- How can we accomplish these objectives? What strategies could we use to make progress?

After you have discussed the above questions for an hour, take an additional 15 minutes to prepare a 5-7 minute presentation for the large group, using 2 or 3 flipchart pages at most. Someone should be prepared to give your presentation to the large group.

About Sacred Structures and Jim Baker



For the past 10 years Jim has served as Executive Pastor at Brentwood Baptist Church outside Nashville, Tennessee serving alongside Senior Pastor Mike Glenn to lead one of the largest and fastest growing churches in the nation.

During Jim's tenure Brentwood Baptist Church has doubled and tripled every significant metric of church growth and health and has grown from a staff of 14 ministers to over 50 with a support staff of over 100. Jim is also a certified Model-netics Instructor, a nationally recognized training system of organizational and management concepts and principles.

In his spare time Jim exercises his passion for both creativity and structure through his hobby of reclaiming vintage bibles, hand made pieces and broken and cast away items and repurposing them into crosses and representations of biblical metaphors. Jim sees these "sacred structures" as representative of how Christ "makes all things new" through God's Word and his Spirit and can repurpose our mistakes and our lives for his purposes.

Information on Jim's coaching, consulting, training and speaking services as well as purchase of his art structures is available on his website, SacredStructures.org.