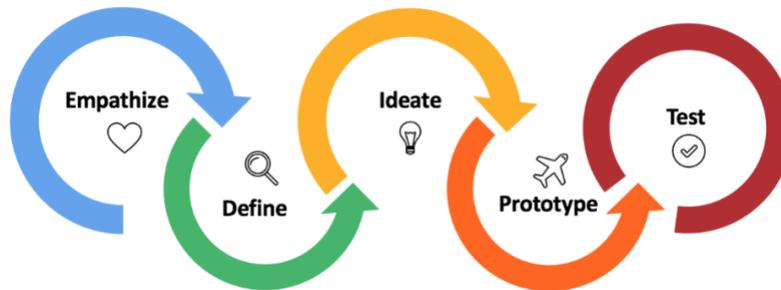


## Step One to Human-Centered Design or Incarnational Innovation: To Empathize

*How does it feel to experience the unspoken realities of someone's life- to walk in their shoes, to feel with their heart, to see with their eyes?*



### What are Empathy Interviews? (By Franc Lucas with adaptations)

Being on the receiving end of empathy is to feel heard. To feel heard is to feel valued. An empathy interview is about active listening and active hearing. The following points highlight their importance:

- Empathy interviews allow your target audience (Example: Unaffiliated church members you are trying to reach, or specific communities as you work to “See All the People.”) to speak about what is important to them.
- They focus on the emotional and subconscious aspects.
- They allow interviewers to gain insights on how your target audience behave in given environments and situations.
- They can reveal innovative solutions you might not have discovered otherwise, or unmet needs and challenges you might be overlooking.
- Empathy interviews are about getting deeper and going beyond your run of the mill questions.
- They’re about making the subject feel at ease so they can shed the mask and speak from the heart.
- They offer interviewers a chance to observe body language and reactions of the subjects. (If conducted with a visual element, in-person or Zoom) This allows for spontaneous questions based on observations.

## How do You Conduct an Empathy Interview?

To conduct an interview, firstly prepare a question script as a guide. During the interview, if something comes up that is not on the script, you can explore the idea on the fly.

Some questions might only earn you a single response. But there are questions which bring out an answer filled with useful insights. Asking questions that get you a useful and thoughtful answer is a skill one learns through practice.

Interviewers, however, do more than just listening and recording. They observe their subject's body language, tone of voice, mannerisms, and they also follow up on responses that need further explanation.

## An Example Method of Empathy Interviewing

These quick bullets take you through what is an effective method for interviewing:

1. Introduce yourself.
2. Introduce your project.
3. Shift your focus to the interviewee (ask name, where they come from).
4. Build rapport.
5. Ask about specific instances or occurrences ("Tell me about the last time..")
6. Keep questions to fewer than ten words.
7. Ask one question at a time.
8. Encourage stories.
9. Look for inconsistencies and contradictions; what people say and what they do can be very different.
10. Observe non-verbal cues, such as use of hands, facial expressions.
11. Don't suggest answers to your questions.
12. Ask neutral questions like "What do you think about...?"
13. Explore emotions like "Why do you feel...?" "What do you feel about...?"
14. Question statements.

15. If you get stuck, ask “why?” Constantly asking why digs deeper into emotion and motivation. These help you understand user behavior and identify needs.

“Why?”

“Why did you do/say/think that?”

“Really? And why was that?”

“Can you say more about that?”

“Tell me more.”

“And what were you feeling then?”

