

Something to Talk About

A conversation guide for church leaders

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I Wish I Said That

I love proverbs. I love pithy statements. They make me stop and think. I think that's one reason I love the Old Testament book of Proverbs - a chapter a day of pithy commentary about life and the people around me – and about me.

As most of us church leaders are still deeply involved in sorting things out related to dealing with COVID19, I'm offering a simple article this month. I am sharing with you a few of my favorite quotes – things I wish I was smart enough to have said - pithy comments about life and leadership. Pick one or two that might pertain to the situation you and your congregation are in and spend a few minutes thinking within your team about something other than Zoom, YouTube, Facebook, and live-streaming versus taped delay debates. It will be refreshing. The quote and source¹ will be in italic font with a question or two to spur your conversation. A good quote is something to talk about.

- *“Rank does not confer privilege or give power. It imposes responsibility.” (Peter Drucker).* Share a story from your life about a leader that did not get this and a leader who lived this out. What differentiated how it felt working for each of them? What makes it hard to lead from this perspective? How do we focus on responsibility rather than power?
- *“People do what they do because it works. When it stops working, they stop doing it.” (Jack Harris)* Are there things that people do that annoy us? Is this why church bullies so often get their way? What can we appropriately do so that the negative things they do no longer work for them? How might we as leaders address sinful behavior in the church so that it no longer works for them?
- *“If I'd asked people what they wanted, they would have asked for a faster horse.” (Henry Ford)* When should we ask the church what they want and how much weight should we give their answers? What types of changes should we pursue because it will help the church accomplish its mission even though it may not be what people want?
- *“Encouraging and fixing are not the same thing.” (Rick Langeloh)* How do church leaders discern when to encourage and when to fix? Stereotypically speaking, how does a husband

¹ Relax. Some of the quote's sources are attributed to various people or in doubt and may be worded differently in different sources – I'm focusing on the statement, not its source or its verbatim accuracy in this article.

know if his wife wants to be encouraged or wants help fixing something in her life? Create your own stereotypical question here.

- *“All organizations are perfectly aligned to get the results they get.” (Arthur W. Jones)* What in this church is not working well? How might our culture, systems and behaviors be “perfectly aligned” to produce this undesired result? Is this inadvertent or intentional? How might we realign to get the results we are looking for?
- *“Let’s-not-reinvent-the-wheel thinking may prevent us from ever having a better wheel.” (Bob Osborne)* Yes, I actually did say that in a staff meeting. I became tired of hearing that phrase whenever we began looking for a novel solution to an age-old problem. It stopped creativity and innovation in their tracks and often resulted in our being stuck in place – for a long time. When was the last time you heard or said this in your team? What happened to the creativity in the room? How might we move beyond this? Should we retire this phrase? When should we just do the tried-and-true responses to things rather than looking for innovation?
- *“People are like bicycles. If they are not moving in a particular direction, they fall over.” (Albert Einstein)* In what particular direction do we want this church to move? Are we actually moving that direction? Are people falling over? How often and how clearly do we communicate among ourselves and the church what that direction is? How do we help those that have fallen get up?

The EFCA West team is ready to assist you as you navigate this COVID19 season. Let us know if we can serve you in any way. We have several helpful resources posted on our Website (go to efcawest.org), our Facebook pages and our YouTube channel. Please check them out. Let’s keep the conversation going.

Let us know if we can help and how your conversation goes.

Contact Bob Osborne by e-mail at bob.osborne@efca.org.

This is one of a series of articles intended to facilitate and guide church leaders’ conversations about significant issues that often are not talked about among pastors, boards, and church leadership teams.

Prior articles can be found at <https://efcawest.efcadistrict.org/church-leadership/> or <https://efcawest.efcadistrict.org/something-to-talk-about-archives/>.