

FOR PRODUCERS & HOSTS

Interviewer Question Guide

Thirteen questions Pastor Jared answers particularly well, with full sample answers so producers can pre-brief hosts. Every answer may be paraphrased or quoted.

QUESTION 01**What is a “Lazarus culture,” and how do you know when you’re leading one?**

SAMPLE ANSWER Picture a team that still shows up on time, still hits most of its numbers, and has quietly stopped believing anything will actually change. That’s a Lazarus culture. It isn’t dead. It’s dormant. You know you’re in one when the meetings feel heavy, decisions you already made keep getting re-decided, and the same few problems circle for months with no resolution. The name comes from John 11. Lazarus had been in the tomb four days, and everyone standing there had already made their peace with the loss. Most declining cultures are exactly that. Alive enough to bury, not dead enough to walk away from. And they’re all waiting on the same thing: a leader with enough authority and enough love to call them out.

QUESTION 02**You spent 20 years in executive leadership before writing this book. What made you write it now?**

SAMPLE ANSWER For years I kept having the same conversation in rooms that had nothing to do with each other. A church board on a Tuesday night. A CEO’s leadership team on Wednesday. My own dinner table on Thursday. Different stakes, but the same three questions underneath all of it. How do I say the hard thing without losing the person? How do I get everyone actually pulling in one direction? And how do I become the kind of leader whose culture I’d want my own kids to catch? Once I realized a pastor, a CEO, and a parent were all asking those exact three questions, I couldn’t unsee it. This book is my answer to all three, and the answer turned out to be the same eight practices in every room.

QUESTION 03**What is the single most common leadership mistake you see across pastors, executives, and parents?**

SAMPLE ANSWER They try to fix a culture by adding to it. A new program at the church. A new initiative at the office. A new activity on the family calendar. Adding feels like leadership, because it’s visible and it’s fast. But you don’t build culture by adding. You build it by practicing. A dying culture with a fuller calendar is still a dying culture. It just looks busier on the way down. That’s the whole thesis of the book in one sentence.

QUESTION 04**You have a contrarian take on the church growth industry. Explain.**

SAMPLE ANSWER The church growth industry sells programs to churches that are declining, and declining churches are the easiest customers in the world, because they're scared. But here's what I've watched for 20 years. A declining church almost never has a program deficit. It has a culture deficit. The people are tired, the trust is thin, and no amount of new programming fixes tired and thin. You just hand the decline a nicer brochure. Fix the culture and you'll need half the programs you thought you did. Add programs to a broken culture and you'll burn out the few healthy people you have left. That's expensive, and the people you can least afford to lose are the ones who pay for it.

QUESTION 05**Walk me through the Grace and Truth Matrix with an example from your own church.**

SAMPLE ANSWER The Grace and Truth Matrix says every leader is running one of four cultures, depending on how much grace and how much truth they actually bring. High truth and low grace burns people out. High grace and low truth lets them coast. Low on both is quiet decline. High grace and high truth is the only one that grows people. Here's a real one from my own leadership. I had a staff member whose work had been slipping for six months, and I'd said nothing, because I told myself I was being gracious. I wasn't. I was being a coward, and the whole team was paying for it. High grace and high truth meant sitting down, naming the specific behaviors I'd actually watched, owning that I'd let it slide far too long, and building a concrete path forward that same afternoon. That person is still with us and thriving.

QUESTION 06**The Peace Index measures something most teams don't measure. Why should they?**

SAMPLE ANSWER Most teams measure output, because output is easy to count. The Peace Index measures the condition of the people producing the output, which is harder to count and matters more. A team can hit every number for about 18 months on adrenaline and fear before someone important quits or breaks. By the time attrition shows up in your reports, the damage is already a year old. I would rather take the temperature of the room every week than read the autopsy every quarter. Peace isn't a soft metric. It's the leading indicator that tells you which way the numbers are about to move, because they always follow the people.

QUESTION 07

You commissioned a 1,000-respondent field survey called the Culture Resurrection Index before writing the book. What did it find that surprised you the most?

