

# **STARTING WELL:**

## **The First Two Years In A New Church**

A Service to Southern Baptist Churches  
Provided by  
LifeWay Christian Resources  
of the  
Southern Baptist Convention



## **STARTING WELL START WITH A PLAN**

### **Preparing to Get Off To A Good Start**

Getting off to a good start is critical for you and the church. This manual is intended to give some steps, processes, resources and insights into ways to make the first two years in a new church effective and foundational for the future. The materials gleaned for the manual come from a wide spectrum of ministry practitioners with good track records of starting well in a variety of churches and settings. The manual is intended to be a roadmap or guide for the first two years in a new church. It can be shortened, although we caution that, or lengthened as the situation warrants. But, at the least, it will give you some things to consider as you work to get off to a good start in your new church.

**Start with a plan** – The components given in this manual can serve as your plan for starting well. But here is deal - You will want to develop your own ministry plan. Without a game plan you will be tossed about by everyone's agenda, and be assured there will be other agendas. Having a plan keeps you on track and gives you some guideposts to how you are doing.

Leadership in the first two years of ministry should focus on building relationships and preparing to lead the church through the early stages of a new pastor's ministry. This preparation will influence the level of success in the crucial change-oriented decision-making activities during the years to come.

#### **1. Get Acquainted with the Church membership.**

Familiarize yourself regarding the church's schedule of events, elected leaders, community resources, and its denominational resources. Give particular attention to the Church Leadership Team. The Church Leadership Team, sometimes called Church Council, is composed of leaders (chairmen, directors, and coordinators) of ministry and service organizations such as deacon ministry, Bible study (Sunday School), discipleship training, music ministry, and finance ministry. The team assists in coordinating and promoting activities essential to the applications of biblical principles in church practice.

#### **2. Enlist and Meet With a Vision Team.**

The Vision Team is made up of people already in the following elected positions in the church. However, members of the team may suggest that one or more other key influencers be added. The Vision Team will be the key working group with which a new pastor works in his first two years of ministry. Some of its work will be in subgroups.

- Church Leadership Team (Church Council)
- Deacon Officers
- Ministry Staff
- Chairmen of strategic committees or ministry teams (such as prayer, personnel, finances/budget, properties, and nominating)

- Key influencers in the church and/or community

The number of Vision Team members will be according to the size and needs of the church. A good rule of thumb is 10-50 people depending on the church's membership.

**3. Schedule a Church Memories Workshop.** Guidance for this workshop is found on pages 9-15.

#### **4. Ask lots of questions.**

During the first two years on the job, a pastor should be asking questions and listening actively to what people think and how they feel about the church and its history.

A focused way of doing this would be to hold some listening sessions, in which a pastor exclusively asks questions and listens to the thoughts and dreams of his church members. A guide for doing this is found on pages 5-6.

*The Interventionist* by Lyle E. Schaller contains hundreds of questions used in various stages of discovery in church consultation. Some of the following questions are from Schaller's question-filled chapter 11. Others are added for use in surfacing feelings about past and present experiences in the church. Some of those feelings may have been unexpressed for years. The questions may help people express hurts hidden beneath the surface and needs that might otherwise not be expressed in constructive ways.

Asking questions, listening, discerning, and remembering can inform your leadership and enrich your preaching.

#### **5. Develop a Sequence of Process for leading through the visioning process.**

Develop a Sequence of Process for leading the church through the process. That schedule will influence the church's calendar of events and the planning of worship emphases and your sermons.

Estimated times required for each of the stages are provided below. Special events and circumstances unique to each church and pastor will determine the actual time needed for each of the processes. However, the process should not be hurried to the point of moving to another stage before the prerequisite stage is completed.

16 weeks	Preparing to Lead through the Stages of Visioning
8 weeks	Stage 1: Viewing the Church's History through the Eyes of Christ
8 weeks	Stage 2: Assessing the Church's Current Reality
8 weeks	Stage 3: Affirming Biblical Principles for Church Growth
8 weeks	Stage 4: Focusing on Kingdom Results
8 weeks	Stage 5: Establishing Church Practice
16 weeks	Stage 6: Using the Essential Church Strategy
16 weeks	Stage 7: Overview of Transformational Church, DVD and Online Assessment

If this Sample Sequence of Process is followed, four months will be invested in getting acquainted and getting started and eighteen months in guiding the church in the development of a strategic vision and plan. Completing the get-ready process should lay the relational foundations for the process and address any negative emotions that would otherwise hinder it.

### Overview of Vision Process

8 weeks	<b>1</b>	Viewing the Church's History Through the Eyes of Christ	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Listening Sessions</li> <li>• Formation of Vision Team</li> <li>• Church's History Workshop</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Listening Sessions</li> <li>• Preach through Revelation 2-3</li> <li>• Installation of Vision Team</li> </ul>
8 weeks	<b>2</b>	Assessing Current Reality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Church Culture (Values Inventory, Demographics)</li> <li>• Current Reality (20 year ACP data, MAP presentation and discussion)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Preach on Great Commission, Acts 1:8</li> <li>• Preach on missional themes</li> </ul>
8 weeks	<b>3</b>	Affirming Biblical Principles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Divide team into five sub-teams</li> <li>• SWOT presentation and discussion</li> </ul>	
8 weeks	<b>4</b>	Focusing on Kingdom Results	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Formation of sub-teams according to five functions and enlistment of 1-2 additional team members</li> <li>• Meet to develop recommendations with focus on calendar, leadership, budget, prayer, people, facilities, and technology</li> <li>• Compile all reports into Vision team report/recommendations to present to the church</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Preach on five functions of the church</li> <li>• Recommendation of Vision team presented to and voted on by church</li> </ul>
8 weeks	<b>5</b>	Establishing Church Practice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Presentation and adoption of recommendations</li> <li>• Task assignments and implementation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Preach on kingdom results</li> <li>• Assignment of each recommendation to existing entity within the church</li> </ul>
16 weeks	<b>6</b>	Using the Essential Church Strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Development of mission statement by Vision Team and alignment of ministries</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Preach on mission statement</li> </ul>
16 Weeks	<b>7</b>	Transformational Church Strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lead Focus Team to study Transformational Church book and DVD</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Preach on the Seven Elements of Transformation</li> </ul>

## **STAGE 1: Viewing the Church's History through the Eyes of Christ**

You, as the new pastor who has not been involved in the history of the church, can lead objectively in reviewing the church's history to determine both positive and negative effects the history has on the present nature and ministry of the church. However, you have much to learn about this congregation as well before you are able to truly discern how to lead it into a preferred kingdom future. You can help the church understand the impact of church history on the present nature of the church.

1. Review chapter 5 of *Experiencing God*, written by Henry T. Blackaby and Claude V. King and published by Broadman & Holman in 1994. This chapter introduces seven realities of experiencing God, realities that “identify ways God works with a person or group to involve them in His work.” Praying through the realities provides a valuable starting point for looking at and learning from the church's history. Consider preaching one or more sermons based on the following seven realities.
  - God is always at work around you.
  - God pursues a continuing love relationship with you that is real and personal.
  - God invites you to become involved with Him in His work.
  - God speaks by the Holy Spirit through the Bible, prayer, circumstances, and the church to reveal Himself, His purposes, and His ways.
  - God's invitation for you to work with Him always leads to a crisis of belief that requires faith and action.
  - You must make major adjustments in your life to join God in what He is doing.
  - You come to know God by experience as you obey Him and He accomplishes His work through you
2. Conduct a series of Listening Sessions as outlined on pages 5-6.
3. Teach the church what the Bible says about the activity of Satan in seeking to discredit Christians and blunt the spiritual power of the church. John's letters to the churches of Asia Minor recorded in Revelation 2–3 would provide a biblical basis for a series of sermons preparing church members to deal with both personal sin and corporate sin as the Holy Spirit guides them.
4. Lead out in the formation of the vision team as outlined on pages 7-8.
5. Involve the Vision Team in a Church Memories Workshop (4 hours) as outlined on pages 9-15. The Vision Team can help determine who else should be invited to participate such as teachers, leaders, and committee/team members.

The pastor will serve as leader/facilitator of the workshop. The workshop will take about four hours (such as 8:00 a.m. – 12:00 noon on Saturday or 4:00 – 8:00 p.m. on Sunday). Take breaks when needed.

## Listening Sessions

*“Good listening, not necessarily more talking, is the key to good communication. Failure to listen well communicates that we may not value the person talking or we may not think what he or she is important enough to give him or her a hearing. It could also mean that we have already made up our mind. We owe it to our brothers and sisters in the faith to give them a hearing, whatever the topic. This is especially true if they disagree with us or stand on the side of an issue that we do not support. On the one hand, we tend not to discuss issues in the church that divide us. On the other hand, when we do, we can short-circuit the process by not listening well.”*

*Advanced Strategic Planning*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed., Aubrey Malphurs, pp.86-87.

A new pastor comes to his church with limited knowledge of it. Rushing to make immediate changes before relational foundations are in place nearly always results in counterproductive and possibly disastrous. While it is important to lay a relational foundation in the beginning that cannot be rushed, the tension is nevertheless real and should be addressed.

One option for a new pastor to consider is to conduct a series of listening sessions early in his ministry, most likely the first or second month. The benefits of this approach are as follows:

- (1) It provides a venue for the new pastor to begin building relationships that will undergird his entire ministry at that church.
- (2) It allows the new pastor the luxury of time to assess and discern the current reality in the church.
- (3) It affirms and encourages church members in their concerns, griefs, and fears.
- (4) It validates their importance as a member of the body of Christ and allows them to be heard as such.
- (5) It communicates to the church that the new pastor has not come with a preconceived agenda.
- (6) It provides the new pastor a look at the personalities that will likely emerge in his first two years.

### *Scheduling and Size of Group*

If a session has more than 20 people, discussion might be hindered. (Keep in mind that not everyone in the church will attend.) A smaller church might only need one or two listening sessions while a larger one will need multiple sessions. On average, the new pastor should plan on scheduling three or four listening sessions. One method that could be used is to invite all members and attenders with last names that begin with A to G to the first session, H to Q, and so forth.

### *Agenda and Contents*

The agenda of each session should be very simple and built around a series of open-ended questions that promote healthy and thoughtful discussion. Begin the session by briefly stating the purpose, which is to help the new pastor begin to understand the church and get to know its members. Affirm that the members and attenders will do the majority of the talking during the

session, not the new pastor. It might be helpful to provide nametags for everyone present so that the new pastor can continue learning the names of his new church members.

Should the new pastor take notes or have someone present to do that for him? Opinions vary; some believe that doing so would squelch discussion while others believe that helpful information might be lost. Whichever approach is used, great care should be taken to make those present feel safe and comfortable in sharing without it being used against them in the future.

Here are some possible questions:

- What is your name and what first brought you here?
- Why did you come back?
- Why did you decide to join?
- What distinguishes this church from other churches (other than denominational affiliation)?
- What do you believe is the ideal tenure for a pastor?
- What gives you the most satisfaction in the position in which you now serve? the most frustration?
- How many generations of your church family have been members of this church? of any church?
- For whom do you believe Sunday worship should be designed?
- Are there people in this community who would not feel comfortable attending worship services in this church? Why?
- What is the most significant change that has happened here since you became a member?
- How do you feel about your ability to influence decision-making in the church?
- Picture in your mind what you would like this congregation to look like five years from now. How does that picture differ from today?
- What is the biggest barrier to making your vision become the reality of tomorrow?
- What is the issue with which this church needs to deal?
- What does this church do best? Brag to me about this church.
- What is the question that I should have asked but didn't know enough to ask?

*The Interventionist* by Lyle E. Schaller contains hundreds of questions used in various stages of discovery in church consultation. It is out of print, but you can find either a new or used copy at [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com).



## **Organizing the Vision Team**

One of the first tasks of the new Pastor is to put together the team that will lead the church through the early days of his new pastorate. It is important to remember that every investment made with this team contributes to future direction and success of the church. Formation and development of the Vision Team will be one of the most significant leadership development tasks accomplished by the new Pastor in his first two years.

### *How is the team selected?*

The team must be representative of the congregation and have the respect of the congregation. Therefore, the congregation must have a significant role in selecting the team. Beginning with early discussions with the church, the Pastor should make it clear that the church will nominate members for the team. The process of nomination is not an election per se, but provides a very good pool of names and priority of selection. The Pastor will make the final determination of members. This is so that the Pastor has the latitude to include or exclude individuals who can contribute to or may detract from the work.

For example, if the church nominates a good team, but does not include a significant leader because they are not popular, or because they have a contrary opinion, the Pastor may want to add that person to the team anyway. Though the personality may be challenging to manage, it is often important to have all sides represented at the table for the outcome to have integrity. There may be occasions where contrary individuals change their opinion when they serve on the team because they realize they are alone in their perspective. In the same way, there may be family members or other relationships that would dominate the team. The Pastor may choose to limit participation to only one or two family representatives. Husbands and wives should not both serve on the team. If a married couple is nominated, allow the couple to decide which one will serve.

### *Who should serve on the team?*

Ministry or support staff members should serve on the Vision Team but do so with great deliberation. Their input is important but because of their roles in the church, their opinions tend to put the team discussion out of balance. Care must be taken to not stifle or cut off the input of other team members. Youth should not serve on the Vision Team. Their input can be sought out and considered in the process. The discussion of the Vision Team may not be understood by a young person.

The size of the team is an important consideration. A good rule of thumb is 10-50 active and influential members of the church, depending on the size of the church.

### *A recommended process.*

On an announced Sunday, nomination slips are passed out and members are given the opportunity to nominate five names for the team. Slips are taken up and accepted throughout the week.

After one week, the church secretary or other designated person tallies nominations and ranks them according to number of nominations received.

The Pastor should evaluate the nominations and form a draft slate of names. These names should be evaluated by one or two trusted individuals (Chairman of Deacons, Sr. Staff member etc) for input as to who should or should not be included. Additions or deletions should be made to the list. The list should include about five additional names in the event some people decline to serve.

Starting at the top of the list, the Pastor should personally contact each nominee and request them to serve on the team. This should be a personal contact by phone and not a letter contact. They will have questions and need to understand they are being recruited for an important task. The task will require commitment of time and energy. There will probably be regular meetings while the team gets started and then additional assignments will come as the process unfolds. Generally, personal recruitment yields a better response and a higher level of commitment from the participants.

Once a list of committed names is completed, a commissioning service is recommended. The team should be recognized by the church and the church should have a special time of prayer and commitment to pray for the team in the upcoming days.

## **CHURCH MEMORIES WORKSHOP**

### **Reflect on the Past; Prepare for the Future**

#### **Introduction**

Our church's history is yesterday, last week, last month, last year, and all the way back to the beliefs and practices of the spiritual ancestors of our church's founders. Church history reflects the constant love and absolute power of a perfect God as well as the successes and the failures, the victories and the defeats of His imperfect followers. The history of most churches can be expressed in the theme of a televised sports program several years ago: "The joy of victory and the agony of defeat." The ups and downs of a church's history affect how the church perceives itself today.

Though often unconsciously, that perception affects how power and control issues are expressed in the church, how decisions are made, and how personal and group relationships flow. How a church perceives itself in light of its history influences congregational values, faith actions, and expectations of the future.

Many churches find dysfunctional characteristics in their pasts that profoundly influence their present and call for awareness and an on-guard posture. They need help in recognizing how the rulers, the authorities, the powers of this dark world, and the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms have led the church to relationships and behaviors that do not reflect the spirit of Christ or advance the kingdom of God (see Eph. 6:12). Churches need help in recognizing how the spiritual forces of evil can be resisted in the power of the omnipotent God. They need guidance in recognizing and repenting of personal behavior that perpetuates the sins of the past.

Churches also find periods of dynamic spiritual health in their history that call for celebration and recovery of the characteristics that produced such spiritual health. They need help in discerning how God's Spirit moved in the lives of church members and in the church as a body in its times of spiritual health and growth.

This Church Memories Workshop will provide an opportunity for an interactive review of our past to determine both positive and negative effects the church's collective memory has on the present nature and ministry of the church. The focus of the process is to view the church's history through the eyes of Christ. During the workshop participants will discover both the dynamic and the dysfunctional qualities in our church's past. Then church members can respond appropriately with repentance and celebration. The workshop is part of helping our church turn loose the past in order to take hold of the present and move with spiritual power and holy confidence into the future. Then we as a church can celebrate how the Lord has blessed us in the past and how He can use us in the future. This workshop will include three major parts: (1) What did Jesus say to the seven churches in Revelation 2-3? (2) What would Jesus say to our church? (3) What are the good memories and painful memories throughout the time each of us has been a part of our church? (Use this paragraph in promotion.)

### **Step One: What Did Jesus Say to the Seven Churches (Revelation 2 & 3)**

Break into small groups at each table (five to seven people). Assign each table one of the seven churches. Each church may be assigned to more than one table, or a table may be assigned more than one church. Have a sheet of paper with the name of the assigned church on each table. Distribute copies of the worksheet to all participants.

#### Small groups

Ask each group to choose a facilitator to guide the discussion, a recorder to prepare the group response on one of the worksheets, and a reporter to share the group's response with the large group.

Each group will study the assigned passage and prepare a group response for its assigned church: What is the Lord's opinion of this church—His compliment, His criticism, His command, and the consequences? State that Laodicea did not receive a compliment; Smyrna and Philadelphia did not receive criticisms or consequences.

#### Large group

In the large group, let the reporter from each table give a brief report on their assigned church.

Ask for the reporter from the first table assigned Ephesus to report on the compliments. Then let the second table assigned Ephesus (if there is one) to add any compliments not already mentioned. Then ask the second table to report on the criticisms. The first table can then add any criticisms not already mentioned. Then ask the first table to report on the commands. The second table can add any commands not already mentioned. Then ask the second table to report on the consequences for Ephesus. The first table can add any consequences not already mentioned.

Then use the same pattern for the other six churches – Smyrna (no criticisms or consequences), Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia (no criticisms or consequences), and Laodicea (no compliment).

### **Step Two: What Would Jesus Say to our church?**

#### Individual responses

Give each participant a copy of the worksheet. Have all participants write their personal responses on the worksheet. Also give each participant two sets (different colors) of five dots for use later.

Note: Since some participants may be responsible for areas of ministry that are thought to be criticisms for your church, it may be difficult for other participants to be open and honest. Encourage openness and frankness, reminding the group to speak the truth in love. Lead the group to understand the need for confidentiality.

### Small groups

When everyone has finished writing their personal responses, ask each person to take turns within the same table group to name one compliment from his or her worksheet. As they are mentioned, the recorder will write the compliments on a worksheet. Allow time in the groups for everyone to name all the compliments on their lists that have not already been mentioned.

Then use the same process of taking turns within the group to name (and write on a worksheet) the criticisms from his or her worksheet.

When all the responses have been given, ask each person in the small group to vote for the top three compliments. Record the votes for each compliment. Circle the three with the highest number of votes. The recorder will then write the group's top three compliments on a tear sheet.

Then, ask each person in the small group to vote for the top three criticisms. Record the votes for each criticism. Circle the three with the highest number of votes. The recorder will then write the group's top three criticisms on a tear sheet.

Each small group will post their two tear sheets on the wall (compliments in one area and criticisms in another area).

### Large group

In the large group, the pastors will read all of the compliments on the tear sheets posted on the wall. Acknowledge that there are similar compliments but it is difficult to merge them at this time because valuable wording could be lost. Do not make comments on specific compliments at this time.

Then the leader will read all of the criticisms on the tear sheets posted on the wall. Acknowledge that there are similar criticisms but it is difficult to merge them at this time because valuable wording could be lost. Do not make comments on specific criticisms at this time.

Then ask each person to vote for the five most important compliments from all of the tear sheets by using one set of five dots. Place a dot beside or below the compliment without covering any of the words.

Then ask each person to vote on the top five most important criticisms from all of the tear sheets by using the other set of five dots. Place a dot beside or below the criticism without covering any of the words.

Review with the large group some of the top compliments. Have a time of prayer to thank God for all of the compliments.

Then review with the large group the top criticisms. Acknowledge that it is much more difficult to face the reality of criticisms of our church by Jesus. Have a time of prayer to thank God for what He has done despite these criticisms. Lead the group to pray for wisdom to strengthen the church. Acknowledge our absolute dependence on the Lord as a church.

