

Spiritual Guidance, Reveal and HighQuest

The latest book from the Willow Creek Reveal project is called *Focus*. In this book Cally Parkinson looks at two critical issues: what people want/need from their church and what people want/need from the senior pastor.

Through their Reveal Survey, Willow Creek concluded that what people want and what they need from their church are highly correlated. They discovered that spiritual guidance and accountability are the church's most significant drivers of spiritual growth and they are both wanted and needed. This is true in every stage of spiritual maturity.

Focus breaks down Spiritual Guidance into 5 practical components. Given in random order, churches provide spiritual guidance in the following ways:

1. *Helps me develop a personal relationship with Christ*
2. *Provides a clear pathway that helps guide my spiritual growth*
3. *Challenges me to grow and take next steps*
4. *Church leaders model and consistently reinforce how to grow spiritually*
5. *Helps me understand the Bible in greater depth*

Two additional needs emerged as highly important.

6. *Helps me feel like I belong*
7. *Encourages me to take personal responsibility for my own growth*

Out of these seven needs, only one did not appear high on people's "want list". You guessed it, #7. This is the one issue that people do not identify as a critical want, but it is essential for spiritual maturity. It is much like vegetables in a child's diet, essential but not desired!

***Focus* findings and the HighQuest series.**

There is a high degree of correlation between what the Reveal Survey found and the design of the *HighQuest* series. It is interesting to us that these two projects were started about the same time and although independent from each other, they are complementary. One identifies the issues and the other provides a resource that addresses the issues. Let's take a look at this correlation.

1. Helps me develop a personal relationship with Christ

HighQuest was designed to be relational and Christ centered. Although doctrine is important, the focus of *HighQuest* is Christ. Each of the three tracks in the series looks at Christ from a different vantage point: Knowing Christ, Reflecting Christ, and Reproducing Christ. The primary personal practice that is used (called an Appointment with God) is the discipline of consistently meeting Christ in His Word and reflecting on what He says regarding Himself and our lives.

2. Provides a clear pathway for guiding my spiritual growth

People want to be pointed down the right path on their spiritual journey. If it is not clear where they are to go, they will be hesitant to take the next steps; clarity is both needed and wanted.

HighQuest identifies the three pursuits of a follower of Christ. They are not courses to be completed but three dimensions for walking the path of our spiritual journey. These three pursuits are called “tracks” in the *HighQuest* series.

Track I: Knowing Christ Deeply (Upward pursuit)

Track II: Reflecting Christ Authentically (Inward pursuit)

Track III: Reproducing Christ Intentionally (Outward pursuit)

3. Challenges me to grow and take next steps

Each unit in the *HighQuest* series fits on one of these tracks. When the series is completed for the men, there will be three units in each track from which to select. This gives the leader the option to be both comprehensive and flexible as he challenges men to take the next step in their spiritual journeys.

For example, after completing a unit of *HighQuest*, men may choose to go to a new track or to do another unit in the track they are currently in. Since each person travels at a different pace along their spiritual journey, *HighQuest* gives the flexibility to adapt the pace to the needs of the men. Using the *HighQuest* grid this means that some men may go from Ia: His Works to IIa: His Image; other men may go from Ia His Works to Ib: His Ways.

4. Church leaders model and consistently reinforce how to grow spiritually

Coaching and modeling are key elements for ministering in the lives of people. We would do well to learn from the old adage, “More is caught than taught.” For example, the key to Ezra’s successful leadership is found in Ezra 7:10, “For Ezra had set his heart to study the law of the Lord, and to practice it, and to teach His statutes and ordinances in Israel.” Ezra studied the Word, obeyed the Word, and THEN taught the Word. This should be our pattern, as well.

The *HighQuest* Forum is an environment where the role of the leader is not to be a teacher but to be a coach and a model. It is a life to life involvement in which the Forum leader demonstrates the very things he hopes to build into the men in his group. Modeling becomes the primary method for conveying principles as opposed to an impersonal instructional approach.

5. Helps me understand the Bible in greater depth

The *HighQuest* series helps men get into the Bible. Each day is spent in reflecting on the words of God. It is easy in our world of prolific communication to look at everything but the Scripture. We read books, blogs, and emails with increasing intensity and even books about the Bible, but the Bible is conspicuously absent. This happens even though Scripture is the one source that is timeless and true.

Even before the internet, Paul reminded Timothy of the danger, “Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, handling accurately the word of truth” (2 Tim. 2:15).

In each unit of *HighQuest*, men are reflecting on fifty to sixty passages of Scripture. If a man does 3 units of *HighQuest*, he will personally reflect on 150-180 passages: thoughtfully considering the Scripture for himself rather than relying on what others say about it. The assumption behind *HighQuest* is that as a person is spending time in God's Word, God will meet him and the Holy Spirit will guide and give understanding.

6. Helps me feel like I belong

One of the essential elements for spiritual growth is an environment where we are accepted for who we are and where we are. We need to know we are significant, important, and valued. Often men have not had that experience in large groups. If you are not present in a group of 15, no one cares. But if in a group of 3-4 men, you are not present; it makes a difference.

A *HighQuest* Forum of 3-4 men is a safe place where men can be honest, transparent and challenged. It is an environment where men can share more deeply than news, weather and sports. As they explore the Scripture together and share their journeys, a community is developed that gives them a sense of belonging as well as challenges them in their spiritual growth.

7. Encourages me to take personal responsibility for my own growth

This is the one need that is not a high want or desire for most people. We need to be equipped and challenged to take personal responsibility for our own spiritual journey, but we tend to abdicate it to the church. The resulting complacent attitude is often unwisely facilitated by the church. Sometimes this happens because teachers need pupils. When many of our church leaders are gifted as teachers, they tend to keep people as pupils, but people need coaches more than just teachers. The focus of a coach is to develop people by showing them how, telling them why, and encouraging them as they do it.

HighQuest is designed to teach men to feed themselves on the Word. It is not a traditional Bible study of questions and answers. *HighQuest* is inductive rather than deductive. It teaches men how to use a spiritual knife and fork as they delve into the Scripture. As they learn the skills of reflection, meditation, Scripture memory, and application, they are equipped to face any issue they will encounter along their journey. They gain confidence that they can go to the Scripture and hear from God.

HighQuest teaches necessary self help skills in the context of life issues. The life issues are many, but the critical skills are few. Learning these skills and taking personal responsibility to practice them doesn't come easily or quickly. It requires practice, time, and accountability in order for men to turn these disciplines into habits that are both a delight and beneficial. The wonderful thing about spiritual disciplines is that once they become habits, we focus less on the mechanics and more on the outcomes.