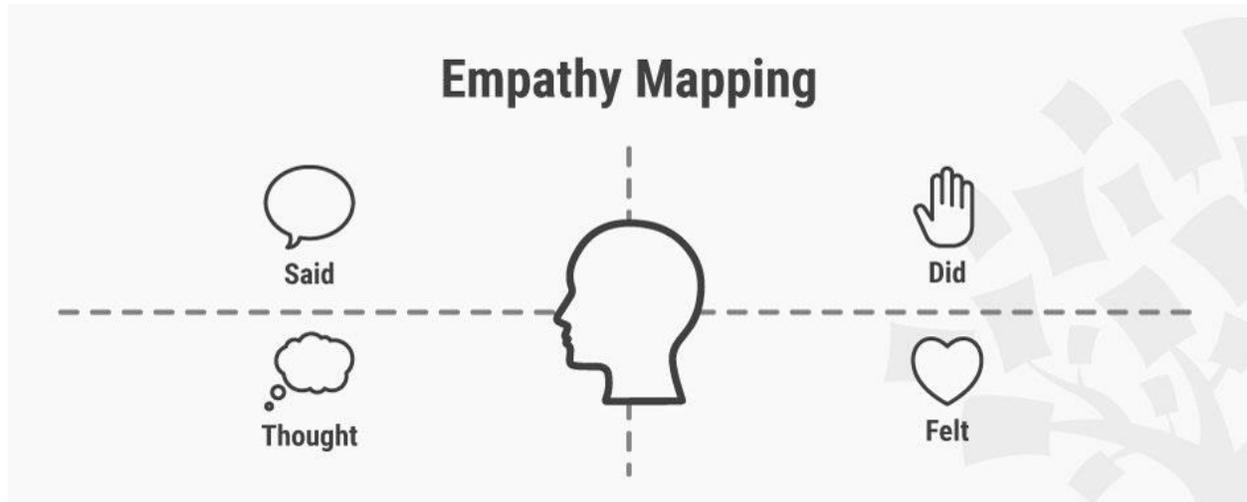
16. Thank them and wrap things up.

### Things to Remember

- Always have a beginner’s mindset.
- Suspend your judgments. You’re not there to judge. Keep an open mind. Openness is a mindset that is required.
- Be fully present. Be truly there. Someone can tell if you’d rather be elsewhere. Show each interviewee they are the most interesting, person you have ever met.
- Silence all devices. Do not look at your texts or answer phone calls.
- It can be helpful to ask if you can record the conversation- especially if you are doing a more formal process and if you are alone in interviewing.
- Interview in pairs. One can ask questions whilst the other takes notes. You can take turns.
- Use a permission form if you take photographs.
- Use release documents for interviewee to sign- specially if you go beyond interviewee’s that you have a connection or association with.
- Also explain how the person’s data and any data you collect will be used from the interview.
- Leave 30 minutes or so between each interview. This gives the interviewer some time to make additional notes and compile their thoughts while everything is still fresh in their mind.

**Empathy Maps** are often used to collectively review your interview experience.

They typically are laid out in 4 quadrants, what people **Said, Did, Thought,** and **Felt**. From this data you can discern the **Pains**- the fears, obstacles and challenges that your target audience face, and their **Gains**- - their hopes, desires, and wants. This is the start of Incarnational Innovation!



As you launch teams of people to complete empathy interviews as part of a new design process for relaunching church the following videos may be helpful:

Human Centered Design in the Church

<https://www.wesleyseminary.edu/wesley-innovation-hub/wesley-innovations-resources/>

<https://www.wesleyseminary.edu/wesley-innovation-hub/wesley-innovations-resources/>

A Sermon on Human-Centered Design

<https://fccithaca.org/2018/06/03/june-3-2018/>

What is Human Centered Design?

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0bxtEqM2TQU>

How a Non-Profit is Using Human-Centered Design to Transform the Child Welfare System

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Llp5REFQ\\_Qw](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Llp5REFQ_Qw)

Design Thinking- Empathize

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=q654-kmF3Pc>

What are empathy interviews?

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C79Ou-i3T-E>

Design Thinking Empathy Work- Interviewing the Community (Elementary School Children doing empathy interviews)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cJQh9dTp1OE>

A sample of students learning to interview

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=e3sWISmovKQ>

Big Resources for Going Deep...

Empathy Fieldguide

<https://hci.stanford.edu/courses/cs147/2016/au/readings/FIELDGUIDE-Screen-DTBC-March-2015-V2.pdf>

Empathy Interview Fieldguide

<https://the-content-strategist.docs.contently.com/v/empathy-interview-field-guide>

Note: If you have questions as The Minnesota Annual Conference begins to learn and grow in Human Centered Design or Incarnational Innovation practices, please feel free to reach out to Jody Thone, Director of Leadership Development at [jody.thone@minnesotaumc.org](mailto:jody.thone@minnesotaumc.org)