Later gather all of the tear sheets. After the workshop, the Vision Team can create a summary report identifying the top compliments and the top criticisms. The team will use this information in developing recommendations for actions later in the process.

### **Step Three: Time Line and Memories**

Prior to the workshop, prepare to post on the wall a piece of butcher paper (10-15 feet long). Put the date the church began on the far left of the paper and the next decade on the right end of the paper. Write each decade someone has memories of the church. Write in the first year of each decade for which information is available information such as the resident church membership, average Sunday School attendance, discipleship enrollment, number of baptisms, number of other additions, and total contributions. Write the names and dates of service of each pastor. Possibly post a picture of each pastor at the point he began his service to the church. Possibly write a few other key events in the life of the church. Provide plenty of yellow and blue post-it notes (at least 3" by 3") at each table.

#### Introduction

This part of the workshop asks an important question: What are the good memories and painful memories throughout the time each of us has been a part of our church? Our memories impact the decisions we make today and the plans we have for the future. Each church has a unique past that influences the present and the future. Surfacing memories is one way to turn loose of the past in order to take hold of the present and move with spiritual power and holy confidence into the future. With the Holy Spirit's guidance, this exercise may be the most powerful part of the workshop.

#### Good Memories

Ask everyone in the group to use the yellow post-it notes to write their good memories of the church and the approximate year of that memory. These are anonymous, so remind them not to write their names on the post-it notes. Each person will write one memory per post-it note. Good memories may include (1) people – such as a pastor or staff member, Sunday School teacher, or other church member; (2) events – such as your baptism, baptism of a child, your wedding, the date you joined the church, a specific church service that had life-changing implications, a significant revival, or a new building; and (3) ministries – such as a year of many baptisms, a Sunday School class, choir, a discipleship study, the year you began serving in a ministry role, or the year you made a commitment to tithe. (Post this list on the wall or have as a handout on each table.)

Ask the participants to post their good memories on the appropriate decade on the time line sheet on the wall. When all good memories have been posted, the leader will read some of them aloud and invite additional comments. Also, people will be able to read these at a break or after the workshop.

Lead a time of celebration (including a song and prayer) for these blessings.

### Painful Memories

Ask everyone in the group to use the blue post-it notes to write their painful memories of the church and the approximate year of that memory. These are anonymous, so remind them not to write their names on the post-it notes. Each person will write one memory per post-it note. Painful memories may include (1) people – such as the death of a loved church member, departure of a pastor or staff member; (2) events – such as the funeral of a family member, a major church conflict, members leaving the church; and (3) ministries – such as the discontinuation or reduction of a meaningful ministry. (Post this list on the wall or in a handout.) Remind the group to be tactful as they write in generalities rather than specific details. The purpose is to be constructive not hurtful. These will not be read aloud.

Ask the participants to post their painful memories on the appropriate decade on the time line sheet on the wall. When all painful memories have been posted, the leader will comment on the clusters of painful memories and lead a time of prayerful confession. Ask the Lord to remove any bitterness or bad feelings that remain. After the prayer, collect all of the blue post-it notes, and shred them to symbolize that we will no longer allow these painful memories to drag us down.

### **Closing**

Form a circle around the room holding hands. Close with sentence prayers, allowing all members to voice thanksgiving for what the church has meant in their lives.

Celebrate the community of faith by singing a church family song such as “We Are One in the Bond of Love” or “I’m So Glad I’m a Part of the Family of God.”

## **WHAT DID JESUS SAY TO THE SEVEN CHURCHES?**

Ephesus (Rev. 2:1-7), Smyrna (Rev. 2:8-11), Pergamum (Rev. 2:12-17),  
Thyatira (Rev. 2:18-29), Sardis (Rev. 3:1-6), Philadelphia (Rev. 3:7-13),  
Laodicea (Rev. 3:14-22)

**What did Jesus say to the church in \_\_\_\_\_?**

**Compliments** – “I know your works....” (none for Laodicea)

**Criticisms** – “But I have this against you....” (none for Smyrna and Philadelphia)

**Commands** – “Therefore, you must....”

**Consequences** – “If you do not....” (none for Smyrna and Philadelphia)



## WHAT WOULD JESUS SAY TO OUR CHURCH?

**Compliments** – “I know your works....” (What would Jesus say that our church does well? How has God uniquely gifted us as a body?)

**Criticisms** – “But I have this against you....” (What would Jesus say are our church’s shortcomings, faults, and failures? What would Jesus say we are not doing well? What would Jesus say we should be doing that we are not doing?)

## **STAGE 2: Assessing the Church's Current Reality**

The new pastor should lead the church to understand and accept the current reality in the church and its community.

1. Provide the Vision Team an overview of the information on church culture on pages 17-18.
2. Provide the Vision Team an overview of the information on values and lead them through the values inventory exercise on pages 19-21.
3. Provide the Vision Team an overview of the information on community context on pages 22-23.
4. Begin preaching on the Great Commission: God's Purpose and Plan for His Churches. Also preach on missional themes, helping the church to understand the difference between being missional and mission-minded. Emphasize that God is at work all around us, advancing His kingdom, and invites His people to join Him in that work. Also emphasize that the church is not building; rather, the church is God's people and their mission is outside of the walls of the building.
5. Present the Church Model and Process (M.A.P.) on page 24 and lead a discussion on it using the guide on page 25.
6. Request a demographic report on the church's primary ministry area from LifeWay Church Resources, state convention office, or local associational office.
7. Review the demographic report with the Vision Team. Lead a time of discussion about it using the guide on page 31.
8. Complete the Current Reality worksheets of the *Tools for an Essential Church* manual. These worksheets are available at [www.LifeWay.com/currentreality](http://www.LifeWay.com/currentreality).

## Understanding Church Culture

You have a wonderful opportunity in your role as a new pastor to lead your church to better understand the elements that make up its unique character. God has provided the resources and opportunities for your church to become exactly what He desires. If there is no compelling reason to change, churches will continue to repeat programs, ministries, and practices from year to year regardless of what impact they may, or may not, be having on the community or the congregation.

Church practices and structures must be viewed through the church's culture (see the chart of "A Church Model and Process" on page 24) to determine how relevant they are in their here-and-now world. Church culture means the local context of church life that shapes the way a church views itself and that leads to the unique identity and style of the church. Every church has its own history, consequently its own culture.

Reviewing the present status reveals "the way we do church" expressed in the history and traditions of the church. It is a rich source for understanding the style of the church and what a church wants to become. Analyzing church culture requires a church to wrestle with the questions, "Who are we as a church today?" and "Who does God want us to become?" Multiple and complex appraisals influence a church's identity. Every church is different. Every church develops a culture whether the church has a long history or is a new start.

Asking appropriate questions can help the congregation discover its personality and its image in the community. What is the present reality for your church? What resources, events, and personalities shape the nature of how the church responds to a changing world? What vision is there of a future that will honor God?

To understand the culture of your church you need to investigate the following criteria:

- What affect is the church having on the lives of those who attend?  
How do church members express their devotion to the Lord Jesus? Who has been on a short-term mission trip? How many participate in evangelism visitation? Do you have a prayer ministry? How is the financial support of the church?
- How is the community affected by the presence of the church and its members?  
Who lives in the immediate areas around the church? How does the church reach out to them? What services are provided for children, youth, singles, elderly, handicapped, or others? What does the community really think about this church and its members?
- What does the church emphasize?  
What percent of the church budget is allocated for evangelism and missions? What place does prayer fit in the daily schedule of the church and staff? How do the events and activities of the church relate to the overall mission of the church?

- How does a guest feel when they visit your church?  
How many parking spaces do you have? Is there adequate seating space in the worship center? Do you have a welcome center clearly identified for guests? Is your preschool space clean, safe, adequately sized, and well staffed? Do you have adequate discipleship opportunities for all ages in spaces that are inviting and welcoming?
- Are the leaders functioning in their ministry roles?  
What should the deacons be focused on? Is there relevant teaching and preaching that seeks to change lives and strengthen disciples? Do members of the church understand their responsibilities and their spiritual gifts?
- Do the attenders have a good time when they come to church?  
How does the church fellowship together? What ministries are designed to help break down the sense of the large group and allow people to experience the joy of relationships?

In the same sense individuals are guided by their self-esteem, church tend to be guided by the congregational church-esteem. With low church-esteem we are reluctant to mention our church in conversations at the grocery store, soccer field, or gym. With a high sense of church-esteem we recognize the value our church is in our own lives and the potential value it has for those around us.

Guests who visit your church are 83% more likely to remain a part of your church six months later if they have been a part of a small group such as Bible Study or Sunday School. So many in our culture, both young and old, are looking for a place to establish deep lasting relationships. Your church should be the place people turn to find acceptance and support.

Simple church principles call for each church to evaluate every activity in light of how it relates to the main function of the local church. Programs do not need to be complex or expensive to be effective. Seek to focus the ministries of your church around your unique set of core beliefs and values. Involve the whole church in developing a clear understanding of your present reality. Create an environment where the church begins to dream again about the future God has planned for them. Then organize leadership and direction around seeking to focus on those ministries that move the church toward that new desired future state.

## Values Inventory<sup>1</sup>

One of the most important aspects of understanding the culture of a church is the exploration and clarification of its core values. Briefly defined, values are beliefs put into practice. While it is possible for a congregation to have “aspirational” values—collective behaviors that they would like to see—their culture consists of their actual values.

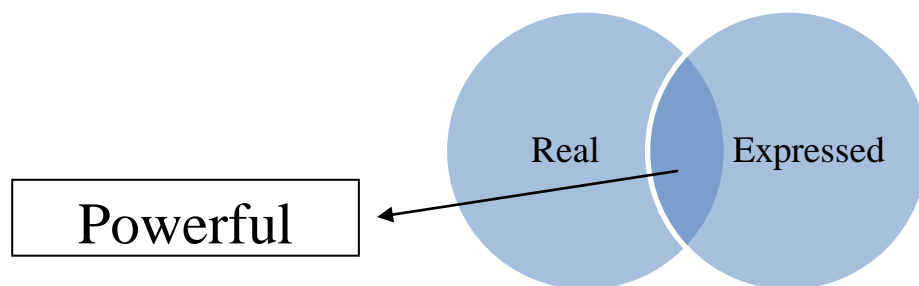
The values of a church are those things that are non-negotiable, that for which we would be willing to sacrifice everything. Although the form in which they are expressed may vary, Biblical values should never change. Core values should be marked by great passion. And these beliefs drive behavior that should reflect the actions and attitudes of Christ Himself.

An organization must know what it stands for. A study of values can be very powerful because it seeks to answer the question, “Why do we do the things we do? Why does it matter?”

Values are behaviorally examined. A church can look at its budget and determine its values. It can do so by looking at its calendar because we always make time for what is important to us. And finally reviewing its collective decisions helps a church know what its true values are. In other words, a church’s business meeting minutes offer clues as to its values. As values get clearer, so do the decisions needing to be made.

Why should a congregation spend time examining its values? First, they are frequently held without awareness. Congregational culture has been compared to a fishbowl. Asking your congregation to describe it is like asking a fish to describe water. Values are so much a part of us that it is difficult to talk about them in an objective fashion. Second, any attempt to implement change in a congregation will be futile without factoring corporate values into the picture. They function as railroad tracks within the organization. Even if a desire for change is present, congregational behavior will stay the same unless new tracks and patterns of behavior are established.

It may be helpful to compare the types of values as “real” versus “expressed.” It is, of course, possible to have expressed values that are not real. It is also possible to have real values that have not been clearly and passionately articulated. Great synergy takes place when a congregation’s values are both real and expressed. We can call those values “powerful” because they become the impetus for change in the congregation.



### *Leading the Exercise*

Distribute copies of the inventory below. Remind team members that they are surveying the values of the church, *not their own personal values*. Briefly define each value, adding any needed clarification. Instruct team members to complete the inventory according to the directions. (Note: you may want to add to the list. Be sure that team members are clear as to definitions.)

Write each value on butcher paper or tear sheets. (Probably two or three per sheet will be optimal.) Allow sufficient room to the left or right for the placement of color coding labels. Give each team member a limited number of labels, probably four but no more than six. Ascribe a numeric value to each color, such as red – 1, blue – 2, etc.

Total the numeric value of the dots placed by each value. The top six represent the actual values of the congregation. After identifying the actual values, lead the Vision Team in a discussion through the following questions:

- Is this accurate? Why or why not?
- What glaring omissions do you see? (Note: these can become aspirational values toward which the church will strive.)
- How will actual values strengthen the church as it moves forward? How will they threaten it?

## Values Inventory

1	2	3	4
Not important	Somewhat important	Important	Most important

**Directions:** Using the scale below, circle the number that best expresses to what extent the following values are important to your church (actual values). Work your way through the list quickly, going with your first impression.

- |   |         |
|---|---------|
| 1. <b>Preaching and teaching Scripture:</b> Communicating God's Word to people                              | 1 2 3 4 |
| 2. <b>Family:</b> People immediately related to one another by marriage or birth                            | 1 2 3 4 |
| 3. <b>Bible knowledge:</b> A familiarity with the truths of Scripture                                       | 1 2 3 4 |
| 4. <b>World missions:</b> Spreading the gospel of Christ around the globe                                   | 1 2 3 4 |
| 5. <b>Community:</b> Caring about and addressing the needs of others  | 1 2 3 4 |
| 6. <b>Encouragement:</b> Giving hope to people who need some hope   | 1 2 3 4 |
| 7. <b>Giving:</b> Providing a portion of one's finances to support the ministry                             | 1 2 3 4 |
| 8. <b>Fellowship:</b> Relating to and enjoying one another  | 1 2 3 4 |
| 9. <b>Leadership:</b> A person's ability to influence others to pursue God's mission for their organization | 1 2 3 4 |
| 10. <b>Cultural relevance:</b> Communicating truth in a way that people who aren't like us understand it    | 1 2 3 4 |
| 11. <b>Prayer:</b> Communicating with God   | 1 2 3 4 |
| 12. <b>Excellence:</b> Maintaining the highest of ministry standards that bring glory to God                | 1 2 3 4 |
| 13. <b>Evangelism:</b> Telling others the good news about Christ  | 1 2 3 4 |
| 14. <b>Team ministry:</b> A group of people ministering together with synergy                               | 1 2 3 4 |
| 15. <b>Creativity:</b> Coming up with new ideas and ways of doing ministry                                  | 1 2 3 4 |
| 16. <b>Worship:</b> Attributing worth to God  | 1 2 3 4 |
| 17. <b>Status quo:</b> A preference for the way things are  | 1 2 3 4 |
| 18. <b>Cooperation:</b> The act of working together in the service of the Savior                            | 1 2 3 4 |
| 19. <b>Lost people:</b> People who are non-Christians and may not attend church (unchurched)                | 1 2 3 4 |
| 20. <b>Mobilized laity:</b> Christians who are actively serving in the ministries of their church           | 1 2 3 4 |
| 21. <b>Tradition:</b> The customary ways or the "tried and true"  | 1 2 3 4 |
| 22. <b>Obedience:</b> A willingness to do what God or others ask  | 1 2 3 4 |
| 23. <b>Innovation:</b> Making changes that promote the ministry as it serves Christ                         | 1 2 3 4 |
| 24. <b>Initiative:</b> The willingness to take the first step or make the first move in a ministry setting  | 1 2 3 4 |
| 25. <b>Benevolence:</b> Caring for basic human (physical) needs, either within or outside the church        | 1 2 3 4 |
| 26. _____   | 1 2 3 4 |
| 27. _____   | 1 2 3 4 |
| 28. _____   | 1 2 3 4 |

## **Understanding Community Context**

Every church has been placed within a community. Understanding some key indicators and trends about that community will help the church determine better ways to relate to those who live around it.

Communities, and churches, go through a series of common stages or lifecycles:

- Birth – figuring out how to survive
- Growth – how to handle new people and challenges
- Maturity – slowing down, relaxed activities
- Decline – trying to hold on, what do we do next

God's ideal plan is for the church to renew itself and start a new cycle before it reaches the maturity stage. If the church waits until it begins to decline, the momentum works against it and regeneration becomes more difficult. For a church to maintain relevance within its community, it must understand who makes up the community. It also must understand who makes up the people in the church and how those people compare to the local community. This is the context in which the church must function.

Demographic data is available from a number of sources that will tell you how many people live within a certain radius of the church. The data will provide current and projected increases for race, age, income level, and a number of other variables.

Equally important to understanding the community is the need to understand who makes up the attenders at your church. Age groups can be estimated by tabulating Sunday School rolls. Other demographic information is more difficult without using some kind of survey or enlisting the assistance of an outside consultant.

In addition to the age, gender, race, and income levels, computer technology has enabled the identification of lifestyle segmentation groups within areas as small as 1/16<sup>th</sup> of a square mile. Each of these clusters of people share a great deal in common. Most churches will have about 80% of the congregation in three or four of these segmentation groups. The extent to which these clusters in the church match up with similar clusters in the surrounding community determines how well the church is reaching the community.

In a very large church it may not be unusual for every social group to be represented in the congregation by at least one family. Churches are not exclusive of anyone. However, in churches of any size (small, medium, or large), most of the members will be from a limited number of the social groups identified in the study. These are the people that God has gifted the church to reach.

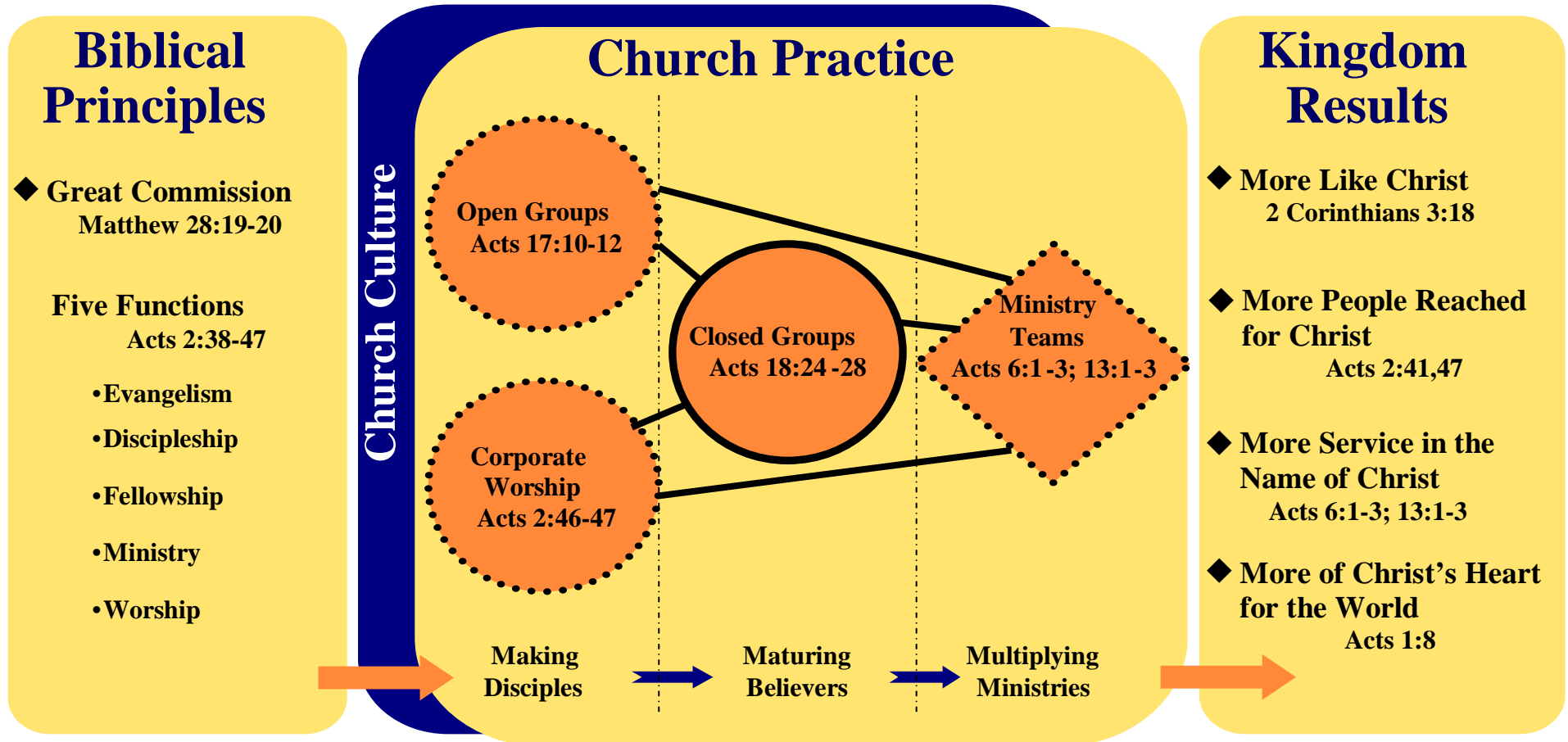


Lifestyle segmentation is based on the concept that “birds of a feather, flock together.” People who fit into a certain cluster that is highly represented in the congregation are more likely to continue to associate with your church because they find people similar to themselves. The opposite is also true. If your church primarily consists of three clusters and someone from a radically different cluster visits, they may find very few people like them.

