**BOBB BIEHL’s PROFOUND QUESTIONS**

**I I could answer one question for you, knowing you would get the right answer, what would your question be?**

**To identify and articulate your Dream, ask yourself, “What makes you weep with emotion or pound the table with excitement?**

**If you and I could sit down together on a park bench on a sunny spring day and talk for an hour about any situation or problem or risk—anything you’re trying to think through and analyze and gain perspective on—what single situation would you want to discuss?**

With that situation focused clearly in your mind, let’s work through the questions I would ask to help you.

**WHAT? WHEN? WHO? HOW? WHERE? HOW MUCH?**

Rudyard Kipling called them his “six trusted men”—the questions who, what, when, where, why, and how.  As a reporter and writer, Kipling was speaking from a journalistic perspective rather than a leadership perspective, but his questions are helpful for us as well—though we might want to ask them in a different order.

Start with ***What?*** Can you state, in just a sentence, what is the situation you want to think through today?

***Why*** would you like to think it through? Why is it important to you? Why has this situation developed?

***When*** did it start developing? When do you need to solve it? When do you need to deal with it? When do you need to make some changes?

***Who*** are the primary people involved? Who caused the situation? Who is involved with it? Who is the beneficiary of it? Who benefits most? Who takes the brunt of it? Who is most affected by it?

***How***do we change it? How do we make a difference? How do we bring appropriate resources to bear?

And ***Where***? Is space or place even important? Is it important to do it here in town, or maybe in a different state, or at your house or my house? Where should we do it? Whatever we do to correct the situation, how does “where” fit in?

Another important question I always add is ***How much?***How much will it take to correct the situation? How much money? How much time? How much energy? What amount of resources will it take?

As you can see, it’s impossible to think through any situation effectively without questions. It isn’t just hard; it’s actually impossible. You must ask questions like What? Why? When? Who? How? Where? and How much?

That’s why the better you become at asking questions, the better you are at thinking through anything, anywhere, at any time, for the rest of your life.

**COMPARED TO WHAT?**

A second line of questioning I would have you consider is **“Compared to what?” *Nothing is meaningful without a context.*** So what is the context of the situation you are dealing with? What are the comparisons? What other situations are like it? What have you experienced like it before? What are the facts? And how do you compare those facts with facts in other parts of your life?

A person may be happy making five dollars an hour until he learns that someone next to him is making six dollars for doing the same thing. Now he has a different context for evaluating his situation.

A senior executive once said to me, *“Bobb, we’re $50,000 in the red this month.”* I think he expected me to turn pale, but instead I calmly asked, *“Compared to what?”*

He answered, “What do you mean, *‘Compared to what?’ We’re $50,000 in the red this month!”*

*“Well,”* I said again, *“compared to what? If you were projected to be $100,000 in the red, then you’re actually in great shape now! If you expected to be $50,000 in the red, you’re right on target. And if you were supposed to be $100,000 in the black, you’re in deep trouble.* ***So…compared to what?”***

At that he answered, *“Well, our projection was that we’re sup-posed to be $46,000 in the red.”*

*“Then relax,”* I said. *“What else do you have to talk about today?”*

Maybe you too can relax as you gain the perspective of context. What’s the context of the situation you’re dealing with today—the broader pictures?

For example, what difference will this situation make ten years from now? In other words, what is the context of time and how will time affect it?

What is the context of money? How much would the problem cost to correct, and how does that amount compare with all the money you made this year, or all the money you’ll make in your lifetime?

**WHAT’S MISSING?**

The third line of questioning focuses on these two words: **What’s missing?** Frankly, I believe our education system today fails to teach us this profound question, but leads us instead to be analytical only about what we see.

What missing information is making it difficult for you to get a clear understanding of your situation? What facts do you need to gather to help you see it more clearly?

This is one of the hardest questions to remember to ask yourself, but it frequently unlocks solutions for problems that otherwise just can’t be solved.

When any situation has you confused, simply asking *“What’s missing?”* often leads to a major breakthrough.

**WHAT IS THE IDEAL IN THIS SITUATION?**

Another question you’ll want to use over and over again is ***“What is the ideal?”***It’s actually an “ideal” question—it fits nearly everything.

In the situation you’re dealing with—what would be the ideal solution? What would be the outcome if everyone involved acted in an ideal manner? If you had the ideal amount of money? The ideal amount of equipment? The ideal facility? The ideal everything? Ideally, what would we have that we don’t have now? And how much of that is truly critical?

***Develop an insatiable commitment to seeking the ideal.***Build this into your thinking so that until you reach the ideal, you will always have a slight dissatisfaction in your mind.

Until you recognize what the ideal is, you don’t know precisely the distance between where you are and where you’d like to be or could be.

**What would my five closest friends advise me?**

If you asked your five closest friends to help you deal with this situation, what advice would they offer? Often, just imagining their response gives you needed perspective.

