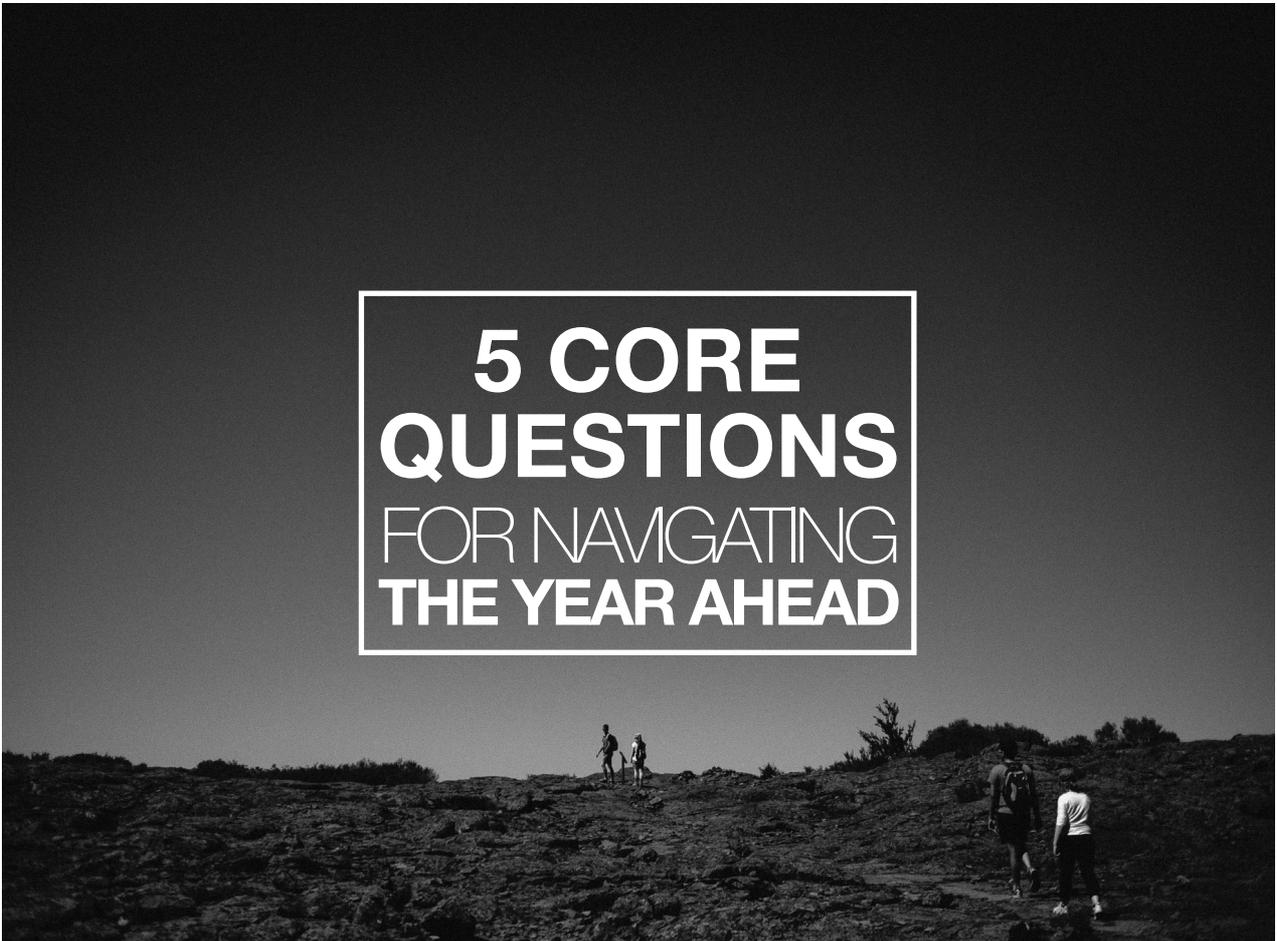


# LEADERSHIP SHORT



## 5 CORE QUESTIONS FOR NAVIGATING THE YEAR AHEAD

The principles below have been adapted from material in the 'Shift m2M' training manual. For more information on Shift m2M visit their website <http://www.movementbuilders.com.au>

Christmas is over, the New Year has begun, and quicker than you realise the restful period of summer will give way to the frenetic pace of a new year in ministry. Programs will start up again, people will return from leave, and pretty soon it's business as usual. I love the restful Christmas break, but my passion is ignited when I get caught up in mission and experience lives transformed. If you're anything like me, the great trap of a new year is to jump head first into the 'rapidly flowing river' of youth ministry without first surveying where you are about to jump. My heart wants to get on with the excitement of ministry, however, without first pausing to see what is ahead, I can quickly find myself in an unhealthy and dangerous place.