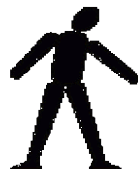
Cluster analysis goes beyond just identifying who the different clusters are, but also provides information as to what locations have large percentages of those lifestyles. Now your church can make outreach in focused geographic areas to people who are very similar to those within the church body. You might organize a prayer walk of those communities, a door-to-door survey campaign, or a ministry event targeted to appeal to those particular segments of the community.

Most research indicates about 50% of any community is un-churched. Once your church has identified who the most receptive prospects might be, the field truly is “white unto harvest.”

# A Church Model and Process



Lost



The Foundation of Corporate Prayer



In Ministry

## M.A.P. Exercise

It has been estimated that 80% of the general population are visual learners. The M.A.P. model helps them picture in their mind's eye and thus understand the mission and purpose of the church. In addition, many individuals prefer to learn in a kinesthetic manner, which means they prefer to learn by action.

In light of these two realities, the following exercise is recommended. Have members of the Vision team gather in groups of four to five. Provide them with blank sheets of paper and pencils. (Have butcher paper, tear sheets, or other drawing surfaces available for later in the exercise.)

Direct team members to draw the *church practice section* of M.A.P. as they see it currently existing in their church. Emphasize that they are attempting to picture current reality or “where we are,” not the ideal reality or “where we should be.” Make sure that team members understand that the four elements of church practice are not restricted to certain programs or events. Help them to see that they are evaluating overall effectiveness in each of the four areas.

The size of the shapes (circles, diamond) should be drawn to reflect effectiveness, i.e., a large corporate worship circle indicates effectiveness in this area. Dotted lines indicate accessibility for the unchurched, while solid lines denote an intentional focus on believers. Lines between the shapes convey connectedness. An example might be as follows: a line between corporate worship and open groups might indicate visitors to worship services are invited to participate in small group Bible study experiences.

Note to pastor/facilitator: you will have to assure team members that this is not an art class and their “creation” will not be judged or critiqued. Help them see that the point is to promote discussion and interaction, not to produce an artistic masterpiece. **THERE IS NOT A RIGHT WAY TO DRAW THE MODEL.** Rather, it is a diagnostic and dialogical tool. It helps a church see where they are and to talk about that.

Allow time for each team member to complete their rendering of the M.A.P. model as it currently exists in their church setting. Provide time in each group for each person to show their drawing and to explain why they portrayed as they did. As time permits, have each group enlist one volunteer to share their drawing with the entire team and facilitate a follow-up discussion.

## THE FOUNDATION OF CORPORATE PRAYER (Acts 4:23-33)

Though they may not verbalize it, the hearts of many church members are saying, “Pastor, teach us to pray.”

Corporate prayer is absolutely essential to the spiritual well being of any church. Three Bible verses, selected from many, affirm corporate prayer as a biblical principle foundational to effective church practice and essential to producing desired kingdom results.

- “If I close the sky so there is no rain, or if I command the grasshopper to consume the land, or if I send pestilence on My people, and My people who are called by My name humble themselves, pray and seek My face, and turn from their evil ways, then I will hear from heaven, forgive their sin, and heal their land.”—the LORD (2 Chron. 7:13–14)
- “My house will be called a house of prayer.” – Jesus (Matt. 21:13; quoting Is. 56:7)
- “Don’t worry about anything, but in everything, through prayer and petition with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God.” – Paul (Phil. 4:6)

The following testimonies from godly leaders spanning three quarters of a century affirm corporate prayer as a biblical principle foundational to effective church practice and essential to producing desired kingdom results.

One of the most prolific writers on prayer is E.M. Bounds. A recent compilation of his writings on prayer is The Classic Collection on Prayer (Bridge-Logos Publishers). Bounds spent the last seventeen years of his life devoted to prayer, reading Scripture, and writing. He affirmed that prayer is the most important ingredient for spiritual growth and continuing power in the church.

In 1924 R. A. Torrey published a series of Bible studies on prayer in which he spoke about the blessings prayer will bring to churches. He wrote about the church gathered for prayer. “Prayer will bring blessing, definite and rich and immeasurable blessing, to the Church; praying will do more to make the Church what it ought to be than anything else we can do. Prayer will do more to root out heresy than all the heresy trials that were ever held. Prayer will do more to straighten out tangles and misunderstandings and unhappy complications in the life of a Church than all the councils and conferences that were ever held. Prayer will do more to bring a deep and lasting and sweeping revival, a revival that is real and lasting and altogether of the right sort, than all the organizations that were ever devised by man.”<sup>2</sup>

Writing in 1942, George Buttrick asserted that “the decline of the church prayer meeting is a more disturbing symptom of ill health than the alleged decline in church attendance or even than sectarian strife.” He charged churches with prayer meetings consisting of stereotyped and casual phrases that were repeated *ad nauseam* and declared “the church cannot redeem a tragic world without the vitality of corporate prayer.”<sup>3</sup>

Fifty years later T. W. Hunt wrote about the blessings that come through a church intercessory prayer ministry concentrated toward God’s glory and honor. “If a church develops a successful Intercessory Prayer Ministry, other programs of the church will be

blessed. Baptisms will go up, Sunday School attendance will increase, Discipleship Training will take on a new importance, and all programs will be enhanced. The church will discover God blesses a ministry that comes from Him and depends upon Him.”<sup>4</sup>

In 1997 Jim Cymbala, pastor of the Brooklyn Tabernacle, wrote *Fresh Wind, Fresh Fire*, describing how that church was transformed through corporate prayer. Citing an experience when God told him how to lead the church, he said, “From this day on, the prayer meeting will be the barometer of our church. What happens on Tuesday night will be the gauge by which we will judge the success or failure because that will be the measure by which God blesses us.”<sup>5</sup> Cymbala, who speaks in conferences of church leaders across the country, including Southern Baptist conferences and churches, emphasizes to pastors that “for our churches and ministries to be all God wants them to be, they *must* be saturated with prayer. Spiritual power is *always* linked to communion with God.”

These testimonies provide a message particularly pertinent to new pastors. Regardless of the circumstances in which you find the church, corporate prayer is a vital part of the solution of problems and determining directions for the future.

Growing out of this prayer emphasis from the 1990s that carries into the third millennium, many churches are returning to experienced traditional practices of prayer or are making significant changes to impact the church.

- Leaders are challenged to make corporate prayer the primary focus of the church and its work.
- Prayer is considered a prerequisite for all ministry efforts.
- Churches are adding several types of prayer-related meetings to the church schedule.
- Prayer is a weapon and a shield in preparing for evangelistic meetings.
- Leaders are encouraged to rely on the work and power of the Holy Spirit rather than gimmicks or techniques.
- Prayer for personal repentance and confession of sin occurs in meetings of church members.
- Prayer becomes a personal priority in leaders’ lives and ministries.

Pastors can make a lasting contribution in many churches by helping them move beyond using prayer just as a way to open a meeting and to close a meeting or as a way to transition from one activity to another in worship services. Ritual praying may make *some* contribution in corporate meetings, but it falls dismally short of the blessing that comes from a dynamic encounter with the living God through prayer, the access into which He has invited us. One way to strengthen the ministry of prayer is to develop an ongoing process of prayer partners taking seriously the need for specific prayer for the work of the ministry.

Another way is to recapture the meaning and practice of prayer meetings. Prayer meetings are becoming the key focus of the work of the church and corporate prayer an essential part of the ministry of the church.

John Franklin in *And the Place Was Shaken* provides the following guidance for revitalizing the prayer meeting.<sup>6</sup>

God has three desires He wants to fulfill in a prayer meeting.

- He wants to reveal Himself to His people.  
The result is... People glorify God, learn the love relationship with Him, and become like Him.
- He wants to move people to His agenda.  
The result is... People of God are on mission with Him.
- He wants to build and minister to His people, especially through His people.  
The result is... *koinonia*.

Your job as a leader is to work with God by:

- Designing a format that encourages the three desires of God.
- Facilitating activities that encourage the three desires of God.
- Shepherding your people to do the desires of God.
- Discerning the activity of God before and during prayer meeting to increase the three desires of God.

A leader must especially master three types of activities.

- Knowing how to set the focus on God.
- Knowing how to facilitate participation from the laity.
- Knowing how to facilitate ministering activities.

New pastors can use the chart on page 29 as one way to develop a dynamic prayer meeting. This can be an effective way to help church members know how to pray. You can duplicate the form on page 30 to use as a planning sheet for your prayer meeting.

# DEVELOPING A DYNAMIC PRAYER MEETING

**HOW TO USE THIS CHART:** Design a prayer meeting by understanding what God wants in your church, developing the **FORMAT**, and then choosing **ACTIVITIES** to use in each segment of the format. An example of this is in the center. **FORMAT + ACTIVITIES = PRAYER**

## A GOD-CENTERED FORMAT

A format is the organization and process flow of the prayer meeting. In this one-hour model, 5 segments are listed.

\*\*\*\*\*

### FOCUS ON GOD – 10-15 MINUTES

The Goal: To set the people's focus on God. God desires an intimate relationship with Him. Therefore, a prayer meeting must begin with God. The focus can be set on God by highlighting any reality about God – *who He is, what He can do, what He likes or dislikes, the reality of His presence, His purposes, etc.* Prior to the prayer meeting prepare yourself by seeking the Holy Spirit's guidance to know what to emphasize about Him and the implications of our relationship with Him.

### RESPOND FROM THE HEART – 5-10 MINUTES

The Goal: To create an opportunity for the heart to respond to God. When the focus is on God, the heart will respond to Him as the Holy Spirit reminds the people of key issues such as *surrendering personal agendas, faith, gratitude, dependence, repentance, praise, honesty, thanksgiving, etc.* Having an intentional segment allows the people to solidify their response which will prepare their mind and spirit as they continue their prayer.

### SEEK FIRST THE KINGDOM – 15-20 MINUTES

The Goal: To lead the people to be on God's agenda. God said if we seek first the kingdom He would give us everything else. That is why this segment occurs before we ask our requests. Deliberately utilize this time to encourage an outward focus on God's agenda by praying for various themes such as *missions, evangelism, social impact, the backslidden, the homeless, etc.* Remember also to pray consistently for projects and efforts occurring in the life of your church in which God is leading. Present these themes so that they become heart issues, not head issues only.

### PRESENT YOUR REQUESTS – 15-20 MINUTES

The Goal: To pray for needs from God's perspective and minister to one another. Teach the people how to think of prayer requests from God's viewpoint. Also use this segment to minister to one another as prayers are offered for various requests such as *the sick, marriages, financial concerns, crises, the youth, mothers, bereaved, traveling mercies, etc.*

### CLOSE IN CELEBRATION – 5 MINUTES

The Goal: To reaffirm expectation in God. This closure will be a reminder to the people to expect God's answer. You can use different means such as *giving thanks, singing, clapping, unified declaration, etc.* When God is present, people want to respond, and it sends them out on a positive note.

## AN EXAMPLE OF A PRAYER MEETING

### FOCUS ON GOD

1. As a reminder of what God can do, read Eph 3:14-21. Recruit a member to give a testimony of how God answered prayer during the week.

### RESPOND FROM THE HEART

(The number of prayer times may vary.)

1. Encourage dependence by praying in small groups.
2. Encourage faith and put hands together to symbolize expectation receiving.

### SEEK FIRST THE KINGDOM

(Use a theme. The number of prayer times may vary.)

1. Have the mission team come to the front and other members surround and pray for them on their upcoming trip.
2. Pray in small groups for those who will hear the gospel from the mission team.
3. Pray in small groups for local Christians where the team will serve.

### PRESENT YOUR REQUESTS

(The number of prayer times may vary.)

1. Have every member write a prayer card and send to the Jones family currently battling with cancer.
2. Pray for couples with troubled marriages. Let the congregation symbolize standing in the gap for these couples by standing in pairs to pray.
3. Pray in small groups for those needing jobs.
4. Have open prayer time in small groups to pray for needs on members' hearts.

### CLOSE IN CELEBRATION

Have members sing "Praise to the Lord, the Almighty" in a spirit of thanksgiving trusting Him.

## INVOLVEMENT ACTIVITIES

An activity is any way or means to focus the heart on God, elicit participation, and facilitate ministry to one another.

\*\*\*\*\*

There are 3 groupings of activities. They are organized this way to highlight their importance to you as a leader. Keep in mind that any activity can occur anywhere in the format and may also fit in more than one segment.

### FOCUSING ACTIVITIES

The Goal: To set peoples focus on God. The Holy Spirit stirs hearts through various focusing activities such as *the leader's words, use of Scripture, singing, testimony, drama, etc.* Especially use these types of activities at the beginning of the prayer meeting when you are seeking to set the focus on God. Continue orienting people to God as you progress through the prayer meeting. Under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, select what is appropriate for your prayer meeting.

### PARTICIPATION ACTIVITIES

The Goal: To involve as many people as possible, both numerically and physically. This structures likely opportunities for God to speak and work through all the body. You facilitate this two ways:

**NUMERICALLY:** God wants all of His people (not a select few) to participate in the prayer meeting. Therefore: (1) Give away leadership roles in various ways including having a number of participants *read Scripture, give testimonies, guide prayer times, etc.* (2) Give everyone a chance to vocalize their relationship with God. Create these opportunities through activities such as *singing, small groups, individually praying out loud all at once, responsive reading, large group sentence prayers, etc.*

**PHYSICALLY:** People's bodily participation often encourages their heart to participate. Utilize various activities such as *coming to the altar, kneeling, writing a prayer card, clasping hands, standing to pray with another, breaking into small groups, etc.* This doesn't have to be calisthenics. It could be as simple as taking another's hand, but don't create spectator mode by allowing them to just sit there in the pew.

### MINISTERING ACTIVITIES

The Goal: For the body to minister to and build itself up in love. God wants us to minister to each other. Employ activities such as *kneeling beside another at the altar, having new mothers stand as the congregation prays for them, having participants put their hand on each other's shoulder, having the church surround someone with a special need, having small groups surround those struggling with cancer, etc.* Incorporate these activities into the format to let the body build itself up in love.

## Two Pillars of Prayer Meeting

GOD-CENTERED FORMAT	INVOLVEMENT ACTIVITIES
<b>Focus on God</b> - Who He is - What He can do - His presence - His perspective - His likes & dislikes	<b>Focusing</b> - Leader's words - Scripture - Music - Testimony - Drama
<b>Respond from the heart</b> - God-centered - Faith - Honesty - Repentance - Dependence - Praise	<b>Participation Activities</b>  NUMERICALLY - Ask people to have different roles in leading, testifying, reading Scripture, etc. - Singing - Small groups - Individually praying out loud all at once - Responsive reading - Large group sentence prayer, etc.
<b>Seek first the kingdom</b> - Awakening - The lost - The backslidden - Missions - VBS	PHYSICALLY - Come to the altar - Kneel - Stand in pairs - Banner rotation - Go to someone else during the prayer meeting - Writing a prayer card note - Prayer walking
<b>Present your requests</b> - Sick - Marriages - Bereaved - Financial - Families	
<b>Close in celebration</b> - Thanksgiving - Proclamation - Praise - Declaration	<b>Ministering Activities</b> - Sincere love for one another - Praying for one another - Bearing each others burdens - Blessing one another - Encouraging unity

## Your Plan for Prayer Meeting

GOD-CENTERED FORMAT	INVOLVEMENT ACTIVITIES
<b>Focus on God</b>  1. _____	_____
<b>Respond from the heart</b>  1. _____	_____
<b>Seek first the kingdom</b>  1. _____ 2. _____	_____ _____
<b>Present your requests</b>  1. _____ 2. _____ 3. _____ 4. _____	_____ _____ _____ _____
<b>Close in celebration</b>  1. _____	_____



## Discussion of Demographic Study

Why should a church be interested in demographics? Isn't it a secular marketing concept best reserved for businesses and those trying to make money? The word itself simply means "writings about people." It is the research on and study of groups of people in society on either a large or small scale.

The Biblical rationale for demographics is found in John 4:35 when Jesus said, *Don't you say, "There are still four more months, then comes the harvest"? Listen [to what] I'm telling you: Open your eyes and look at the fields, for they are ready for harvest.*

Demographic studies can be an eye-opener for some churches and help them begin to see through kingdom eyes the communities in which God has planted them.

After providing a printed executive summary of the report, presenting it verbally, and explaining the information in it, use the following questions to lead a discussion with the Vision team:

- (1) What surprised you in this report?
- (2) What did not surprise you in this report?
- (3) How do the percentages of age compare to our church? In other words, if our community is made up of 8% who are 10-14 years of age, shouldn't that be reflective of our church as well? What does it say about us if it is less? What does it say about us if it is more?
- (4) What does the population change map have to say about our growth rate as a church?
- (5) Some people say, "Birds of a feather flock together." Would you say that the U.S. Mosaic profile of our community is reflective of our church? If it isn't, what can we do about that? If it is but we're not growing as fast as the population rate, what does that tell us?
- (6) What does the population breakdown according to families and non-families have to say about our strategy as a church?
- (7) The North American Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention asserts that 70% of the US population is lost and does not know Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. How many people does that represent in our community? What is your response to that?

### **STAGE 3: Affirming Biblical Principles for Church Growth**

Biblical principles identify the primary scriptural teachings that direct the scope and work of the church. Biblical principles are the same for all churches in all places in any era. They require a church to wrestle with questions like: “Why do we exist?” and “What does God call us to do with Him that brings glory to Himself?”

New pastors should teach and preach to help people understand and affirm the biblical principles that guide the church in its planning for growth and shape its practice. Leading churches through the following sequential steps is a major responsibility of new pastors.

1. Distribute to each member of the Vision Team a copy of “A Church Model and Process” chart on page 24 and “Biblical Principles for Church Growth” on pages 33-38. Lead the Vision Team to pray faithfully and fervently for God’s guidance in understanding and applying the biblical principles upon which churches are to be built.
2. Continue preaching on the Great Commission: God’s Purpose and Plan for His Churches. Also preach on the five biblical functions of the church revealed in Acts and in selected portions of Paul’s letters to churches. Emphasize that God empowers the body of believers to bring people into the family of God and nurture them in faith and work. It is more than having a church name, a traditional church building, and regularly scheduled activities.
3. Divide the Vision Team into five subgroups, one for each of the five functions. Each subgroup will use the SWOTs form (page 39) to identify the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats the church has in its assigned function area.
4. Each subgroup will present a summary report to the full Vision Team.
5. Use this “Evaluating Our Church’s Commitment to the Commission” form (page 40) as another way to rate the church’s effectiveness in the five functions.

## BIBLICAL PRINCIPLES FOR CHURCH GROWTH <sup>7</sup>

Church growth is the result of God's supernatural work through His people to accomplish His kingdom purposes. Church growth also is the result of God's people obeying His will and His Word in the world.

### **The Great Commission defines for His church God's mission in the world.**

"Then Jesus came near and said to them, 'All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe everything I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age' " (Matt. 28:18-20).

The Great Commission is God's expressed mission to His people in His Word and through His people to the world. At its core, the Great Commission (Matt. 28:18-20) is a command to join Christ in His mission.