**BLIND SPOTS**

Ask your three most trusted friends ... "What do you see as my three main blind spots?"

Your strengths are what you build on ... but your blind spots are where you are vulnerable.

**IF – BEFORE YOU DIE**

If you could only accomplish three measurable things before you die,   
what three measurable things would you accomplish? Take TWO MINUTES right now and write the three things down. You now have far greater “LIFE FOCUS”!

**ELEPHANTS IN THE ROOM**

**What are the “ *elephants in the room* ” in your world today?***(The “obvious to everyone” realities we would rather not admit exist)*

**"AT THIS PHASE OF LIFE..."**

All planning begins with the invisible phrase “At this phase of life ...”

Mid 20's with small children is one phase.

Mid 40's with teenagers is a totally different phase.

Mid 60's empty nester’s is a totally different phase

Mid 80's is a totally different phase.

Don’t forget to preface all of your planning with the phrase...

“At this phase of my / our / our team’s life... “

**IN MY IDEAL WORLD...**

COMPLETE THIS SENTENCE: “In my ideal world I would have the opportunity to \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. This is also a great question to ask a person you’re interviewing for a position, to find her/his dreams. It can also be a great question to ask a spouse, adult children, parents, and other family members.

**IF**

If you were made president of your organization today, what are the first three things you would do? Why would you do them?

**NEW POSITION**

Ask this question when considering/accepting any new position.

“What do you really want to preserve, avoid, and achieve?”

**PERSONAL FOCUS**

To cut through the fog in your thinking today, fill in these two blanks.

At the bottom line what I’m really trying to do in life is summarized by the phrase ...

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ ING \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ WHAT / WHO

*(e.g. Teaching Children ... Strengthening Christian Leaders ... Baking Bread ... Growing Wheat, etc.)*

**PERSONAL GROWTH**

If you were to take one person of your choice to lunch this month as a personal growth experience, who would it be?

**POTENTIAL**

What % of my potential am I actually using at the moment? What three

things would let me move toward using 100%?

**PROGRESS**

if you’re sitting in the same chair three years from today , what has to happen to feel you have made great progress?

**TOPIC**

If you had to speak, write, discuss only one topic for the rest of your life every single night, what would that topic be?

**WORK TODAY**

On a scale of 1 – 10  *(10 is extremely happy and 1 is extremely unhappy)*

How happy are you at your work at this phase of your life?

If your rating was 1-5, you’r in the RED zone. Re-define what you do, get re-assigned to another part of the firm, or resign to find where you really fit elsewhere!

If your rating was 6-7, you’re in the YELLOW zone, you don’t know if this is where you belong long term or not. So set 3 measurable priorities for yourself for 30 days, 60 days and 90 days.  Show them to your team leader.  If he / she agree that this is what you are to do, complete the priorities.  You can then raise your self-rated score up into the 8–10 category.

If your rating was 8 – 9 – 10, you’re in the GREEN zone. Now you ask yourself 2 specific questions: (1) Of all the things I do well, what do I do best ? *(My single greatest strength)*? And (2) How can I spend far more of my time in my strength area and far less of my time in my “growth areas”? Or areas where someone else could do the work 80% as well as I could?”

Get in the GREEN.  Stay in the GREEN.  Build an ALL-GREEN team around you.

**REPORTING QUESTIONS**

 Once your priorities (measurable goals, problems, opportunities) are clear, these reporting questions will keep you and your team focused on the boulders:

**What DECISIONS do you need from me?**

**What PROBLEMS are keeping you from your priorities?**

**What PLANS are you making (which haven’t been discussed)?**

**What PROGRESS have you made?**

**On a scale of 1-10, how are you PERSONALLY?  Why?**

*(Optional)*  **How can I PRAY for you?**

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| --- |
| **SINGLE BOULDER PIORITY**   Is there ONE program, product or idea that could / should have priority over  everything else we are doing?  If this one goes well, everything else gets better.  This should be your focus. |

**SINGLE WORD FOCUS**

The single-word-focus is one of my most trusted “fog-cutters”!

What single word captures the essence of your life’s direction, organization’s focus, next year’s focus, sermon, speech, chapter, or presentation?

For example, when the founder of the Salvation Army, General William Booth, was offered one word to go worldwide via telegraph, he simply sent, “Others.”

**UNIQUE MARKET POSITION**

What is our unique market position? What can we do that others can’t?

How can we maximize our positive uniqueness?

**FOCUS**

What would you do ... if you knew you only had:

30 years   
10 years   
1 year   
1 month   
1 week   
1 day   
1 hour   
1 minute ... to live?

What do your answers tell you about what you should be doing today?

**PERSONAL REFLECTIONS**

“How did I come to be who I think am?

“Who have been the most influential leaders in my personal development over the past \_\_\_ years?”