

coaching4 clergy



Specialized Training for
Pastors, Church Leaders and Coaches

What in God's name are we doing?

Strategic planning is a theme that often shows up at this time of year. In fact, as I write this article, I'm noticing that I've had conversations about this topic three times already this week.

People all of a sudden realize that it's Fall, "back to school time," except they don't have a clue what they're coming back to. So they ask me to help them map out the next 1-3 years or so, because then they'll *really* have a handle on things.

As I've been coaching pastors and church leaders in response to this request, a new distinction has been coming up between strategic *planning* and strategic *preparing*.

When I ask church leaders what they're struggling with, they say that they get one or two steps planned but then get stuck. And often by the time they get to the second step, everything has changed at their church anyway. It's almost as if they can't plan because they don't know what's going to happen next.

Exactly.

It seems the common approach among pastors and Christian leaders is to develop a strategic plan and then pray, "God, please bless the plans that we've created." Too often, that is the mindset of strategic planning.

I'd like to suggest a different approach called strategic *preparing*. The mindset and prayer of strategic preparing is: "God, what are your plans and how can we join you?"

In this approach, we are seeking greater clarity about God's plans and are asking the question: "How do we join in with what God is already doing?" This is the mindset of strategic *preparing*, asking: "How can we prepare ourselves to respond to what God is already doing?"

Planning is an outside thing, it's the external. It's buying into that myth that if we can set things up carefully enough, we can actually control what's going to happen.



Being prepared is internal, an inside thing. It's changing the culture of an organization to be fluid, flexible and responsive. It's about cultivating a sense of anticipation to see God's plans revealed, instead of gripping so tightly onto our own plans. How freeing!

In the spirit of **changing your church by changing your questions**, here's another way to illustrate this distinction.

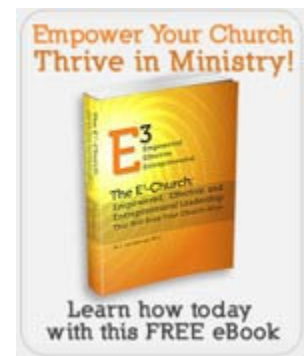
"What in God's name are we doing?"

You might read that as casual slang, almost a curse. But now, look at it again from the perspective of a sincere wish to tune into God's plan. It becomes an entirely different question!

"What, in God's name, are we doing?"

I'll leave you with these other powerful questions to ask at your church, in order to transform your mindset from strategic planning to strategic preparing:

- What in the world is God up to?
- What is God inviting us to be a part of this year?
- What are the 3-4 things we can do to step further into what God's up to?
- What's the risk we're willing to take, in order to give up our plans and be prepared for whatever God has planned?
- How can we further discern what God is inviting us to be part of?
- What does being *strategically prepared* look like for us? Our church? Or, our association or conference?



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