It represents the overriding mandate—the driving force—to any New Testament church. That mandate is "to make disciples." Making disciples involves leading people to personal faith in Jesus Christ as God's Messiah and humanity's personal redeemer, assimilating new believers into the life and ministry of the church, and leading them toward maturity in Christ.

Without the driving force of the Great Commission, church growth will be little more than a misguided attempt to gain numbers, increase enrollments, discover methods, utilize marketing techniques, and do something different. The Great Commission defines God's mission (which is our mission) in the world. The Commission is the Lord's marching orders for every believer and church.

*"All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth."* – We cannot fulfill the Great Commission in our own strength and in our way. The power and authority to do what our Lord commanded are His, not ours.

*"Go, therefore."* – Christ commands us to go into our world with His message of hope and salvation. We go to family, friends, neighbors, and strangers because Jesus tells us to go. For a Christian, going is not an option; it is the Lord's command.

*"Make disciples."* – The best translation of the Greek word sometimes translated *teach* is "make disciples." To become a disciple, a person has to turn from sin and receive salvation from Christ. A disciple is a learner, a follower of Christ who has experienced a radical change of life and lifestyle. Christians are partners with the Lord in redemption.

*“All nations.”* – The kingdom of God is for all people. It is not limited to any racial, national, social, or cultural group. The gospel reveals the Lord’s love for all kinds of people in all kinds of circumstances in all kinds of places. There are no limits on the gospel, geographic or otherwise.

*“Baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.”* – Baptism is an act of obedience and a picture of a person’s identification with Christ in His death, burial, and resurrection. It symbolizes what God has done for us in redemption. When Christ redeems us, we die to sin and rise to new life in Him.

*“Teaching them to observe everything I have commanded you.”* – Christians are to bring disciples into a deeper relationship with Christ and into a better understanding of His will. New disciples are led to spiritual maturity by other believers who help them know and do the things Jesus commanded.

*“And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”* – Jesus assured His disciples that His constant presence would be with them to help them fulfill His Great Commission. Our Lord is beside us, around us, and within us. We join Him, at His invitation, in His redemptive work.

### **The church fulfills the Great Commission through five functions.**

The New Testament describes five functions or purposes that every church can and must do in order to fulfill the Great Commission. These functions are evangelism, discipleship, fellowship, ministry, and worship. Each believer must do the same five functions to fulfill his or her personal calling in the world.

#### **1. Evangelism**

Evangelism is the process of sharing the gospel with the lost and leading them to a personal relationship with Christ that enables them to enter the kingdom of God. It is asking them to repent of their sins, to put their faith in Christ for the forgiveness of sins and the free gift of eternal life, and to follow Him forever as Lord.

“ ‘Repent,’ Peter said to them, ‘and be baptized, each of you, in the name of Jesus the Messiah for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is for you and for your children, and for all who are far off, as many as the Lord our God will call.’ And with many other words he testified and strongly urged them, saying, ‘Be saved from this corrupt generation!’ So those who accepted his message were baptized, and that day about 3,000 people were added to them” (Acts 2:38-41).

“Therefore if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation; old things have passed away, and look, new things have come. Now everything is from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: that is, in Christ, God was reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and He has

committed the message of reconciliation to us. Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ; certain that God is appealing through us, we plead on Christ's behalf, 'Be reconciled to God.' He made the One who did not know sin to be sin for us, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him" (2 Cor. 5:17-21).

Evangelism is the good news of the gospel spoken by believers and lived out in their lives. Christians are saved to fellowship with the King of kings and Lord of lords. That is too much blessing to be kept to oneself. Evangelism is sharing the blessing with those who do not have it. It is a spiritual interaction between saved people and the lost.

Evangelism under the lordship of Christ is the only way to make disciples. The need for the gospel is universal and the message is universal and effective in all cultures. Evangelism is a believer sharing the gospel with a lost person of any age or culture in ways both understand. God saves His people for fellowship with Him and sends them into the world to help others to personally know the joy of forgiveness and the blessing of wholeness through the saving work of Jesus Christ on the cross.

## **2. Discipleship**

Discipleship is a lifelong journey of obedience to Christ that transforms a person's values and behavior and results in ministry in one's home, church, and in the world. Disciples are people who have responded to the Holy Spirit's conviction by repenting of their sins, have trusted Jesus Christ's redeeming work for forgiveness from sin, and have begun the journey of life with Christ desiring to grow into the likeness of Christ. Mature discipleship, living for the Lord in every aspect of life while awaiting the coming of the Savior to bring everything under His control, is a goal for all believers.

"And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching, to fellowship, to the breaking of bread, and to prayers. Then fear came over everyone, and many wonders and signs were being performed through the apostles" (Acts 2:42-43).

"For by grace you are saved through faith, and this is not from yourselves; it is God's gift—not from works, so that no one can boast. For we are His creation—created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared ahead of time so that we should walk in them" (Eph. 2:8-10).

Nothing about the Christian life is natural or easy. The life of a disciple involves struggle, inconvenience, and sometimes terrible suffering. Believers must be taught to understand and practice the ways of Christ. They must see kingdom living displayed in believers who are more spiritually mature. Then they must model kingdom living for those who are younger in their faith.

Nurturing disciples is the process of teaching the new citizen in the kingdom of God to love, trust, and obey God the King and how to evangelize and train others to do the same. The discipleship process requires commitment, patience, and obedience, because maturing believers requires time.

### **3. Fellowship**

Fellowship is intimate spiritual relationship with God and with other believers brought together in Jesus Christ, the way members express their “oneness” in Jesus Christ. The biblical word means “to share in” or “to come into communion” and suggests unity and community. See the biblical church covenant on page 66.

“And they devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching, to fellowship, to the breaking of bread, and to prayers. . . . And every day they devoted themselves to meeting together in the temple complex, and broke bread from house to house. They ate their food with gladness and simplicity of heart, praising God and having favor with all the people. And every day the Lord added to them those who were being saved” (Acts 2:42, 46, 47).

Fellowship does not happen by accident. It is the result of the power of God working in individual believers and in the church body. As believers share with others their salvation experiences, practice living Christlike lives, and demonstrate their faith by serving others, fellowship flourishes as surely as summer follows spring.

Without warm, loving fellowship churches will not grow. People will not come where bickering, selfishness, coldness, and tensions prevail. People want to be where peace, joy, love, and family relationships prevail.

In addition to the local fellowship of believers, the church is a great family of believers across the world. When one Christian meets another anywhere in the world, regardless of language, color, or culture, they have an immediate bond with each other because they share in the same saving grace of Jesus Christ. Jesus described His relationship with the Father in terms of oneness and offers His followers that same kind of relationship with Him and with each other.

Christ’s unity with the Father is the pattern for churches not bound together by creeds or confessions, programs, and ministries, but with the bonds of God’s love and the bonding power of the Holy Spirit. A prerequisite to fellowship among believers is dynamic worship of the living God who makes all people one through the cross of Christ. Those who experience fellowship with God in worship cannot withhold fellowship from others who worship this same one and only God.

### **4. Ministry**

“Now all the believers were together and had everything in common. So they sold their possessions and property and distributed the proceeds to all, as anyone had a need” (Acts 2:44-45).

“And He personally gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, for the training of the saints in the work of ministry, to build up the body of Christ, until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of God’s Son, growing into a mature man with a stature measured by Christ’s fullness. Then we will no longer be little

children, tossed by the waves and blown around by every wind of teaching, by human cunning with cleverness in the techniques of deceit. But speaking the truth in love, let us grow in every way into Him who is the head—Christ” (Eph. 4:11-15).

Ministry is meeting another person’s need in the name of Jesus, both members of the church and non-members. Using the resources God provides, it is expressed as service to people inside the church family and expressed as missions to those outside the church. This ministry grows out of a transformed and serving life.

Christian compassion demands that we minister to all people without regard to their race, religious affiliation, abilities, or circumstances. Ministry is rooted in the compassion and concern the Lord builds into the hearts of believers when they enter His kingdom.

Human need is so staggering that our own resources alone will never be enough. As God expects us to minister, He gives us the power and the means to do so. We must be good stewards of the faith, abilities, and resources God has given us.

Every church has the responsibility to equip its members to discover, develop, and use their ministry gifts in ways that honor Christ and build God’s kingdom. Ministry is as natural to growing Christians as are evangelism and discipleship because of the Holy Spirit dwelling in them. Churches that are relevant to their community grow.

## **5. Worship**

Worship is the response of believers to the presence, holiness, and revelation of Almighty God that transforms them into His likeness. It leads worshippers to a greater appreciation for God, a better understanding of His ways, and a deeper commitment to Him. Worship brings us face-to-face with our Creator and draws us closer to His image. Worship arises from the commands of God in Scripture and the grateful hearts of the redeemed. Worship is to the soul what breathing is to the body.

“And every day they devoted themselves to meeting together in the temple complex, and broke bread from house to house. They ate their food with gladness and simplicity of heart, praising God and having favor with all the people. And every day the Lord added to them those who were being saved” (Acts 2:46-47).

“Jesus told her, ‘Believe Me, woman, an hour is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem. You Samaritans worship what you do not know. We worship what we do know, because salvation is from the Jews. But an hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth. Yes, the Father wants such people to worship Him. God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth’ ” (John 4:21-24).

Christian worship is first a personal experience; then it is a family and a congregational experience. Church leaders have the responsibility to help new believers grow in all aspects of worship: prayer, devotional Scripture reading, praise, adoration, confession, repentance,

profession, and stewardship of life. In addition, corporate worship is fostered through public Scripture reading, preaching, and the ordinances.

The first worship experience of all Christians is when their yielded hearts bow before God confessing and repenting of sin, turn to Jesus Christ for salvation from sin, and rejoice at the reality of salvation. Encountering God in worship transforms believers more and more into His likeness.



# S W O T s

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Strengths	Weaknesses
Opportunities	Threats

Note: strengths and weaknesses are internal in nature, while opportunities and threats are external

## EVALUATING OUR CHURCH'S COMMITMENT TO THE COMMISSION

*The 11 disciples traveled to Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus had directed them. When they saw Him, they worshiped, but some doubted. Then Jesus came near and said to them, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe everything I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age" (Matt. 28:16–20).*

Rate each function for effectiveness using 1 as ineffective and 5 as very effective. Then, write a statement about the church's strengths and weaknesses in each of the functions.

	Rating	Statement
<b>EVANGELISM</b>	_____	
	Strength: _____	
	Weakness: _____	
<b>DISCIPLESHIP</b>	_____	
	Strength: _____	
	Weakness: _____	
<b>FELLOWSHIP</b>	_____	
	Strength: _____	
	Weakness: _____	
<b>MINISTRY</b>	_____	
	Strength: _____	
	Weakness: _____	
<b>WORSHIP</b>	_____	
	Strength: _____	
	Weakness: _____	

## **STAGE 4: Focusing on Kingdom Results**

Kingdom results mean the supernatural activity of God is being expressed through the body of Christ and is being reflected in the changed lives of people. The results are measures or indicators of faithful obedience in responding to the Great Commission and serving God in growing His kingdom.

Having interpreted the Great Commission in terms of evangelism, discipleship, ministry, fellowship, and worship, it follows that a church should plan for the results of faithfully and effectively performing these functions enlightened by the Scriptures and empowered by the Holy Spirit (see chart of “A Church Model and Process” on page 24).

New pastors should teach and preach to help people understand and affirm the kingdom results that guide the church in its planning for growth. Leading churches through these sequential steps is a major responsibility of new pastors.

1. Distribute to each member of the Vision Team a copy of pages 42-44 on Kingdom Results. Use those pages and the chart of “A Church Model and Process” on page 24 to lead the Vision Team to pray faithfully and fervently for God’s guidance in understanding the kingdom results that God want churches to achieve.
2. Preach a sermon series on the four kingdom results—spiritual transformation, numerical growth, ministry expansion, and kingdom advance.
3. Lead the Vision Team in the development of key objectives in the areas of the five functions of the church (pages 34-38).
4. Distribute to each member of the Vision team a copy of pages 42-44 on Kingdom Results. Use those pages and the chart of “A Church Model and Process” on page 24 to lead the Vision team to pray faithfully and fervently for God’s guidance in understanding the kingdom results that God want churches to achieve.
5. Preach a sermon series on the four kingdom results—spiritual transformation, numerical growth, ministry expansion, and kingdom advance.
6. Divide the Vision team into four subgroups to evaluate the church’s effectiveness in each of the result areas using the SWOTs form (page 39). Each subgroup will give a report to the full Vision team.

See the following pages (42-44) for an overview of kingdom results. These may be copied to give to the Vision team (step 1 above).

## **KINGDOM RESULTS**

Kingdom results mean the supernatural activity of God is being expressed through the body of Christ and is being reflected in the changed lives of people. The following four results are measures or indicators of faithful obedience in responding to the Great Commission and serving God in growing His kingdom.

### **1. More Like Christ — Spiritual Transformation**

Spiritual transformation is God's work of changing a believer into the likeness of Jesus by creating a new identity in Christ and by empowering a lifelong relationship of love, trust, and obedience that glorifies God.

In the Great Commission, Jesus said the church must be teaching new disciples to obey everything He commanded (Matt. 28:20). Paul wrote, "We all . . . are reflecting the glory of the Lord and are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory; this is from the Lord who is the Spirit" (2 Cor. 3:18).

New believers need to understand and live the true meaning of discipleship. Just as children pass a series of milestones on their way to maturity, believers go through transformational passages on their way to spiritual maturity.

Spiritual transformation can be observed in at least four dimensions.

- Developing in our relationship with Christ – We get our daily growth and spiritual nourishment from the same source we got our eternal life—Jesus Christ (John 15:5). Jesus desires for us to have the same kind of relationship with Him that He has with the Father (John 17:21). We are to grow to the point that He lives His life in and through us (Gal. 2:19-20).
- Developing in our relationships with believers – The mark of a church is the warm, loving relationships believers enjoy with one another (John 13:34-35). Although we have many different backgrounds, cultures, ideas, opinions, and experiences, we have a common bond in Christ (Gal. 3:26-28).
- Developing in our relationships with unbelievers – Those who are objects of the Father's love and concern must be on our hearts and minds as well. Believers have been given the ministry and message of reconciliation as His ambassadors (2 Cor. 5:18-20). With the power of the Holy Spirit, we are His witnesses to those nearby and to the ends of the earth (Acts 1:8).
- Developing Christian disciplines – The Christian life is built on important disciplines such as Bible reading, prayer, worship, witnessing, and faithful participation in the fellowship of believers. These activities will not produce mature Christians by themselves, but believers need them to grow spiritually.

## **2. More People Reached for Christ — Numerical Growth**

Numbers are important in the kingdom of God or the Bible would not have recorded them. Twice in the second chapter of Acts, Luke records the number of people who were baptized and added to the church (v. 41, 47). Luke reports in Acts 6:1 that “the number of disciples was multiplying.” Six verses later the number of disciples “multiplied greatly.” It is obvious that God is pleased when His children serve in ways that help His kingdom come on earth. Numerical growth means increases in all areas of the church. Also numerical growth means any size church can grow.

There’s nothing wrong with seeing numbers as evidence of God at work. The danger is in seeing numbers as statistics rather than people and in using numbers as the only measure of growth.

What numerical growth does the church desire? Results can be expected in each of the following areas if the church is faithfully and effectively involved in evangelism, discipleship, fellowship, ministry, and worship.

- Professions of faith and baptisms
- People attending Bible study
- People participating regularly in corporate worship and corporate prayer

Churches that expect numerical growth are normally engaged in training for these growth areas, involved in ministries outside the church, practicing biblical stewardship, providing effective discipleship, and participating in mission projects. Some churches already have practical and challenging growth goals while others have become comfortable being on a growth plateau or in a gradual decline.

## **3. More Service in the Name of Christ — Ministry Expansion**

When Jesus spoke of the final judgment in Matthew 25:31–46, He talked about ministry. “Whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me” (25:40).

As the church becomes sensitive to the unmet needs in the fellowship, the community, and the world, they will expand their ministries to meet those needs. Ministry expansion means that as a church grows numerically and as people are transformed spiritually, the Holy Spirit opens additional doors of ministry. As long as we minister to hurting people, we will never lack for an audience.

“In those days, as the number of the disciples was multiplying, there arose a complaint by the Hellenistic Jews against the Hebraic Jews that their widows were being overlooked in the daily distribution. Then the Twelve summoned the whole company of the disciples and said, ‘It would not be right for us to give up preaching about God to wait on tables. Therefore, brothers, select from among you seven men of good reputation, full of the Spirit and wisdom, whom we can appoint to this duty’” (Acts 6:1-3).

“In the local church at Antioch there were prophets and teachers: Barnabas, Simeon who was called Niger, Lucius the Eyrenian, Manaen, a close friend of Herod the tetrarch, and Saul. As they were ministering to the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, ‘Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work that I have called them to.’ Then, after they had fasted, prayed, and laid hands on them, they sent them off” (Acts 13:1-3).

God intends to meet the needs in the fellowship, community, and world through the lives of His children who seek out areas of ministry in which to serve. God expects us to place our gifts, abilities, and resources in His hands for His use. He will bless them and add to them so that we will have more than enough to meet the needs of all people. The church must listen to the Holy Spirit’s voice through the Word of God and prayer and must depend on the Spirit to lead it to the ministry He desires. The more mature believers are the more likely God will lead them to do greater and different things.

#### **4. More of Christ’s Heart for the World — Kingdom Advance**

Kingdom advance is God’s daily work of extending His kingdom throughout the world. The church is involved in reaching the world for Christ by praying, giving generously, and sending members on mission into the world. This is the Great Commission in its purest and best form. Remember, however, the Great Commission’s ‘go’ is not complete until people are sent out from local churches—to advance His kingdom to ‘all nations’—as the Lord directs.”

“Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness” (Matt. 6:33).

“But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be My witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth” (Acts 1:8).

Kingdom advance results from kingdom consciousness. Sights are lifted above self-interest, or one class or group or team, or one church or denomination. Above all human structure is the kingdom of God. The measure of kingdom advance in a church is the church praying “Your kingdom come, your will be done” (Matt. 6:10) and accepting God’s rule in all of its affairs.

When a church grows numerically, spiritually, and in ministry, believers become sensitive to the need to extend the gospel beyond their community to a world lost in sin. Their window on the world is enlarged. Their desire to witness, disciple, and minister is multiplied and enlarged. Involvement in missions reveals that the people of God have developed a worldview that is proper and biblical. The church will see the world as God sees it and will respond by sending its members into the world as missionaries.

God calls out believers to go into the world with the message of redemption. For some believers, the call will be to their families, churches, and neighborhoods. Others will be called to faraway places. But all believers are commissioned by Jesus to go into the world. “Just as the Father has sent Me, I also send you” (John 20:21).

## **STAGE 5: Establishing Church Practice**

This is a crucial stage in the ministry of a new pastor—leading a church from convictional principles to productive practice. Church practice means how you involve people in evangelism, discipleship, ministry, fellowship, and worship. It determines how people will relate to people and to tasks in carrying out the Great Commission. Shaping church practice answers questions like “What is the most effective way to do our work to make the greatest difference in the lives of people?” Strategy is the course a church decides to take to achieve kingdom results. Church practice is the operational plan to get there.

As a new pastor you have the challenge of leading the church in the hard work of praying and planning. To succeed you must inspire churches to move beyond lethargy, constricting traditions, low expectations, and low commitment. To do that, you must pray for a discerning heart.

1. Distribute to each member of the Vision Team a copy of pages 46-49 on Church Practice. Although you have already distributed the chart of “A Church Model and Process” on page 24, have extra copies available. Lead the Vision Team in studying about the four church practices of open groups, closed groups, corporate worship, and ministry teams. Challenge them to pray fervently for God’s guidance in applying the church practices in order to carry out the biblical principles for church growth and to accomplish the kingdom results God desires for the church.
2. Communicate to the congregation about the church practices through sermons and church publications. Display the chart of the Model and Process (page 24) throughout the church facilities.

See the following pages (46-49) for an overview of church practice. These may be copied to give to the Vision Team (step 1 above).

