

5 QUESTIONS TO DETERMINE THE NEEDS OF YOUR SCATTERED CONGREGATION

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Among the difficulties congregations are finding in the socially distanced church is how hard it is to really know what each other needs.

It's hard to get to these sensitive subjects when we are having fewer conversations and without the same depth of personal, face-to-face conversations.

In most cases, the reason we don't know each other's needs today is that we haven't asked. Even for those who we see on social media, their posts and tweets don't paint the whole picture. We don't actually know much of what people are facing.

As we begin to move toward reopening our churches, it's important to increase communication on the logistical aspects of that move. LifeWay Research developed a free [survey](#) your church can use to gauge the thoughts of your congregation.

It is even more important, however, to intentionally increase communication on where members are at personally. Whether your church chooses to do this in survey-form (see the free download at the end of this article), or through phone calls, we must continue to bear one another's burdens regardless of the physical distance we must maintain.

If your church asks these in survey form, be sure to communicate that as needs are shared, the responsibility to meet them will also be shared. Jesus never intended for the pastor to meet all the needs (even all the spiritual needs) in a local congregation.

Here are five open-ended questions to help pastors, deacons, and small group leaders start important conversations around real needs to equip your church to meet those needs together.

1. IN WHAT WAYS HAVE YOU EXPERIENCED LOSS DURING THE CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC? WHERE ARE YOU IN TERMS OF DEALING WITH THIS?

People in your congregation may have lost jobs, lost income, and even lost loved ones to COVID-19. But almost everyone has lost special events, occasions, and experiences. They may have been pushed out of a routine they enjoyed. If they're honest, they may feel they've lost their identity, their purpose, their security, or their future.

These are losses that need to be grieved, and grieving can be so much easier with a friend. In some cases, people may need professional help working through these losses. Your church needs to be ready to refer someone to a professional therapist or psychiatrist when a person's resiliency is low or there are signs of mental illness.

When it feels like we have no bearings, we need to be reminded of the standing stones we have set up in the past as markers of God's faithfulness. We need to review God's promises that apply to us today, and we need to look ahead to the future hope we have in Christ.

2. WHAT PHYSICAL NEEDS DO YOU HAVE OR THINK YOU MAY SOON HAVE (BE HONEST)?

Most Americans have not experienced a lack for life's necessities of food and shelter. Admitting you have reached or may soon reach a point of need is hard. Our churches need to be a place where we can readily admit we cannot do everything on our own. Sometimes that includes providing for our families.

Those who administer benevolence funds in churches should expect a wave of needs to be arriving soon. The better they understand the actual needs that are emerging, the better stewards they can be of the funds they have to meet tangible needs within the church.

3. HOW ARE YOUR RELATIONSHIPS WITH FAMILY AND THOSE CLOSE TO YOU?

For some, social distancing has drastically increased their time with immediate family. For others, it has meant separation from close relationships. Either can create relational stress.

Our relational skills don't suddenly improve, and past problems do not simply evaporate in a pandemic. Many individuals will need help with communication, conflict management, and healing.

4. WHAT HAVE YOUR CONVERSATIONS WITH GOD BEEN LIKE LATELY? WHAT ARE YOU QUESTIONING? WHAT ARE YOU ASKING FOR? WHAT HAS HE BEEN TEACHING YOU?

It can be dangerous to ask an opinion question about how someone is doing spiritually. Our perspective on where we stand can so quickly get off from God's plumb line. Our opinion may not align with God's Word and may not be anywhere near what God sees as He examines our heart.

When you have the opportunity, it's wise to assess where members stand on important [signposts](#) found in Scripture. However, that would be a full survey on its own.

But a question like this can still reveal a lot. Look to see if individuals are even talking with God. Are they turning toward Him or away from Him? Are they asking honest questions of God or are they stepping into the dangerous place of questioning His love?

5. WHAT GIFTS OR RESOURCES DO YOU HAVE THAT YOU THINK GOD MAY WANT YOU TO USE TO HELP OTHERS? WHAT OPPORTUNITIES HAS GOD ALREADY GIVEN YOU?

If we believe in God's design for the church to truly function as a body, then we must believe that every believer is being equipped by the Holy Spirit to help the body. This covers the entire array of needs that likely will surface in these conversations.

Especially in this time of heightened needs, the Holy Spirit is raising up people to encourage others, leaders, people with knowledge and wisdom, people able to give and to serve.

Download this [free survey from LifeWay Research](#) that includes these questions to help you determine your congregation's needs.

Previously, LifeWay Research released a [free survey](#) on gauging the opinions of your congregation on reopening the church building and resuming services.

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