

THRIVING CONGREGATIONS

EMPATHETIC LISTENING



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**THE VIBRANT FAITH THRIVING CONGREGATIONS ARE
GETTING READY TO INNOVATE**



AND WE'RE GOING TO GET READY BY LISTENING!



OFTEN CHURCHES AND OTHER ORGANIZATIONS INNOVATE LIKE THIS:

“Well, it seems great to me”

Of course it does, you made it.

If you shipped it to the world (or even showed it to a colleague) it might be because you liked it. You made it for yourself.

But if your music, your graphic design, your website—whatever your work is— isn't resonating with the market, it might be because you forgot to make it for them.

- Empathy is at the heart of design.
- What do people in this group think looks great? What do they need?

Make that.

...Seth Godin

BEFORE JESUS HEALED

HE LISTENED



**TO THE WOMAN AT THE WELL
TO BLIND BARTEMAUS
TO THE MAN BORN BLIND
TO ZACCHEUS**

WHY LISTEN?



BECAUSE WE NEED TO BE TRANSFORMED

From *The Innovative Church* by Scott Curmode. (Baker House, 2020)

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- Before we can invite people into the gospel story, we need to understand their story, what matters to them, what defines them.
- We are NOT listening for the issues with their morality or doctrine. We listen for what they think about before they go to sleep at night.
- Some issues are their aspirations, and some their fears. “**Longings and losses.**” The Western tradition describes these as “the human condition.” These are also called questions of identity, belonging and purpose.
- The Gospel is God’s hopeful response to our shared story of *longings and losses*, and the gospel is what turns our *longings and losses* into a shared story of hope.
- We listen for the *longings and losses* of the people entrusted to our care.

LONGING AND LOSSES QUESTIONS

You do not need to use all of these questions to hear people well.

3-4 questions in any group you are listening to is likely the max.

You can use these questions or add your own.



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- What are you hoping for?
 - What have you lost in the last year?
 - What are you grieving?
 - What are you celebrating?
 - What would you love to be able to do?
 - What are you hoping for?
 - What's one thing you longing for--for yourself? For your family?
 - (For the community) What changes in our community are you looking for?
 - How is God moving in your life (or in this community)?
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THREE SPACES FOR YOUR THRIVING CONGREGATION LISTENING



ONLINE

- Ask 5-10 people from your church to use the questions to ask their friends/followers about their longings and losses on their social media accounts.
- (In this process, you will find out what people at your church use what forms SM!).
- Ask your people who have volunteered to do this to return the responses (comments) they received after a week without names attached.

IN WORSHIP

When your people are gathering in person for worship again, create some time for distanced pods or groups of 4 and ask people at your church 2-3 of these same *“longing and losses”* questions.

Be sure to have a recorder in each group who writes down peoples' responses.

IN THE COMMUNITY—CHOOSE ONE

- Invite 5 people who live in the neighborhood around the church and hold a zoom conversation with them and ask them 2-3 questions about their *longings and losses*. Make sure someone is writing down their answers.
- Connect with 3-5 community or grassroots leaders in our community. Offer to buy them lunch. Ask them the *longing/losses* questions about your community. Make sure someone is writing down their answers.
- Ask 3-5 people from your church to invite their neighbors to a zoom lunch. Give them grub hub coupons to hand to their guests ahead of time. Ask them 2-3 of the *longing/losses* questions. Make sure that someone is writing down their answers.

**WHEN YOU HAVE FINISHED, GIVE THE RESPONSES
TO YOUR COACH, KEEPING THE THREE “SPACES”
SEPARATE.**

**VIBRANT FAITH WILL DO THE “THEME ANALYSIS”
FOR YOUR CHURCH.**

**YOU’LL USE THE RESULTS OF YOUR LISTENING TO
BEGIN THE PROCESS OF INNOVATING WITH
CHRISTIAN PRACTICES.**