## CHURCH PRACTICE

The “Church Model and Process” diagram provides a model for church practice defining three stages of growth: (1) making disciples through open groups and corporate worship, (2) maturing believers through closed groups, and (3) multiplying ministries through ministry teams. Understanding open groups, closed groups, corporate worship, and ministry teams and the process and essential actions for making them effective in achieving kingdom results may be the turning point for growth in your church. The visuals described in this section are on the diagram.

### Open Groups

Open groups are on-going, evangelistic Bible study units including both believers and unbelievers. The dotted circle shows this is an entry point for unbelievers.

An open group is primarily an evangelistic Bible study group or event comprised of an intentional mix of both believers and unbelievers. The focus is evangelism, the context is Bible study, and the intent is to begin assimilation. It is also a great environment for building relationships and encouragement. Participants can enter the group at any point. Prior knowledge of the content being studied is not required.

An open group should be defined by its purpose, nature, function, and participants rather than by its resources, label, time frame, or location. “Open” means both believers and unbelievers are invited to participate in the Bible study experience. The group is intentionally formed around the study of God’s Word. Sunday School classes are open groups that have proven over time to be an effective way to involve families and individuals in Bible study.

Five transferable principles are valuable in guiding the effectiveness of open groups.

- The Principle of Foundational Evangelism – Open Bible study groups provide the best long-term approach for building a ministry environment that guides preschoolers and children toward conversion through foundational teaching, encourages unsaved people to come to faith in Christ, assimilates new believers into the life of the church, and encourages believers to lead others to Christ.
- The Principle of Foundational Discipleship – Open group Bible study provides a foundational step of discipleship for involving people in seeking the kingdom of God and fulfilling the Great Commission.
- The Principle of Family Responsibility – Open groups equip Christian parents to fulfill their responsibility as the primary Bible teachers of their children. These groups work to nurture sound, healthy families that help children and adults to integrate the Scriptures into their lives influencing how they think and act.
- The Principle of Spiritual Transformation – Open groups engage learners in the biblical method of instruction that leads people toward spiritual transformation. These groups champion the absolute truth and authority of God’s Word. They also lead



believers to integrate a biblical worldview into their minds, hearts, and lives through ongoing systematic Bible study.

- The Principle of Biblical Leadership – Open groups call for leaders to follow the biblical standard for leadership. These groups call leaders to a prophetic ministry, listening to God’s voice, discovering His message, integrating the message into their lives, and proclaiming His truth through His church to the nations. Every leader is to be accountable for being an authentic example of Christ in personal living.

## **Corporate Worship**

Worship services are focused on God but are designed for both believers and unbelievers. The dotted circle shows this is an entry point for unbelievers.

Worship that transforms is the response of believers to the presence, holiness, and revelation of Almighty God. As the leader of the church, the pastor is the primary worship leader. He will involve others in planning and leading worship experiences. The form of worship is not as important as the purpose of worship. *That* we worship is far more important than *how* we worship. A worship service must be designed to meet the fellowship needs of the church. This will create a family spirit that unites believers with the Lord and one another.

Corporate worship is open to unbelievers as the church gathers to praise God, study the Bible, and help people to understand, believe, and respond to the truths of the Bible. Some worship experiences focus primarily on the needs of Christians and others focus primarily on the needs of unbelievers, but the Holy Spirit can use both to speak to the needs of believers and unbelievers.

The New Testament identifies at least eight elements of worship the early church practiced. Worship must be planned with an intentional effort to balance and integrate these elements of worship.

1. Prayer – Prayer is communication with God that leads the congregation to an awareness of His presence.
2. Praise – Praise expresses to God our adoration and thanks for His character, being, and work. It assists the congregation in understanding the reality of God’s kingdom and His reign over the world and their lives.
3. Confession and Repentance – God restores fellowship when the congregation confesses (agrees with God regarding the reality of their sins) and repents (turns from their sin to God).
4. Profession of Faith – Profession provides the opportunity for the congregation to acknowledge God as Creator, Redeemer, and Sustainer and to respond to His Word and His activity.
5. Scripture Reading and Study – God transforms His church through His Word. The Holy Spirit uses the hearing, reading, and study of Scripture to draw attention to God and our fellowship with Him.

6. Preaching – God uses the preaching of the Word to teach, challenge, confront, convict, and exhort the congregation to obey His Word. Preaching focuses on the Lord and His magnificence.
7. Lord's Supper and Baptism – Jesus established the ordinances as dramatic symbols to make the congregation aware of His work on their behalf.
8. Offerings – A Christian's giving of self, abilities, tithes, and offerings are responses of obedient stewardship, gratitude, and trust. To worship fully means to give yourself in obedience to God.

## **Closed Groups**

Closed groups are short-term, self-contained units that (1) develop disciples to serve and (2) equip kingdom leaders. The solid circle shows these groups are focused on believers.

The focus of closed groups is training, the context is discipling, and the intent is to continue assimilation. Closed groups build kingdom leaders and equip believers to serve by engaging people in discipleship that moves them toward spiritual transformation through short-term training units in an atmosphere of accountability to God and to each other. Because the discipleship group or event has a specific purpose, it is comprised of believers only who covenant to meet together for a limited period of time.

The church creates and maintains groups in which church members are led to discover their spiritual gifts and to develop knowledge and skills for effective ministry. The number and focus of closed groups should be determined by the felt needs of church members for spiritual transformation, teaching and leadership skills, family living skills, ministry and mission skills.

Six principles are valuable in guiding the effectiveness of closed groups.

- The Relationship Principle – Transformation takes place in relationships that start with and are based on an intimate relationship with Jesus. Also, transformational discipleship expresses itself in other relationships including marriage, family, friendships, church, work, acquaintances, community, and society.
- The Followship Principle – The church provides a spiritually sensitive environment that encourages believers to respond to God's call to follow, challenges them to fulfill that call in the Body of Christ, and develops their skills for service.
- The Empowerment Principle – Throughout His ministry Jesus empowered, equipped, disciplined, trained, built up, developed, and prepared His disciples to serve. The Holy Spirit empowers the church to develop servant leaders who depend on His power.
- The Flexibility Principle – Diverse people need flexible and adaptable ways to exercise spiritual transformation. A church ensures that its methods are appropriate for people of all learning styles, personality types, genders, ages, family types and situations, cultural differences, economic conditions, and ethnic backgrounds.
- The Lifestyle Principle – The bulk of Scripture is the story of diverse, ordinary, common people who demonstrated a life transformed by God. The church helps disciples express biblical principles in their everyday lives.

- The Accountability Principle – Although believers are ultimately accountable to God, God uses spouses, other family members, church members, friends, and others to keep us aware of our accountability to Him. The measure of discipleship is the degree to which a believer is like Jesus in attitudes, behavior, and relationships.

## **Ministry Teams**

Ministry teams provide opportunities for service within the church (left side of the diamond) and involvement in missions beyond the church (right side of the diamond). The dotted diamond shows this is an entry point for unbelievers.

Ministry teams exist to build up the body of Christ to accomplish its work of ministry both within the church and outside the church. Ministry teams represent the multiplying stage that lets members extend their reach and their impact on the culture.

Five transferable principles are valuable in guiding the effectiveness of ministry teams.

- The Principle of Filtering – To keep the church and its ministries focused on work that is its calling, the church must filter out any proposed ministry action that is not compatible with its purpose based on fulfilling the Great Commission, accomplishing one or more of the five functions, and achieving one or more of the kingdom results.
- The Principle of Internal/External Focus – Church ministry teams can be focused on strengthening the church body or on sharing the love of Christ beyond the church. Churches must have ministry teams that focus internally and externally.
- The Principle of Universal Involvement – Every Christian has a place of responsibility within the total ministry of the church and must accept responsibility for personal involvement in a ministry team.
- The Principle of Ministry-Team Integration – Churches integrate ministry teams into the life of the church as they staff various ministries of the church. For example, open-group, closed-group, and corporate worship activities are led by ministry teams.
- The Principle of Commission – Ministry teams are not an entity unto themselves. They function under the commission or authorization of the church. The leadership of the team is responsible for reporting the results of the team's ministry to the church.

## **STAGE 6: Using the Essential Church Strategy**

The new pastor should lead the church to understand and use the strategy described in *Essential Church*.

1. Lead members of the Vision Team to write a mission/purpose statement using the process in the Simplify chapter of *Tools for an Essential Church*. (pp. 30-43 of the manual)
2. Lead the church to adopt the mission/purpose statement through appropriate channels and procedures.
3. Communicate the mission/purpose statement to the church through one or more sermons.
4. Lead the Vision Team to use the Deepen chapter of *Tools for an Essential Church* (pp. 44-55) to evaluate the Bible study and preaching ministry of the church. Use questions such as: What kind of sermons is the congregation used to? What kind would members prefer? Are the Bible study groups open or closed? How are the Bible study groups incorporating new people?
5. Lead the Vision Team to use the Expect chapter of *Tools for an Essential Church* (pp. 56-65) to develop a membership process.
6. Lead the Vision Team to use the Multiply chapter of *Tools for an Essential Church* (pp. 66-77) to examine the ministry and evangelism strategies of the church. Lead the church to develop strategies to become more outward focused.

## ESSENTIAL CHURCH

When studying young adults who are church dropouts, Thom and Sam Rainer found a common theme: Young adults do not see that the church was essential to their lives. The authors believe this is the primary underlying factor of declining churches. Many people continue to claim a church, but they do not attend regularly. Research shows that most of the dropouts leave the church between the ages of seventeen and nineteen.

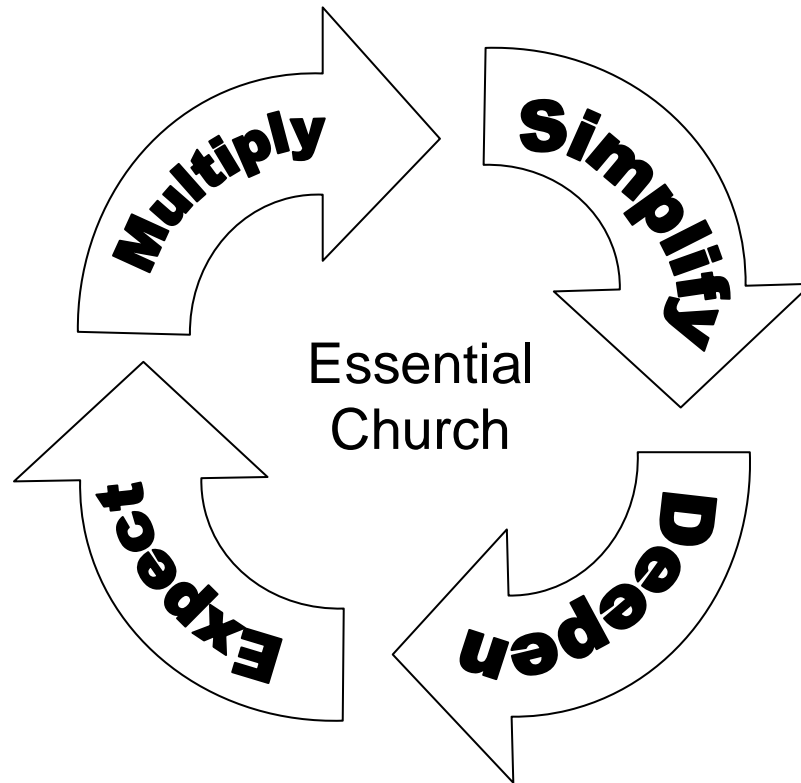
The authors identify seven sins of dying churches.

- Sin 1. Doctrine Dilution – Certain absolutes found within Scripture are so crucial that a Christian should be willing to sacrifice his or her life for them. Watering down Scripture is not the answer to reaching a younger generation for Christ.
- Sin 2. Loss of Evangelistic Passion – Dying churches putter around in sharing their faith. It is the responsibility of the pastor and other key leaders to exhibit evangelistic passion and obedience to the Great Commission.
- Sin 3. Failure to Be Relevant – There is nothing more relevant to a lost world than the saving grace of Jesus Christ. Churches must find ways change their internal culture in order to relay this gospel message to the culture around them.
- Sin 4. Few Outwardly Focused Ministries – Dying churches gorge themselves on closed Bible study groups and church-wide fellowship events while neglecting outreach in the community. Churches must think outward to their community.
- Sin 5. Conflict over Personal Preferences – Squabbling over the most insignificant things smother a church. Churches must break through the quagmire of preferences and unite people around the common causes of spiritual growth and missions.
- Sin 6. The Priority of Comfort – Dying churches do nothing outside the bounds of their comfort level. Churches that flourish will get outside their comfort zones to reach into areas that are uncharted to them.
- Sin 7. Biblical Illiteracy – A major sin of dying churches is to neglect the basics of Scripture and theological teaching. Churches must help their members understand the foundations of their faith if they are to be obedient to God.

The challenge is for churches to communicate to young adults that church is essential for their lives. An essential church will demonstrate biblically the New Testament reality that God intended for local congregations to gather, worship, disciple, minister, and evangelize. Thus members will see the local congregation as critical to their lives. Essential churches have four major components.

### **Simplify**

The essential church has learned to simplify to get their structure right for making disciples. Too many churches are too complicated and filled with activities that have no coherent purpose. They have no clear process or structure for making disciples who are fully devoted followers of Jesus Christ.



This component is described in *Simple Church* by Eric Geiger and Thom Rainer. A simple church is a congregation designed around a straightforward and strategic process that moves people through the stages of spiritual transformation. The simple church has four elements.

- Step 1: Clarity – This is communicating the church’s ministry process of building up the spiritual lives of the members so it is understood by the people. This includes defining the process, illustrating it so members can see it, having a way to measure it, discuss it along the way, and find ways to increase understanding. All of this maintains ownership and involvement.
- Step 2: Movement – This is removing the congestion that prevents the spiritual growth from functioning properly. The ministry process puts people in the place for God to transform them. This means the programming is strategic and sequential to intentionally move members from one step to the next in spiritual maturity. The first step for new believers is a class for new members.
- Step 3: Alignment – This is maximizing the energy of everyone in the church. Jesus prayed for unity among His disciples. “May they all be one, as You, Father, are on Me and I am in You. May they also be one in Us, so the world may believe You sent Me” (John 17:21). Not only does unity reflect God’s character, but it also gets the attention of the world. Alignment is arranging all ministries, programs, and staff (including those that are new) around the same simple process and requiring accountability.
- Step 4: Focus – This is a commitment to abandon those areas that fall outside the church’s simple ministry process. This aspect is the most difficult because saying no tends to bother the person who hears it. Saying no to a proposed new ministry that does not fit is easier than eliminating existing activities that do not fit the

process. But both will be necessary. Making the focused process understandable requires simple language and brevity.

### **Deepen**

An essential church provides strong biblical teaching and preaching to enable its members to deepen their knowledge of God's Word and His truths. They get the content right. These congregations have resisted the temptation to "dumb down" biblical teachings in an attempt to draw a crowd or to avoid tough issues.

An essential church does three things to deepen the discipleship of their members.

- Relevant biblical preaching is found in the pulpit every Sunday.
- Group Bible study is a high priority and core value of the church.
- The members are encouraged and expected to study and learn the Bible for themselves. They are taught and equipped to feed themselves from the Word of God.

### **Expectations**

The essential church has high expectations of its members to know the need for commitment to the congregation. They get the attitude right. The high-expectation church expects much and, thus, receives much from its members. As a result, the church exodus is minimized. When expectations are low, commitment is low.

One of the keys to raising expectations is to have a clearly communicated membership process that explains the expectations of membership to new members. The church believes that they are called to make a difference and to call their members to make a difference in the name of Christ. This is clearly communicated on the front end in new member classes. And making a difference is expected as one of the continuing checkpoints of discipleship.

The essential church has simple structures that move believers along a clearly defined process of maturity. The process can be easily communicated and understood. Small groups are essential to connect people relationally and are the primary ministry arm of the church.

### **Multiply**

An essential church is committed to help its members multiply spiritually, to reach beyond their own fellowship. They get the action right. Evangelism is part of the heartbeat of the church. Missions and ministry are common in the lives of the members.

They have an intentional strategy to reach the dechurched (those who have dropped out). While we lose two-thirds of young adults between the ages of eighteen and twenty-two, we can reclaim half of them between the ages of twenty-three and thirty. The key to reclaiming young adults who have dropped out is the encouragement of friends and family members. The essential church also has an intentional strategy to reach the unchurched (those who have never or rarely been to church). Many of essential churches seek to plant other churches. These churches multiply because they constantly seek to look and reach beyond themselves.

The authors conclude with a plea to avoid a cookie-cutter approach to church health. Such an approach tends to be man-centered rather than God-centered as a church seeks to emulate the latest fad. Such an approach also ignores the uniqueness of every congregation and the uniqueness of the community in which the church is located. Thus there is not a single way to become an essential church. But the principles of this book (based on research) can be a valuable guide along the journey.

## **STAGE 7**

### **Understanding the Seven Elements of Transformational Church**

*Transformational Church*, Thom Rainer & Ed Stetzer, B&H

In **Transformational Church**, best-selling research authors **Ed Stetzer** and **Thom S. Rainer** address the question: how does a body of believers do its part to be in the “sweet spot” where true spiritual transformation occurs? By surveying fifty thousand churches — then narrowing the scope down to five hundred congregations — Stetzer and Rainer share with readers the qualitative answer. **Transformational Church**, the most comprehensive study of the modern American church to date, contains a wealth of indispensable new data, nuanced insights, and how-to guidance, all centered on this key finding:

“Transformational churches make disciples whose lives are being transformed by the gospel, so that people engage the culture around them for its ultimate transformation. Deeply committed to the essential foundations of discipleship (worship, community, and mission), transformational churches practice their faith and make disciples through vibrant leadership, prayerful dependence upon God, and relational intentionality. And they do so paying mind to their unique context and with a missionary mindset.”

Provide the Vision Team an overview of the Transformational Church (see appendix for overview and copy of online assessment).

- Read *Transformational Church* to gain understanding and insight around the seven elements of transformation.
- Use the Transformational Church DVD to guide discussion with the Vision Team.
- Consider a sermon series on the elements of transformation.
- Lead the church to take the Transformational Church Assessment Tool (TCAT).
- Interpret the results of the TCAT to the Vision Team and the church in order to better understand the church’s strengths and challenges.
- Lead the church to celebrate its strengths and to begin addressing the challenges.
- Help the Vision Team to consider the impact the TCAT results have on the ministries and strategies of the church and adjustments that need to be made.



## SUGGESTED READING FOR CONTINUING GROWTH

1. *And the Place was Shaken: How to Lead a Powerful Prayer Ministry*, John Franklin, B&H

Emphasizes the importance of corporate prayer in the life of the church and provides guidance for revitalizing prayer meetings.

2. *Comeback Churches*, Ed Stetzer and Mike Dotson, B&H

Research shows that over time, most churches plateau and then eventually decline. To counter this trend, the authors surveyed 300 churches from across ten different denominations that recently achieved healthy evangelistic growth after a significant season of decline. The result is an exciting method of congregational reinvigoration that can be adapted by any church.

3. *Equipping Deacons to Confront Conflict*, Robert Sheffield and James White, LifeWay Press

This resource provides a basic understanding of conflict and how church leaders can respond as peacemakers.

4. *Essential Church*, Thom S. Rainer and Sam S. Rainer, III, B&H;  
*Tools for an Essential Church*, Thom S. Rainer, Sam S. Rainer III, and Dan Garland

In response to their research showing young adults leaving the church because they do not see it as essential in their lives, the authors share insight from churches that are successfully retaining young adults. The companion book, *Tools*, provides practical instruments for assessing a church's current reality and for implementing the principles of the book.

5. *The Interventionist*, Lyle E. Schaller, Abingdon Press

Provides a conceptual framework for asking questions about congregations and classifies various syndromes that prevent a church from making the changes needed for new life; a productive guide for new ministers.

6. *Jesus on Leadership*, C. Gene Wilkes, LifeWay Press.

Published in workbook format, this book is designed to lead members of the body of Christ to apply biblical principles of servant leadership to all areas of their ministries.

7. *The Kingdom-Focused Church*, Gene Mims, B&H; *Kingdom Principles for Church Growth*, Revised and Expanded, Gene Mims, Convention Press

These books present a biblical foundation emphasizing process, not methods, with the Great Commission as the driving force for a kingdom-focused church, five essential church functions, four kingdom results, and four key church practices.

