

Expert or Guide

Equipping a leader is not the task of a coaching expert but the task of a coaching guide. If you are like most, taking the stance of a guide when it comes to equipping is no easy task. Who does not want to be the expert? Who, when asked for help by someone, does not want to have the brilliant answer? Resisting the temptation to be the expert but instead guiding your leader to workable solutions to ministry challenges will be the mark of effective coaching.

Equipping is about helping your leaders effectively carry out their tasks. Questions 2 through 4 in our six Questions model provide a tool for equipping your leaders. Equipping happens as coaches guide leaders through these three questions: What are you celebrating? What challenges are you facing? How will you tackle those challenges?

Question 2 - What are you Celebrating?

Celebrating successes with your leaders is essential for a couple of reasons. First, leaders regularly need to be re-minded of the vision and importance of the role they are playing so that they are motivated to carry out their task. Equipping them includes recasting vision and helping renew passion which are both by-products of celebration. Consider asking your leaders questions like: Is anyone in your group (or on your team) making a decision to follow Jesus? Who in your group (or on your team) is growing spiritually? What are you feeling good about right now in your ministry? What are you most enjoying in your role as a leader? In what ways do you see God using you as a leader?

Second, celebrating successes helps leaders understand what is working well and encourages them to continue doing those things and to build upon those things. Equipping is not just about addressing things that aren't working; it is also about reinforcing things that are working well. Successes often point the way to the next steps for a leader or ministry. Consider asking your leaders questions like: What is working really well in your ministry right now? What efforts does God seem to be blessing? What have you done in the past month that has had the greatest impact? What would happen if you spent more time doing those things? How can you leverage the success of those things to take your ministry and your leadership to the next level?

Celebrate successes regularly with your leaders. Affirmation is crucial to a leader's ongoing commitment and motivation. Celebration provides an avenue

for the leader and coach to honor God for the amazing things he is accomplishing in their lives and ministries.

Question 3 - What Challenges are you Facing?

Question 3 provides an avenue for your leader to talk openly about things that aren't going well. Obstacles and challenges need to be acknowledged and owned before they can begin to be tackled and overcome. These challenges may be related to circumstances (i.e. inadequate meeting space, difficulty coordinating schedules), people entrusted to your leader's care (i.e. conflict, personal problems), or your leader's own skills and/or growth as a Christ-follower.

As a coach, part of your role is to ensure that you provide a safe, confidential, and nurturing environment for your leaders to talk openly about these challenges. Encourage your leaders to look honestly at their ministry and personal leadership and to name those things that aren't working or could be improved upon. Affirm their insights and lead them on to Question 4.

Question 4 - How Will you Tackle Those Challenges?

Question 4 is the ultimate test for a coach who struggles with wanting to be an expert instead of a guide! Often once the challenges have been named we want to jump in and start offering advice and solutions to our leaders. There are times when our insights are necessary but more often than not our leaders possess the wisdom they need to solve ministry challenges. This wisdom simply needs to be drawn out of them. Encourage your leaders to think through their challenges and to develop a plan of action to tackle those challenges. Ask them questions like: What would you like to see happen? What would need to take place in order for change to occur? Who might be able to help solve this problem? What steps can you begin taking to tackle this challenge?

The benefit of using questions to help your leaders develop action plans (rather than giving advice or naming solutions)

Skill Box - Basic Problem Solving

Use the following key questions and action plans to tackle ministry challenges.

STEP	KEY QUESTION	ACTION PLAN
Heart Check	Are my own emotions or interests affecting my perception of this challenge?	Spend some time in solitude praying and/or journaling about your perception of the challenge. Ask a wise and trusted friend to point out any blind spots in your perspective.
Prioritize	What is the most important challenge?	Brainstorm a list of all the ministry challenges you are facing. Prioritize this list and deal with one challenge at a time.
Core	What is at the core of this challenge?	Focus your attention on the cause of the challenge (not the symptoms). Discern what is at the root of the challenge.
Options	What are the options for solving this challenge?	Brainstorm a list of options. Do not evaluate the options at this point. Come up with as many options as possible.
Evaluate and Decide	Of all our options, what are the two or three best? Which option is best?	Narrow down your options. Pick the best option. Make sure everyone affected will agree to rally behind this option.
Roadmap	What steps do we need to take to tackle this challenge?	Outline a roadmap of steps that will take you from the challenge to the solution.
Act	What do I need to do now?	Start tackling the steps in your roadmap.
Reflect	What did I learn in tackling this challenge?	Spend time debriefing with your team.