Ministry activity is easy to create. But a busy leader does not necessarily result in effective leadership, nor does a busy ministry necessarily create the environment for effective discipleship and life transformation. Jumping head first into the year ahead and simply 'making things happen' will inevitably lead to frustration, tiredness and disillusionment- never a good recipe for ministry effectiveness or long-term health. In order to create an effective ministry, we first need to ensure that we are aligned with what God is up to- this begins in the heart of the leader. This January, as you start a new year, find some space to be still, to listen and to reflect on what God is up to. Take time for a heart check and realignment- rekindle the

passion for Jesus before your passion for ministry takes you too far ahead.

Secondly, begin by asking the right questions. Before you plan a 'program' get the foundational framework questions right- this will help you know where you are going, why you are going that way and what you are doing as you go. Here's a great framework to get you started.

### 1. **PURPOSE: Why do we exist?**

- It is so important for a leader and ministry team to get this in their hearts and heads. Why do we do what we do? What is our unique calling and purpose? This is the 'mission' question. If you are leading a youth ministry perhaps you can brainstorm around this - why does the youth ministry of this church exist? Another great place to draw a clear picture is in the scriptures. Wrestle with some of the great passages of mission that Jesus speaks over his disciples. These will help you align with Jesus' greater mission to which the whole church is called.



**“Take time for a heart check and realignment- rekindle the passion for Jesus before your passion for ministry takes you too far ahead.”**

### 2. **PASSION: What is our motivation for what we do?**

- This question is perhaps more important than the first. Getting this is often what sustains us for the long haul. It is about passion, it is about capturing the 'why'. What is my/ our underlying motivation for ministry? There are a bunch of deceiving motivations out there- it can be about our pride, our self image, about other peoples perception of us, about proving ourselves. The wrong motivation leads to manipulation and abusive leadership that uses people to achieve our own purpose. Our motivation for ministry must find its foundation in this simple statement: 'Love God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength; and love your neighbour as yourself.' If we are not ultimately driven by a love for God then ministry will quickly lose its focus. If we are not driven equally by a love for the people we are serving they will easily become 'numbers' or 'customers' in our system. Ministry must be an act of love in both directions.

### 3. **PEOPLE: Who are those God has given us/ sent us to?**

- Knowing the people God has called us to serve and reach is vital. So often we know in a general sense- 'we are a youth ministry, we reach youth'. But such broad generalised categories can often result in us missing the unique calling our ministry has in the context God has placed us. Who are

these youth? What are they like? What are their challenges and issues? How does the Gospel of the Kingdom good news reach them in their place?

We so often look around us for a new ministry idea, something that is working brilliantly in another place to another group of people. When we find it, we bolt it onto our ministry hoping the results will follow. The reality is though, that this 'idea/ program/ initiative' was birthed out of a completely different environment from ours, for a different people to us. We need to know the unique people God has invited us to reach if we are to be effective. How well do you know the people God has given you? How well are you able to love them with the love of Jesus if you do not know them? Spending time defining the 'PEOPLE' will mean you know what fits and what doesn't and will give you great insight into developing a ministry for your unique place and time.

#### **4. PROCESS: How will we achieve our purpose?**

- Although ministry is always driven by the Spirit, and we are called to be on Gods agenda, having a well thought out process and strategy is an important part of developing an effective ministry. The process is a tool to help us get where we believe God is leading us. It must never become the rule. If, as a ministry you can define clearly why you exist and what you are called to do in the lives of the people you are reaching, then you can begin to think strategically about the process that will help you get there. If we are called to 'make disciples of all nations', then how do we go about doing that where we are? How will we help a young person:

i) Connect with our ministry or community of faith?

ii) Experience the good news of Jesus and the community he creates?

iii) Begin the journey of faith and grow to become a mature disciple of Jesus who impacts their world as a Kingdom Influencer?

Every activity we do in ministry achieves something. Make sure you think about what your activity is meant to achieve, how effective it is and if there are ways you could do it better. We all have limited resources- time, people, energy, space, finance etc. So make sure everything you do this year is strategically intended to achieve the purpose for which you believe God has called the ministry.

#### **5. POTENTIAL**

- Finally, create space to dream. We all begin ministry with excitement and anticipation with what God will achieve as we surrender our life to his purposes. Sadly, we often become discouraged along the way with the reality of what we experience. The start of a new year is the perfect time to get excited once again with what God could do as we surrender ourselves to His Spirit and follow after Jesus. Don't be afraid to name the dreams, to talk about the hopes, to think about number, outcomes & goals. One of the most exciting parts of ministry is seeing where we have come from - setting goals and dreams are an important part of this. Again, it is vital that we don't allow our goals and dreams to drive ministry or to become 'laws' that we are obliged to fulfill. Rather let them become an exciting hope that drives us forward to the impossible, believing that in the hands of an almighty God we can together achieve *'immeasurably more than we could ever ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us... for His glory.'* (Eph 3:20)