8. *The Life-Changing Power of Prayer*, T.W. Hunt, LifeWay Press

The author shares from years of study and his own personal walk to help readers grasp a biblical understanding of prayer and develop a more meaningful prayer life.

9. *Pastor Search Committee Handbook*, LifeWay Press

Identifies dozens of essential checkpoints to help expedite the work of this committee and make sure it makes right decisions. The first part of the text focuses on the elements of committee organization; while the second section outlines the steps the committee should follow to accomplish its goal. There's even a set of reproducible forms included in the back and on a CD to help gather information and compare candidates.

10. *Paul on Leadership*, C. Gene Wilkes, LifeWay Press

This book helps your church navigate through change. It uses at the life of the Apostle Paul as the one entrusted with taking the gospel to the world. His experience at a mission outpost in Antioch became a model for him as he set out to plant churches on his missionary journeys. The author pinpoints principles and strategies from Paul's experiences that are transferable to individuals and churches today.

11. *The Peacemaker: A Biblical Guide to Resolving Personal Conflict*, Ken Sande, Baker Book House

This practical resource provides clear guidance for equipping Christians and their churches to respond to conflict biblically.

12. *Reality, 7 Truths from Experiencing God*, Henry & Richard Blackaby, LifeWay Press

This interactive book provides materials for seven small group sessions, daily devotions, and sermon note pages for a 40-day experience. This resource includes

the essence of the widely-used *Experiencing God: Knowing and Doing the Will of God* study.

13. *Simple Church*, Thom S. Rainer and Eric Geiger, B&H

Many churches have blended many models into a complex and busy approach to church life. Based on research, this book proposes four simple words—clarity, movement, alignment, and focus—to help a church follow God in designing a more streamlined approach.

14. *Spiritual Gifts*, David Francis, LifeWay Press

God never intended for each of us to be alike. In fact, He delights in giving His children a variety of gifts for ministry and service. Explore how your spiritual gifts can be matched to ministry, and discover a new appreciation for the gifts of others in your church.

15. *Spiritual Leadership*, Henry & Richard Blackaby, B&H

Drawing upon their own extensive leadership experience as well as their ministry to leaders in all walks of life, Henry and Richard Blackaby offer insightful counsel into the ways God develops, guides, and empowers spiritual leaders.

16. *Spiritual Warfare: Biblical Truth for Victory*, John Franklin and Chuck Lawless, LifeWay Press

This 8-session video-enhanced study teaches that the key to victory is focusing on God. It teaches participants to recognize and respond to spiritual attacks and evaluates popular issues in the spiritual warfare movement.

17. *Your Church Experiencing God Together*, Henry & Melvin Blackaby, LifeWay Press

This 9-session video-enhanced study was written by Blackaby and his son, Mel, pastor of Bow Valley Baptist Church in Cochrane, Alberta, Canada. This study is filled with engaging stories from both Henry's and Mel's pastoral experiences.

18. *Transformational Church*, Thom Rainer & Ed Stetzer, B&H

In **Transformational Church**, best-selling research authors **Ed Stetzer** and **Thom S. Rainer** address the question: how does a body of believers do its part to be in the “sweet spot” where true spiritual transformation occurs? By surveying fifty thousand churches — then narrowing the scope down to five hundred congregations — Stetzer and Rainer share with readers the qualitative answer. **Transformational Church**, the most comprehensive study of the modern American church to date,

contains a wealth of indispensable new data, nuanced insights, and how-to guidance, all centered on this key finding:

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## **SKILLS NEEDED TO GET OFF TO A GOOD START:**

### **Start with yourself**

**Start with yourself:** *Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who doesn't need to be ashamed, correctly teaching the word of truth. 2 Tim 2:15 (HCSB)*

In order to lead the church to be healthy and transformational you must yourself be healthy and in the process of becoming the person God created you to be. So the first step in starting well is to start with yourself.

Brad Hoffmann and Michael Todd Wilson have written an excellent guide for Pastors and other ministers called ***Preventing Ministry Failure***. It is a guidebook for people in ministry to prepare them to withstand the common pressures of ministry and to flourish in ministry. The book is structured around seven foundation stones for effective ministry over the long haul.

- Foundation Stone 1 – Intimacy: Connecting to the Heart of Successful Pastoring
- Foundation Stone 2 – Calling: The Power for Effectiveness in Ministry
- Foundation Stone 3 – Stress Management: Avoiding Ineffectiveness and Burnout
- Foundation Stone 4 – Boundaries: Protecting What Matters Most
- Foundation Stone 5 – Re-creation: The Fuel to Re-energize Ministry
- Foundation Stone 6 – People Skills: Managing our Most Valuable Resource
- Foundation Stone 7 – Leadership Skills: Setting Ministers Apart from the Rest of the Sheep

Reading and working through this book will help to refresh, renew and revitalize your ministry as you prepare to serve in a new church setting.

**Leading From Your Strengths** is an online personal strengths assessment tool. Go to [www/lifeway.com/ministryinsights](http://www/lifeway.com/ministryinsights) to take the online assessment. This tool delivers a comprehensive, personal 28-page report that helps you discover and understand your God-given strengths and how you interact in your ministry environment and relationships. If you have staff, have them take the assessment and compare your strengths to their strengths. (see appendix for sample report)

### **Don't go it alone.**

1. Seek a mentor/coach who is ahead of you in ministry, someone with integrity who is doing well in ministry. Develop an agreement concerning the mentoring relationship.
2. Develop relationships with some local ministers, including associational and state convention leaders. This sounds easy but it often proves to be difficult. Other ministers are busy, have their own social networks and may not be open to inviting someone into their lives. Some suggestions: seek out other ministers who know the community well and ask for their insights. Attend local meetings where ministers gather and/or invite a local pastor(s) to have lunch, etc. Developing relationships with some local pastors or church leaders will pay dividends down the road when you need a trusted friend to talk over church or personal issues.

## **SKILLS NEEDED TO GET OFF TO A GOOD START: DISCERNMENT, LEADERSHIP, CARING, PREACHING**

### **The Spiritual Gift of Discernment** (Foundational for All the Skills)

The strategic work of leading a church cannot be done effectively without God's guidance, regardless of the leader's education or experience. Spiritual discernment is required. God said, "Call to me and I will answer you and tell you great and unreachable things you do not know" (Jer. 33:3). That is God's promise to help us with discernment.

Some mistake discernment for wisdom and vice-versa. What is the difference? Wisdom is knowing what to do with knowledge, while discernment is knowing what to do with wisdom.

Demographic data, statistical charts, historical documents, and anecdotal reports provide knowledge but do not assure discernment of truth. Spiritual discernment is essential in transitional ministry. Such discernment is available from God to those who seek it through disciplined prayer, both talking to Him and listening to Him.

A person who is able to understand and clarify the obscure has discernment. A discerning person sees inside (sights in) to what is not evident on the surface, that which the average person does not see, and uses the insight to help others. Discernment has the ability to "see through" with spiritual intuition. As a result a person applies the ability to weigh the pros and cons of a situation. Such discerning insight is mental tuning which in turn clarifies thought for leadership, sensitivity for caring, and revelation for preaching. It's almost as if the person knows what's going on by feel. They just know it because they know it.

#### **1. Biblical Example about Spiritual Discernment**

First Kings 3–9 tell the story of Solomon's great wisdom and leadership in building the nation and the temple after asking one thing of God—an understanding heart. God was pleased to grant Solomon's request. "I will give you a wise and discerning heart," God said, "so that there has never been anyone like you before and never will be again. In addition, I will give you what you did not ask for: both riches and honor, so that no man in any kingdom will be your equal during your entire life. If you walk in my ways and keep my statutes and commandments just as your Father David did, I will give you a long life" (1 Kings 3:12-14). Solomon's discernment was soon revealed in a conflict resolution situation involving two women who claimed to be the mother of the same child.

The writer of 1 Kings affirmed Solomon's discernment in matters of government and teaching. "God gave Solomon wisdom and very great insight, and understanding as vast as the sand on the seashore. Solomon's wisdom was greater than the wisdom of all the people of the East, and greater than all the wisdom of Egypt.... Solomon composed 3,000

proverbs, and his songs numbered 1,005.... People came from everywhere, sent by every king on earth who had heard of his wisdom” (1 Kings 4:29-34).

Shamefully, Solomon’s head was turned from seeking after God to seeking after pleasure and the applause of those who admired his wisdom. “The LORD was angry with Solomon because his heart had turned away from the LORD, the God of Israel, who had appeared to him twice. He had commanded him about this, so that he would not follow other gods, Solomon did not do what the LORD had commanded. Then the LORD said to Solomon, ‘Since you have done this and did not keep My covenant and My statutes, which I commanded you, I will tear the kingdom away from you and give it to your servant.’” (1 Kings 11:9-11).

Spiritual discernment is God’s gift to those who earnestly seek it and faithfully use it with integrity to honor the Lord. Spiritual discernment cannot co-exist with self-interest and self-service. God’s invitation still stands. “Call to me and I will answer you and tell you great and wondrous things you do not know” (Jer. 33:3).

## 2. Prayer as a Door to Spiritual Discernment

Pastors, though enriched with training and much experience, should often hear their hearts speak the words the boy Samuel spoke to the Lord: “Speak, for your servant is listening” (1 Sam. 3:10b). The testimony to Samuel as a listener follows in the last three verses of the same chapter. “Samuel grew, and the Lord was with him and let nothing he said prove false. All Israel from Dan to Beer-Sheba knew that Samuel was a confirmed prophet of the Lord. The Lord continued to appear in Shiloh, because there He revealed Himself to Samuel by His word.” (1 Sam. 3:19-21).

Honestly evaluate how much of your prayer time is given to speaking and how much is given to listening. Remember the adage: God gave us two ears and one mouth so He must have intended for us to listen twice as much as we talk. Use the young-Samuel model, “Speak, for your servant is listening.” Then listen to his counsel to your soul. Pray with the words of an old prayer song: “Speak to my heart, Lord Jesus; speak that my soul may hear.” Look at your library. How many books on prayer have you read? This is an ever-expanding need in the life of the pastor. You need prayer in order to sustain your spiritual body like you need food and water to sustain your physical body.

T. W. Hunt, whose writing and speaking on prayer enriched many pastors’ lives, often shared his experiences of listening to God. He would get up early each morning, prepare two cups of coffee, go to his quiet place, and sit at a table with his cup of coffee. An empty chair was at the other side of the table with the second cup placed on the table in front of the empty chair. In that setting he had a quiet conversation with God. Conversation involves exposing one’s understandings, feelings, and desires to God and listening to God’s understandings, feelings, and desires. That is the way to become rich in discernment.

### 3. Devotional Bible Reading as a Door to Spiritual Discernment

Devotional Bible reading dismisses any idea of gleaned information for the sake of teaching or preaching. It focuses entirely on gleaning information because I want the truth of God to penetrate every fiber of my being, control and order every desire of my heart, and guide me in every relationship involved in my daily walk. Through devotional Bible reading, God can speak to our hearts so our souls may hear.

Pastors, as people who work with the Word vocationally, are most liable to be lax in exercising themselves unto godliness by feasting on the Word personally. It's been said that great preaching flows from the heart replete with the word of God. In other words, great preaching should come from the overflow of one's devotional life.

### Leadership Skills

Extraordinary skills are required for becoming a trusted leader and guiding a church through significant change. Listening and relating skills are vital interpersonal platforms for this acceleration of trust development. Spirituality without false piety, confidence without arrogance, wisdom without snobbery, and boldness without brashness are some of the personal qualities that enable a leader in the process of guiding a church.

“You know that those who are regarded as rulers of the Gentiles dominate them, and their men of high positions exercise power over them. But it must not be like that among you. On the contrary, whoever wants to become great among you [*leader/pastor*] must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first among you must be a slave of all. For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life—a ransom for many” (Mark 10:42–45).

Jesus calls pastors not to lordship but to leadership. He calls to servanthood. Servanthood is responding to the lordship of Jesus Christ by using the resources God has graciously given you in building up Christ's bride, His church. Servanthood is strong work, hard work—Jesus work.

#### 1. Unique Challenge of Leadership as a Pastor

For decades pastors have been cautioned about recommending major changes in church practices before getting to know the church well and to being known by the church. That normally takes more than a year, perhaps two or three years. Many have lost pastorates because they have progressed too quickly in this area. Factor such as church culture, demographic awareness and a multitude of other dynamics affect this area.

A pastor begins serving with a position and a reputation, two shaky launching pads. Many church members, including organizational leaders, will not understand the work the pastor is to do or the relationships required in doing the work regardless of the means used in the process of calling. Initially people follow because they are supposed to or they feel obligated to. That shaky leadership launching pad will collapse into follower-ship



lethargy after a short period of time unless the transitional pastor is able to move to a second level of leadership.

The reputation represented in the pastor's resume may be impressive on paper but will soon cease to evoke awe unless it is expressed in the day-by-day and week-by-week events of church life. Church "attendees" may continue attending with confidence because of good sermons from the pulpit but church leaders will lose confidence if their leader's leadership style threatens them.

**Prolific author and prominent speaker John Maxwell identified stages of leadership in five levels.**

- **Position – Rights: People follow because they have to.**
- **Permission – Relationships: People follow because they want to.**
- **Production – Results: People follow because of what you have done for the organization.**
- **Personnel Development – Reproduction: People follow because of what you have done for them.**
- **Personhood – Respect: People follow because of who you are and what you represent.**

Maxwell notes that the last level is "reserved for leaders who have spent years growing people and organizations. Few make it. Those who do are bigger than life."<sup>8</sup>

The pastor's success depends on whether or not he moves from position (rights) leadership to personhood (respect) leadership and how quickly that progress is made. That is the pastor version of the X-Games (extreme challenge), and it starts over with each new pastor place of ministry.

## 2. Definitions of Leadership

According to Bob Biehl, "Leadership is knowing *what* to do next; knowing *why* that is important; and knowing *how* to bring appropriate resources to bear on the need at hand."<sup>9</sup>

Instead of focusing on what a leader knows John Haggai defines leadership in terms of what a leader does. "Leadership is the discipline of deliberately exerting special influence within a group to move it toward goals of beneficial permanence that fulfill the group's real needs."<sup>10</sup>

John Maxwell takes the role of influence a step farther, insisting that "leadership is influence—nothing more, nothing less."<sup>11</sup> "The only thing a title can buy is a little time—either to increase your level of influence with others or to erase it."<sup>12</sup>

In their book, *Spiritual Leadership*, Henry and Richard Blackaby write, "Spiritual leadership is moving people on to God's agenda."<sup>13</sup>

### 3. Enhancing Leadership/Influence

The unique challenge in becoming a productive leader is a reason for prayerfully selecting Pastor Prayer Partners as soon as possible. These influencers in the church can help you accomplish this goal and keep it on track. As Pastor Prayer Partners demonstrate confidence in your leadership and provide counsel regarding the needs of church leaders affected by change, they will lead others to follow with respect and personal involvement. With their endorsement you will build relationships, produce positive results, and reproduce leaders for growing ministries.

The unique challenge makes it imperative that pastors not attempt to be all things to all people. Remember that Paul instructed the Ephesians that pastors were called to “prepare God’s people for works of service,” not to *do* all the works of service that need doing. In pastor terms that means putting before the people a biblical challenge; helping them know what to do next, why that is important, how it can be accomplished, and what results they can expect; and coaching them gently yet firmly with godly wisdom.

### 4. The Management Factor in Leadership

Leading sets the course, managing guides the process. Leadership is a wrap-around for management. It plans the menu and sets the table. Management cooks and serves the meal. Then leadership returns to evaluate the experience, affirm those who prepared and served the meal, and celebrate its delights.

Leadership is a primary role as pastors relate to the organizational life of the church; management is secondary. Pastors focus on the big picture, the direction and overall movement. They assign details to other employed and elected leaders along with clear understandings of responsibility and accountability.

The pastor provides general leadership in evaluating progress toward the process goals and in affirming the managers and workers and celebrating the group effort. Effective management involves prioritizing, delegating, coordinating, team building, and supplying resources.

#### (1) Prioritizing

Pastors must prioritize in order not to waste on non-essentials. In no other vocational endeavor is prioritizing more important. Simply stated, priorities take precedence. Every project needs a priority ranking in the family of projects, and the component elements of every project must be prioritized. Priorities affect scheduling, funding, and staffing. Not all the good things that can be done and are needed can be done at the same time. A key question is: Of the many tasks to be performed, which must be done first to set the stage for that which must be done next? It is more important to know what not to do than what to do. Purpose and vision determine priorities.

## (2) Delegating

Delegation, for pastors, is the management activity of discovering the abilities and limitations of others and involving them in doing some of the work that is not necessary for you to do but is essential to the overall ministry of the church. The abilities of some will be obvious because of their history of effective service in church organizations. Pastor Search Committee members, deacons, leadership groups or individuals may provide insight about others with abilities to carry through on special assignments. If lack of ability limits a willing person but the person is teachable and the work to be done is recurring, arrange for training to prepare the person for responsibility in the future. Spiritual gift assessments are important to lead a gift based organization. Many are available through your association or state convention.

Bring others onto the team. Involve them in doing some of the work. Challenge them with the opportunity to contribute to something that is important to the church and to the kingdom of God. Provide them with a clear picture of the work to be done and the ways it can best be done. Honor their creativity and initiative as long as their work moves the job toward completion. Agree on an accountability procedure. When and how is progress to be reviewed? When is the job to be completed? How will you measure effectiveness in the job?

Bob Biehl suggests 10 questions to ask “when you want to bring the resources of others to bear on the responsibilities that weigh you down.”<sup>14</sup>

- Exactly what needs to be done?
- Why does it need to be done?
- When does it need to be done?
- Who is the best person to do it?
- How well must it be done?
- How much budget is available for getting it done?
- What training is needed for doing the task?
- What reports do I need from the person who does it?
- Who else may need to be aware of this assignment?
- If it isn’t done, what difference will it make?

Make sure the work they are assigned is essential to the overall ministry of the church. Being assigned busy work demeans people. If the project considered for delegation is not essential to the overall ministry of the church, forget it. The concept of giving everyone something to do whether or not it is important to the Great Commission devalues people and ultimately destroys their desire to help the church accomplish its mission. Ask the hard questions and lead people to understand that this is important.

Read Matthew 10. Think through the answers to the following questions concerning Jesus and delegation.

- What tasks did He assign the disciples? (vv. 6-8)
- How thorough was his orientation session? (vv. 9-42)

- How did this project relate to the original call to the disciples? (Matt. 4:19)
- What did Jesus do after sending the disciples out to do their work? (Matt. 11:1)
- What did the disciples do when they returned from their mission? (Luke 9:10)

### (3) Coordinating

Coordinating is enabling the various components of the church to relate harmoniously, complementarily, and productively. Coordinating requires supervision (super-vision)—maintaining a view of the whole organizational landscape—including structure, personnel, and resource allocation. Supervision and coordination are “hand in glove.” Supervision sees the many parts of one body; coordination results in the many parts working together as one body. (See 1 Cor. 12:12.) With supervision none is neglected; with coordination each makes a significant contribution to the whole.

Coordination is teamwork, every person manning his station and backing up others when needs arise. So very evident in all team sports, coordination is no less required in successful churches, and the pastor is the team coach working to see that the team is well organized and the energy of all players is utilized in the most productive ways. Coordination is essential to assure that all ministry bases are covered and to avoid duplication of services, competition for resources, and “lone ranger” separatism.

### (4) Team Building

Team building is relating persons to persons and persons to tasks in ways that build up people and achieve the goals of the church. One of the transitional pastor’s most valuable contributions can be relating to leaders in ways that stimulate them toward growth and greater achievement that brings fulfillment as members of effective ministry teams.

Team building does not use up people for the sake of the church; it builds up people for the sake of the kingdom of God. It builds up people spiritually, socially, emotionally, and technically. Many inactive church members, who were leaders in church organizations, were used up in doing “church work” instead of built up in the joy of serving with Christ’s followers in compassionately carrying out the Great Commission. They found their respite as dropouts.