SAMPLE ANSWER That the gaps were identical across people who would never compare notes. We surveyed a thousand pastors, executives, and parents, and underneath all of it, the same three weaknesses kept showing up. Almost no one had a repeatable way to give hard feedback. Almost no one had a shared vision they'd actually said out loud and agreed on together. And almost no one had a practice for modeling the culture they wanted instead of just wishing for it. A senior pastor, a CFO, and a mom of three, same three holes. That's the moment I stopped thinking of this as a church book or a business book. Those three gaps are just human, and the eight frameworks exist to close them.

QUESTION 08

What did seminary not teach you that you now spend most of your time teaching?

SAMPLE ANSWER Seminary taught me to build a sermon. It never taught me to run a staff meeting where something hard has to be said. I can work through a passage in the original language. No one ever showed me how to tell a volunteer leader that they've quietly become the problem, in a way that keeps the person and fixes the problem. That's the gap I live in now. The message from the stage is maybe 20% of what forms a church's culture. The other 80% is the system around it, the meetings, the feedback, the way you handle bad news on a Monday. Seminary spends almost all of its time on the 20%.

QUESTION 09

What is the one framework a listener could apply this week, before they've read the book?

SAMPLE ANSWER C.O.R.E. Feedback. It's four steps, and any leader can run it in their next one-on-one. Call It: name the specific thing you actually observed, not a vague feeling. Own It: say your part in the situation first, because you almost always have one. Respond: build the next step together instead of handing down a verdict. Execute: agree on what happens next, and then actually follow up. Most feedback fails because it's one vague person unloading on another vague person with no plan attached. Call it, own it, respond, execute. Four words that turn the conversation every leader dreads into the one that actually changes something.

QUESTION 10**Who is Leading Lazarus NOT for?**

SAMPLE ANSWER It's not for the leader who wants a memoir. I'm not famous, and my story isn't the point. It's not for the leader who wants to feel inspired for a weekend and change nothing on Monday. And honestly, it's not for the leader who's convinced the next conference will fix what the last five didn't. This is a working book. It has homework. If you don't want to be handed anything you actually have to do, this one will annoy you, and that's okay. There are plenty of books that will let you off easier.

QUESTION 11**You've said pastors don't leave over theology, they leave over culture. Defend that.**

SAMPLE ANSWER The Culture Resurrection Index found that 82% of pastors have seriously considered leaving vocational ministry in the last five years. Of those, 74% named culture as the primary reason. Only 8% named compensation. Theology didn't even crack the top five. Pastors don't wake up one day and stop believing in Jesus. They wake up exhausted by a board that won't align, a staff they were never trained to lead, and a Sunday that shows up every 72 hours no matter how the last one went. They don't lose their faith. They lose their team, and then they lose heart. That's a culture problem, and culture problems are fixable. That's the whole reason I wrote this.

QUESTION 12**What would you say to a leader who's been in the tomb for a while and is wondering if it's worth calling the stone away one more time?**

SAMPLE ANSWER Read John 11 slowly. Lazarus didn't climb out of that tomb because he dug deep and tried harder. He was dead. He came out because someone with authority stood outside a sealed grave that everyone had given up on and called him by name. If you're the leader, you're the one standing outside the tomb. Your team can't call themselves out of it. Somebody has to be willing to name the death out loud and then call the thing forward anyway. It might as well be you. That isn't a burden. That's the entire job.

QUESTION 13**The book hit #1 on Amazon in three categories in its first weeks. What do you make of that?**

SAMPLE ANSWER Honestly, it caught me off guard, and it humbled me. I didn't write this to hit a list. Number one is not the point, and it was never the goal. But here is what it tells me. There are a lot more tired leaders out there than anyone wants to admit, and they are hungry for something they can actually use on Monday, not just feel good about on Sunday. The ranking is not a trophy. It is a signal that the pain is real and widespread, and that people are ready to do the work. If being number one for a few weeks puts these eight frameworks in front of one more leader who was about to quit, then it did its job. The credit goes to the readers who told a friend. That is how culture spreads, and apparently it is how books spread too.

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