The law of multiplication says the time spent in growing leaders is more productive than time spent in growing followers. The result will serve the church well into the future.

Teamwork is as important to a church on mission as it is to a championship sports team. There is no place for prima donnas seeking glory for themselves at the expense of team success and kingdom growth. Every team member needs to be fully committed to team tasks and equipped with “how-to” training and enthusiasm (*en Theos*, God with us).

The following adapted excerpts from Price Pritchett’s handbook on teamwork are basic principles transitional pastors can use in helping the church leadership team to grow.<sup>15</sup>  
Use them as teaching tools with the church leadership team.

- Communication breathes the first spark of life into teamwork, and communication keeps teamwork alive. Nothing else is so crucial to coordination of effort. No other factor plays such a precious role in building and preserving trust among teammates. Communication is *the* make-or-break issue.
- One of the most basic elements of teamwork is this: Be good at what you do. Teams need talent. The more of it you bring to the group, the more you can contribute. Build your skills, and, in a very real sense, you are building the team. Set a high standard, and others will follow.
- Sometimes you'll need to cover for teammates, of course, since everyone needs a little help now and then. But don't poke your nose into their business or get in their way. Usually you support your teammates best by playing *your* position to perfection. Teach *team*. Think *team*. Instead of focusing narrowly on your personal assignment and nothing else, watch what's going on with the rest of the group.
- The struggle of "me versus we" is no stranger to team members. You can expect occasional conflict between your selfish interests and what's best for the team.
- Do your part to help bring new teammates up to speed. Get to know them as much as you can during the months of your role as team leader. Provide the training new team members need to carry their load on the team.
- You'll never build the team by acting like a big shot. You do it by building your teammates. Don't showcase your résumé. Team members may admire it but they don't follow it. The fact is only the admiration and respect you earn from others can cause them to follow you as their team leader. Build up others, and they'll end up singing your praises.
- Give priority to time spent with your teammates. The most powerful bonding occurs away from the church. If you can possibly do so, plan a leadership retreat. Play together, pray together, and tell life stories, laugh, and cry.
- In the times you are able to be with the group, concentrate on giving what it needs at the moment. Contribute in such a way that you clearly add value. Make enough of a difference that the team would obviously miss you if you weren't there.
- Effective teams require trust. Church teams should be characterized by trust. In a climate of *mistrust* the risk factor climbs so high that they become barriers to cooperative effort. Preach trust. Teach trust. Demonstrate trust. Christian gossip is an oxymoron.
- A team leader is a role not a position. Fulfilling the role of team leader means serving your team.

##### (5) Supplying Resources

Paul encouraged believers in Philippi that God would "supply all your needs according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus" (Phil. 4:19). What an encouragement! God would not ask them to do something for which he would not supply them the resources with which to do it.

That is a good model for church ministry development. It is a practical concern to be dealt with in stage five of the stages of transition. Decisions must be made about distributing church resources needed to conduct the ministries. Ministry teams will need

to be staffed, provided facilities in which to do their work, and allocated needed financial resources.

It is no more reasonable to assign responsibility to church leaders without allocating the resources with which to manage the responsibility to a successful conclusion than it is to enlist an army and send it into battle without the weapons that are essential to their engagement.

Three questions help pinpoint priorities in resource allocation:

- What can we not afford not to do? These are the primary priorities in allocating personnel, space, and finances.
- What can we not afford to do? These are secondary priorities that will be implemented as soon as resources are available.
- What can we afford not to do? These are not priorities and should be funded only after the primary and secondary priorities have been supplied. If a church treats as priority that which it can afford not to do, weak, understaffed, under-budgeted, and poorly housed ministries will be allowed to claim emotional energy and become sources of dissension and embarrassment to the church.

## **Caring Skills**

Even in a numerically small church, no one person can provide all the special-needs care of individuals and families in the church and community. An effective pastor shows his love and compassion for all of these people. In that sense he is a “soul-source” but does not presume to be their “sole source” of pastoral care. He knows how to be directly involved with them and to equip individuals and groups (deacons, Bible study classes, and special ministry teams) and to involve them in caring ministries.

The compassion of Jesus is referred to many times in the New Testament; it is demonstrated many more times than it is talked about. The promise that Jesus cares for you is given one time (1 Pet. 5:7); the evidence that Jesus cares for you saturates the biblical accounts of His life and His death.

At no time in a church’s life should there be words of love that are not demonstrated in compassion-driven acts of caring. That is never more important in a church than in the disrupted period between pastors. Both the direct pastoral care ministry of the pastor and the directed pastoral care ministry are vital to the health of the church from his first day of service until the last.

Direct pastoral care ministry is responding to personal needs with personal contact or pulpit ministry. Directed pastoral care ministry is responding to personal needs by equipping and leading others to minister through personal contacts and as teachers and leaders of groups in the church. In this way a pastor demonstrates compassion by providing pastoral care beyond the resources of his limited time and energy.

## 1. Direct Pastoral Ministry: Counseling People through the Process of Change in the Church

As churches move through the stages of transition, impending change will become evident. That will be encouraging to some and threatening to others. Traditional ways of doing things provide a comfort zone of familiarity requiring little new learning or adjustment. For many it's just easier to keep the same old saggy, lumpy mattress than to adjust to scientifically improved ones that respond to the needs of their skeletal systems. Some are being dragged by their occupations from typewriter traditions to computer challenges. "Surely," they plead, "the church can be a place that doesn't take from us everything that is familiar."

Personal counseling is needed by some to deal with the impact change will have on their lives. Transitional pastors should not lead in making major changes in the church without also scheduling time for personal counseling with those who need help and bringing the truth of Scripture to bear on the circumstances of change.

Preaching is an effective tool of pastoral care through which people may get help with both understandings and attitudes.

- The New Testament contains the account of drastic change in a religious system with which Jews were very familiar and comfortable. Review the accounts in the four Gospels and the Epistles to see how pervasive and impacting the changes were to those who followed the promised Messiah.
- Consider the "you have heard it said, but I say unto you" passages and the "except a man lay down his life" passages. Through gracious and informative preaching many people may receive answers to important questions and the emotional support needed to adjust to change. The Bible is rich with truth and inspiration all people need in managing change in a rapid-change society.

There are three basic reasons why church members resist change.

*First, people resist change because it threatens to move them outside their comfort zones.* They need help in understanding the religious-system changes Jesus brought to the lives of His disciples and all those who came to believe Him and serve Him.

We are not left alone in managing the change. Jesus assured His disciples the coming Holy Spirit would help them face the fear of the unknown and help them to do things they had never done before. Review John 15:26 and 16:5-16. See the challenge to change in Acts 1:8 and the first fruit of change in Acts 2. The message is that the Holy Spirit introduces change to our lives, walks with (comforts) us through change, and celebrates with us the growth that change produces.

*Second, people resist change because they fear the loss of power, influence, or control in the church.* They need help in understanding "there's plenty good power in my Father's kingdom, there's power enough for you, there's power enough for me, there's power

enough for all.” One person does not have to give up power for another person to have power. He may need to give up an office, but he does not have to give up significance unless he is using the office as a base for self-assertion, a base for controlling decision making or for manipulating others.

*Third, people may resist change because they do not intellectually agree that change is improvement.* Information is powerful. If the process of proposing and approving change was not easy to understand or time to study it and comprehend its strength not adequate, then better presentation of the rationale, without coercion or disrespect for those who do not agree, will help some accept it and support it.

In personal counseling review the rationale, invite questions, and respond to the questions with information and without emotional pressure. Encourage careful consideration of the rationale. If agreement is not expressed, encourage support based on the actions of the majority with confidence that the experience of change will lead to greater understanding and approval as the process unfolds.

## 2. Direct Pastoral Ministry: Assisting Families through Life Transitions

The amount of time a pastor gives to weddings and funerals is most important in ministering to the people of his church. It builds lasting relationships. Pastors will not be available to respond to all needs, especially those for which arrangements could not be made in advance. An important factor is consistency: don’t respond selectively; don’t be available to prominent families without also being available to those less prominent in the church and community. Another important factor is communication. Use the telephone and/or written communication to let members know you care. When you can arrange to do so, visit them to personally extend your blessings.

Your personal contact also is a great encouragement at the time of the birth of babies into the families of church members. Visit when you can. Even if you can’t visit the newborn and parents for several days, contact them to know if all is well and to share your joy with them. Your spouse can be utilized in these important times.

Skill development information for these ministries is available through many resources.

## 3. Directed Pastoral Ministry

Many churches have equipped deacons, Sunday School teachers, and others with skills for use in ministering to people with special needs. They have highlighted this ministry as an important part of all teaching, training, and ministry groups. Care has become a characteristic of the church. Pastors who minister in such churches can use the structures and the prepared people to assure that people will not be neglected.

If this is not the case where you serve, arrange a meeting with deacon officers and a meeting with Sunday School leadership for exploring the ways those organizations may involve people in effectively caring for those who are sick, shut-in, and distressed. The



primary concern is to reduce the possibility that people needing attention and care may not receive it.

From the pulpit and through print media inform the church that, when it comes to pastoral care, the pastor is not the church. The pastor represents the church in this ministry but cannot assume the burden of being the only manifestation of the love of the church for its people. The church is just as involved in the ministry of care when a deacon or a Sunday School teacher ministers lovingly to a person in need as when the pastor does it personally.

In many churches deacons, or an assigned staff member, assume responsibility for benevolence ministry. Check with them to determine the policies that guide their decisions in order to be informed when people ask you about how people in need receive help.

### **Proclaiming Skills**

In what was apparently Paul's final communication to Timothy, he wrote him "Before God and Christ Jesus, who is going to judge the living and the dead, and by His appearing and His kingdom, I solemnly charge you: proclaim the message, persist in it whether convenient or not; rebuke, correct, and encourage with great patience and teaching" (2 Tim. 4:1-2). Preaching the Word as a pastor should inform, inspire, and equip the church for moving effectively. Sermons need to be relevant and fresh in the heart of the preacher; warmed-over messages prepared for other times and places may not adequately address here-and-now issues. While preaching is the most public expression of pastoral proclamation; teaching, personal evangelism, and writing are other important ways to proclaim the truth and call for action.

#### **1. Through Preaching**

The pulpit and preaching provide pastors their greatest visibility and opportunity to impact the life of the church. Pastors must take preaching as seriously as Paul did when he instructed his young protégé Timothy: "Proclaim the message; persist in it whether convenient or not; rebuke, correct, and encourage with great patience and teaching" (2 Tim. 4:2).

Sermons prepared years ago may have served congregations in other times and places well but, without thorough review and contemporary adaptations, rarely respond adequately to the here-and-now challenges facing pastors.

Negatively, the pastor need not show how great a communicator he may be, nor is he called to this pulpit to "straighten out" the church. In general he is to "feed the flock." He does this as he speaks to issues of specific need without addressing specific individuals; focuses on life situations; and draws the people closer to God as an encourager and healer. His messages will be biblical and expository.

To nurture churches and reach people for Christ through preaching, every new opportunity is like a new day. While retaining all that you have learned and all the ideas you have compiled in previous preparations for preaching, don't depend so much on the work of the past that you fail to carefully prepare for the opportunities of the present.

Help for sermon ideas and preparation can be found on the LifeWay website at [www.lifeway.com/proclaim](http://www.lifeway.com/proclaim).

## 2. Through Effective Invitations

Do not hesitate to give a positive invitation at the end of the sermon. The entire message calls for decision in one way or another. It also gives the hearers the opportunity to reflect on the need and ability to make commitment both to Christ and to the church.

When Jesus began His ministry, He said, "Follow Me . . . and I will make you fish for people" (Mark 1:17). At the end of His ministry, Jesus said, "Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations. . . . I am with you always" (Matthew 28:19–20).

Since Jesus began His ministry and closed His ministry with these divine imperatives, it is the responsibility of every Christian to win the lost. A great opportunity to fulfill this commission is giving a powerful invitation at the climax of each service to lead people to the most defining moment of their life, the moment they receive Christ as Lord and Savior.

Consider these 6 vital requirements in extending a great invitation.

1. A great invitation begins with *conviction*. We must be absolutely convinced that Jesus is not a way of salvation, not the best way of salvation, but the only way of salvation (John 14:6).
2. A great invitation burns with *compassion*. We must look on the congregation not as prospects but as persons dearly loved by Christ and desperately in need of Him (Romans 9:2–3).
3. A great invitation is bold because of *consecration*. Any tolerated sin in our lives hinders our anointing in reaching the lost in the invitation (Romans 12:1–2).
4. A great invitation is beautiful in *clarity*. Since the lost might not understand Baptist jargon, we must be very clear in what we are asking them to do (John 3:16).
5. A great invitation is backed by *counselors*. Since this is the defining moment of a person's entire life, we need to make sure it counts. Each person needs an individual counselor in a private place to thoroughly clarify the decision they are making. This cannot be accomplished by taking three minutes to fill out a card on the front pew. The counselors must be thoroughly trained so that this moment will not be lost (2 Corinthians 5:18–20).
6. A great invitation is bathed in *celebration*. Since this is the most significant moment of a person's life, we must make sure that they and the entire church

recognize this as we publicly celebrate, along with the angels in heaven, the decision that has been made (Luke 15:7).

### 3. Through Personal Witnessing

Churches should not have to put personal soul winning in a pastor's job description; it is already in the pastor's life description. It is in every Christian's life description. A church cannot pay enough salary to a pastor to make him a soul winner if he is not already one. A seasoned pastor once said, "...I win souls because I'm a Christian, not because I'm a pastor."

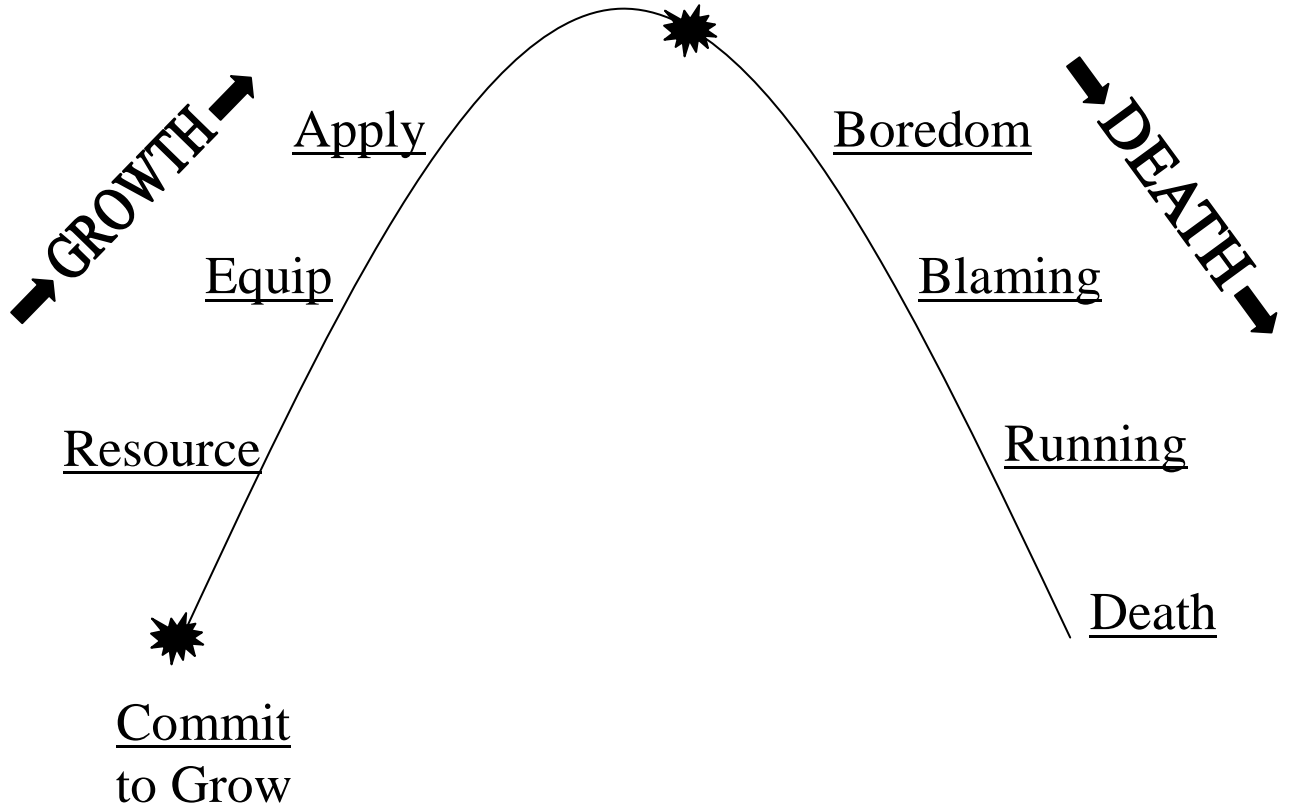
#### **SKILLS NEEDED TO GET OFF TO A GOOD START: RELATING, LISTENING, TECHNICAL, MANAGING CONFLICT**

A pastors' effectiveness results from both the character traits that describe who you are and the skills that demonstrate what you can do. Ministry skills are honed through purposeful study and careful observation with minds open to truth and growth.

Paul saw the potential in Timothy and admonished him to:

"Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth." (2 Timothy 2:15 KJV)

### **Staying Alive All Your Life**



Staying alive all your life requires continuing growth. When growth stops (or slows down), the decline to death begins. Look at the bell curve.

Personal growth is not an accident. It results from a **personal commitment to growth**. It requires personal accountability. No one else will be made responsible for your success or failure. The growth goal must be specific and measurable. Effective growth goals measure progress incrementally.

“Resource” in this model is a verb. You must find tools to use in growing your ministry skills. In this computer-serviced age, ministers are blessed with an abundance of electronic resources. Except for some who minister in some third-world nations, book stores and libraries are accessible to all. Conferences and seminars abound. Friends with good experience in pastoral ministry are excellent resources for those with good listening skills.

With commitment and resources, you must invest a reasonable portion of your time in **equipping activities**. One pastor, unable to attend seminary, earnestly desired to learn Greek in order to be a better Bible teacher. He enlisted a seminary professor to tutor him in Greek with the use of textbooks and audio tapes. He blocked out time five days each week for that purpose. After achieving the desired level of proficiency in Greek, he found another professor to do the same thing with Hebrew. In doing so, he grew in ministry to a level that had previously appeared unlikely, even impossible.

The ultimate reward is not being equipped with knowledge. The payoff is in **applying** knowledge in the practice of ministry.

Caution: Continuing to grow in ministry requires continuing to update and expand ministry skills. Yesterday’s learning is not sufficient for tomorrow’s ministry. The world of ministry is changing too fast for that. Skills that are not updated or expanded every two or three years become outdated. The repetition of behavior becomes boring. The **asterisk at the top** of the curve emphasizes that you must set a new growth commitment into place at least every three years.

Without the stimulation of a new venture in learning, **boredom** is predictable. Boredom begins a downward plunge toward death. Boredom is a self-inflicted disease. A mind void of new learning and the application of new skills is a fertile field for boredom. Active minds, stimulated by the constant search for new skills and better ways of responding to eternal truths, serve as a “keep out” sign to boredom.

If boredom does not raise a caution flag that leads to a new commitment to growth, the next stage in the decline to death is **blaming**. Whether in ministry, other forms of employment, or family life, there is always someone else to blame when boredom takes the place of personal growth.

Non-growth leads to boredom, boredom leads to blaming, and blaming leads to **running**. Running away is an unplanned action plan for many people in our society. This includes

running from job to job, from church to church, from marriage to marriage, or from drug to drug. “Absolute futility. Everything is futile” (Eccl. 1:2b).

Many pastors preach through their file of sermons and lead the church in the activities they have used in another church. When they become bored with personal non-growth in about three years, they begin looking for greener pastures. Such pastors are simply moving to “apply” at the top of the curve. In a very short time they find themselves moving back down the right side of the curve. After two or three years in their new church, they repeat the process until vocational **death** sets in.

Too much of life spent on the right side of the bell curve may result in premature physical death. The vital organs can’t handle the strain produced by constant negativity. Death may be relational. A dead marriage appears to be alive because two spouses continue to live in the same house. Death can be vocational. An employee may appear alive on the job when he is just going through the routine until retirement income is available. Any such form of death is a tragedy because God made us to stay alive all our lives. He gave us growth resources to make it happen.

The only solution for the move toward death on the right side of the bell curve is to return to the beginning of the left side of the bell curve: **commit to grow**.

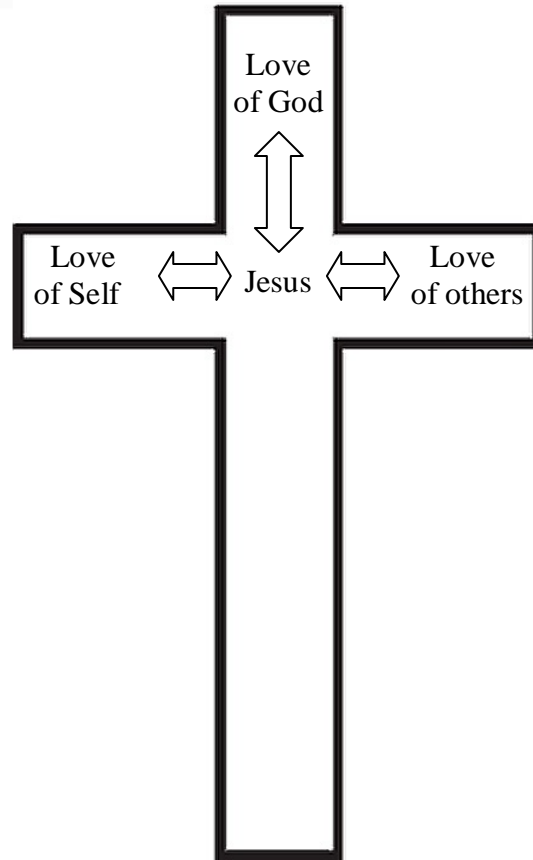
### **Relating Skills**

“Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and greatest commandment and the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.” (Matthew 22:35-40 KJV)

When a lawyer asked Jesus which was the greatest commandment, he was thinking of a way to trap Jesus. The Jews had divided the law into 248 affirmative and 365 negative commands. They had 613 laws, which is the same number of letters in the Decalogue. The Jews based life on do’s and don’ts, obedience to the letter of the law, traditions, the external, and in man’s opinion.

Jesus quickly took the lawyer back to Deuteronomy 6:4—5 the Hebrew confession of faith. Jesus based life on relationships. First, was one’s relationship with God, then with self and others. The motivation of these relationships is love. This was, and is, visually portrayed by the cross. Jesus died on the cross paying the debt of our sin to bring reconciliation between man and God. There is a triple movement of love presented on the cross. As a person experiences the love and forgiveness of God, this enables him to love and forgive self and to love and forgive others.

One cannot truly love self and others without the love of God. When a person is in right relationship with God, he or she will seek healthy self love and agape self-giving love for others.



Relationships are how two separate persons connect and interact. Relationships can be at various levels. For ministry to occur there is a need for closeness in personal relationships. This brings a sense of worth to both parties (Greenfield, p. 22). For a minister to effectively minister he must have a growing relationship with God, a healthy nature, self esteem, and a caring relationship with others.

## **Relating to God**

### **Key word: growing**

All relationships spring from this one. The text tells us, “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment...” Salvation is acknowledging our broken relationship with God because of sin (Romans 3:23). Salvation is when one turns from self and sin unto Jesus as the one mediator between God and man. Salvation is complete abandonment of self, receiving the grace and forgiveness of God.

Unless this relationship is true and growing all other relationships will falter. Love for God will manifest itself in desire to know and do the will of God. How does one grow or experience spiritual transformation? Paul, in Romans 12:1-2, says:

“I beseech you therefore brethren by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service, and be not conformed to this world but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.”

Growing in one’s relationship with God, F.B. Meyer says, comes by circumstances, impressions from the Spirit and the Bible (F.B. Meyer, p. 14-15).

1. Bible

To grow we must read it, meditate upon it, memorize it, observe what God is saying and submit to the text.

“Thy word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path.”

2. Spirit – circumstances

John 14:26 says the Holy Spirit, “...shall teach you all things and bring all things to your remembrance.”

The Spirit guides us into truth. Life is not about circumstances but about being led and controlled by the spirit.

3. Prayer – impressions

Bill Huff says spiritual formation and Christian growth begins within. Its primary tool is to make God-given desire to change and reform a person’s mind with God’s thoughts (Bill Huff p101-107). Honestly evaluate how much of your prayer time is given to speaking and how much is given to listening. Remember the adage: God gave us two ears and one mouth, so He must have intended for us to listen twice as much as we talk. The Samuel model is, “Speak, for your servant is listening.” Then listen to His counsel to your soul. Pray the words of an old song: “speak to my heart Lord Jesus, speak that my soul may hear.”

## **Relating to Self**

To be an effective, long-term minister, one must have a healthy self-esteem based on a relationship with God. We cannot love others without loving ourselves. Look at our text in Matthew again, “Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.”

Persons with low self-esteem have lives out of balance and often they are dysfunctional people. Dysfunctional ministers are often arrogant, intimidators, or over-achievers. At times dysfunctional ministers are displayed by timid, weak, insecure or guilt-driven behavior. Fear can paralyze one from ministry. Pride is destructive to relationships. Pride is self-love and self-esteem at the expense of love and esteem for others.

How does one keep a healthy self-esteem? 1 John 4:18 says, “there is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves punishment and one who fears is not perfected in love.” Genuine love – agape love—is the key. Pride, arrogance, and unhealthy self-love can only be controlled by the mind of Christ. Philippians 2:3-5: “Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves; do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others. Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus.” The reason some ministers have difficult relationships is because they don’t love themselves. We are not to be self-centered or “stuck on ourselves” or narcissistic, but we are forgiven and as children of God, we need to love ourselves.



## Relating to Others

George Barna said when you interview the pastors of highly effective churches, a common theme that emerges is the importance of people's relationships. One pastor stated, "Our church is not a group of people who show up Sunday morning to attend a weekly religious event. The real church is the people who are emotionally connected by their mutual and stated love for Christ and by their commitment to each other because of Christ (Barna p74-75)." When a person is looking for a minister there are three questions they want answered. Can I trust you? Do you really care about me? Are you competent to help me?

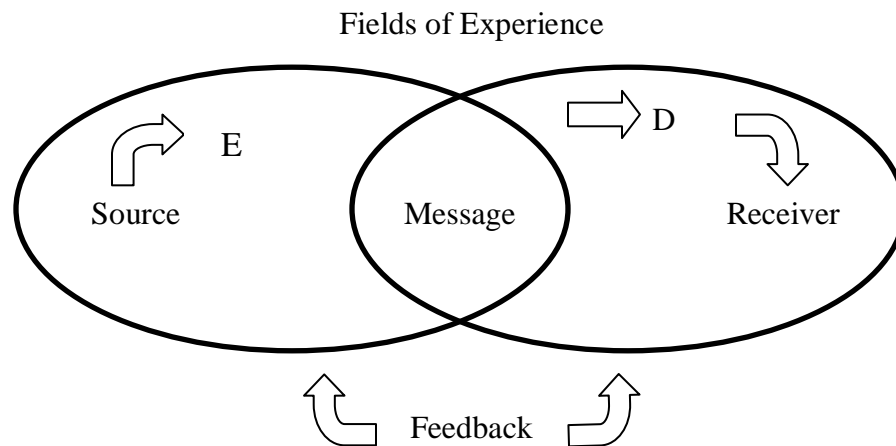
Guy Greenfield delineates eight levels of relationships. When we are right with God and have a healthy self-esteem, we will desire to grow in our relationship with others. This moves us from the shallow-avoidance level to the sharing level.

Eight Ministry Relationships		
Level	Scripture	Result
1. Avoidance	Matthew 15:21-28 Luke 10:25-37	
2. Greeting	Mark 5:21-43	
3. Separate Interests	Matthew 19:16-30 John 4:4-42	
4. Common Interest	John 1:43-51 Acts 18:18-28 Acts 2:42-47	
5. Social Interaction	Matthew 8:14-17 Luke 19:1-10	
6. Caring	John 11:1-7 John 11:17-48	
7. Sharing	Luke 9:18-22	
8. Intimacy	Matthew 26:36-46	

## Listening Skills

Listening is a vital tool in establishing good relationships. Love for God begins with listening to His Word, and love for others is learning to listen to them. Many people are desirous of people who will listen to them. Some pastors, often due to insecurity, feel they must always have an “answer” and are more interested in being heard than listening.

Listening and hearing are not the same. Hearing is a function of the ear. The focus is on the sound. Listening is more complex as it involves interpreting and understanding. Donald Ely of Syracuse University developed a communication model as follows:



### Message

Note the heart of the model in communication is the message.

### Source

The source of an idea in person-to-person communication begins in the mind of the communicator. From here the thought or idea is transmitted to the thought patterns of another.

### E – Encoding

When a message has been decided upon, it must be verbalized or symbolized in some way so it can be communicated to other people. Encoding is not all verbal; it often includes visualization. It could include facial expressions, eye contact, voice tones, body language, sign language and even silence.

### D – Decoding

Encoding is futile unless it is accompanied by a process of decoding. When decoding works the message is received and comprehended by the receiver. A word must be heard, a picture must be seen and sizzling steaks must be smelled. All our sensory experiences play a role in both encoding and decoding. First, if we want people to understand us, we must take pain to encode our message clearly. The receiver must take pain to decode our meaning.

### Receiver

The receiver is the person for whom the message is intended.

### Feedback

Feedback for a preacher might come in the form of a smile, an “amen,” yawns, or a noticeable get up and walk out. Nonverbal feedback tells us what is happening in the communication process. When a mother says, “Johnny did you hear me?” she is asking for feedback.

### Field of Experience

Communication does not take place in a vacuum. This could refer to how much the receiver understands. A teacher should not teach advanced eschatology to four-year-olds. The learning level would be insufficient. One's culture and background affects one's listening. A preacher on the mission field in a third-world country has to be careful with illustrations he takes, due to the listener's limited field of experience.

An effective pastor takes all these factors into consideration. Communication does not happen by chance, it requires work. Listening occurs at different levels.

Ignore – is when a person does not listen at all. How many husbands have been accused of living at this level?

Pretending – is when the listener nods and verbal affirmation, “yeah, right, I understand,” but the truth is he is not listening.

Selective – is when the listener selects what he/she wants to hear and tunes the rest out.

Manipulative – is when the listener purposely plots to change the subject. He uses key words spoken to try to control the conversation.

Empathetic – is when the listener is committed to find the true message. (Hollis p. 50-52).

The Texas Department of Public Safety has taught many officers how to be effective listeners.

## **LEAPS Listening Model**

Listen. Be aware of facial expressions, eye contact, and body language. Concentrate on the details and don't become distracted.

Empathize. Be sensitive to feelings expressed. Attempt to place yourself into their shoes.

Ask questions. This is to help clarify and understand.

Paraphrase. This is restating what the speaker has said. It often begins, “This is what I heard.”

Summarize. This is a restatement to sum up what has been said.

## LISTENING INVENTORY

The listening inventory on the next page is adapted from resources provided by Jim Dugger.

The listening skills inventory can help you know if you are presently practicing Active Listening. After reading each question, give yourself a score of one to five. When you finish taking the inventory, add up your score and check it against the inventory scale. The letters after the questions are keyed to areas you may need to work on.

**Complete the inventory on the next page then return to this page and process the inventory. Do not study the Listening Inventory Scale until you have completed the inventory on the next page.**

---

Now check your totals against the Listening Inventory Scale below.

- 13-20: You are a very good listener.
- 21-32: You are a fairly good listener.
- 33-45: You are an average listener.
- 46-58: You are a fairly poor listener.
- 59-65: You are a poor listener.

Take a look at your responses in the listening inventory. Do they follow a particular pattern? The questions are keyed so you can easily identify the areas you need to work on.

### Listening Inventory Key

- A – Emotional Filters
- B – Physical Distractions
- C – Internal Distractions
- D – Body Language
- E – Nonjudgmental Responses
- F – Filters/Prejudging

Questions	Never Sometimes Always				
	1	2	3	4	5
1. Do you find yourself understanding what was said but not what was meant? (A)					
2. Do you find it hard to concentrate on what the speaker is saying because of external distractions such as noise or movement? (B)					
3. Do you find it hard to concentrate on what the speaker is saying because of internal distractions, such as worry, fear, being unprepared, or daydreaming?					
4. Do you find yourself responding to what the speaker implies rather than what he says? (A)					
5. Do you find yourself responding in anger to words, stated or implied, that for all logical reasons should not make you angry?					
6. Do you have trouble reading a person's body language?					
7. Do you find it difficult to respond to a speaker in a nonjudgmental way if you don't agree with him? (E)					
8. Do you find it difficult to respond to a speaker in a nonjudgmental way if you don't like him? (E)					
9. Do you find yourself preparing your response before the speaker has finished? (F)					
10. Do you find yourself listening selectively, hearing only those words and ideas you want to hear? (A)					
11. Are there certain words, phrases or actions that consistently trigger certain positive or negative responses in you? (F)					
12. Do you find yourself asking, "What did you say?" even though you heard the speaker? (B,C)					
13. Do you rely on others to interpret what happened at a meeting? (A)					

Listen to people outside the church.

## Technical Skills

The challenges involved in serving as Pastor call for the best possible use of resources, including technological resources. Whether you are technologically challenged or technologically gifted, the need is the same. Do whatever you need to do to use every tool available for the advancement of the gospel. By adding two letters to the word “technical,” an h and an o, you create a new word, “theochnical.” That word can mean “using technical resources to the glory of God” which is exactly what we want to do.

1. Use Bible study software and the Internet in sermon preparation.  
Wherever you live as a transitional pastor an abundance of resources for use in sermon preparation are as close as your computer. You no longer need to move to your library to have access to much of the information stored in books. You can find biblical commentaries, cross-reference tools, Bible dictionaries, etc., in Bible software such as Bible Navigator, WordSearch, QuickVerse, Logos, and others. LifeWay endorses and distributes Bible Navigator because of its low cost and ease of use.

LifeWay also provides free model sermons as well as articles on preaching skills. These are available in Proclaim Online. Access these resources at [www.lifeway.com/proclaim](http://www.lifeway.com/proclaim).

LifeWay provides a free online Bible tool at [bible.lifeway.com](http://bible.lifeway.com). Other free online Bible tools include [biblegateway.com](http://biblegateway.com), and [blueletterbible.org](http://blueletterbible.org).

2. Use the Pastor’s Area of LifeWay.com ([www.lifeway.com/pastor](http://www.lifeway.com/pastor)).  
This area of LifeWay.com provides free articles, book reviews, study samples, model sermons, PowerPoint templates, and downloads covering the following five areas of a pastor’s life and ministry.
  - **Preacher** - Sermons and Preaching Articles
  - **Missionary** - Outreach & Evangelism
  - **Caregiver** - Pastoral Care/Counseling
  - **Leader** - Leading/Administration
  - **Person** - God, Self, Family
3. Subscribe to the Free “Pastors Today” E-newsletter.  
Pastors Today is a free weekly newsletter that provides notice of the latest articles and sermons posted on LifeWay.com. Subscribe at [www.lifeway.com/pastor](http://www.lifeway.com/pastor). Weekly issues feature the following:
  - Notice of new practical articles and solutions to help you in your ministry from LifeWay.com/Pastor.
  - Notice of the latest books, Bible studies, and events from LifeWay Christian Resources.
  - Links to free model sermons from Proclaim Online including updates of the latest EXTRA Sermon Helps.

4. Maximize the use of Email messages to church leaders.  
Use your e-mail program to create a group e-mail address list of key leaders: staff, Church Leadership Team (Church Council), Vision Team, Pastor's Prayer Partners, deacon officers, and so forth.
  - Every Thursday or Friday, post a message to the key leaders in this address group.
  - Express personal appreciation for their friendship and support of ministries of the church.
  - Share personal information that is appropriate among friends.
  - Provide information about plans for Sunday and particular prayer needs related to Sunday's events.

Check Email messages regularly. Reply as soon as possible with at least an acknowledgement of receiving the message. Use the telephone if a conversation is deemed necessary.

5. Maximize the use of PowerPoint.  
PowerPoint (or other presentation software) graphically produces images that promote the church's activities and reduces the need for oral announcements in worship services. They may be projected as people are assembling for services or as a special feature during the services. They may be accompanied by sound tracks.

PowerPoint may be used to provide congregations with visual outlines and illustrations accompanying sermons. PowerPoint may be used to reinforce teaching such as Bible studies and leadership training.

Individuals are available in many churches who are professionally involved in developing and using PowerPoint in their jobs or have developed the skill in formal training or individual study to use this technology effectively. Enlist them and provide them opportunities to make significant contributions to the church's ministry. If you choose to use PowerPoint, keep your PowerPoint slides to 7-9 slides per sermon.

6. Use the church's Web page to extend the ministry of the church. This can be especially useful for those who do not live in the church community but want to stay in touch with church members and witness to the community as much as possible.

Church websites are a cost efficient way to provide basic information about your church. You will want to enlist the help of a person with knowledge and skills to create an attractive, informative page and update it regularly.

- Your website should provide non-church members basic information about the church, meeting times, directions to the church, phone numbers, basic staff bios, and other useful information.
- Your website should inform church members of current programs, activities, special ministries, and schedules of particular events.
- Your website might also provide inspirational material for church members and other interested viewers.

- Provide a link with a presentation of the gospel of salvation to people whose curiosity may lead them to access the page and review its contents. NAMB.net provides many resources to help you at [thegoodnews.org](http://thegoodnews.org)
- Some church websites have an area where members login to a secure area where they can get updates on hospital admissions, hospital releases, prayer requests, special events, and changes in meeting schedules and locations.

LifeWay Christian Resources provides churches a website development service called LifeWayLINK. For information, call toll-free at 1-888-408-5580 or visit [www.lifewaylink.com](http://www.lifewaylink.com). Facebook, Twitter and podcasting are social media skills that growing pastors should use to increase their ministry opportunities.



## Conflict Management Skills

We all wish it were not so, but wishing will not make it “not so.” The serpent of the Garden of Eden is the serpent of today’s churches. Satan’s attack on church fellowship increases as the day when he is cast eternally into hell grows nearer. The conflict that characterizes social systems throughout the world infiltrates churches. Paul’s epistles addressed churches in conflict, especially the Corinthian church. He appealed to the churches to live out the fruit of the Spirit: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. Still there was conflict. Centuries later, there is conflict in churches; the redeemed are not yet perfected. Effective pastors need skills in conflict management. Part of the skills needed is understanding of conflict.

Definition of conflict. “Conflict” comes from the Latin word “conflictus,” which refers to an act of striking together. (Webster) Conflict is a situation in which two or more human beings desire goals which are attainable by one or the other, but not both. (McSwain & Treadwell, *Conflict Ministry in the Church*) Conflicts are power struggles over differences: Differing information or differing beliefs; differing interests, desires or values. (Hugh F. Halverstadt. *Managing Church Conflict*) Conflict is when two or more objects try to occupy the same space at the same time. (Douglas Lewis, *Resolving Church Conflicts*) To “manage” means “to handle or direct with some degree of success.” Conflict is neither inherently good nor bad, it is how one manages conflict that determines if it is good or bad. Conflict is going to occur. Conflict has existed since the beginning. You are not the only one who has experienced conflict. How you manage conflict often determines how much conflict you experience.

There are at least 133 conflict cases in the Bible.

- Genesis 3:1-5 - conflict between God’s word and Satan.
- Genesis 3:6-10 - conflict between God and man.
- Genesis 4:1-16 - conflict between brothers.
- Genesis 13:5-10 - conflict over land.
- Mark 3:1-6 - conflict between Jesus and the Pharisees over traditions.
- Acts 6:1-4 - conflict between church members.
- Acts 15:36-41 - conflict over personal issues.
- Galatians 2:11-21 - conflict between Paul and Peter.

**SUMMARY OF FORCED TERMINATION STATISTICS**  
1996-2008

Year	Full-Time Pastors	Bivocational Pastors	Full-Time Staff	Totals	Number of States
1996	818	441		1259	14
1997	607	285	300	1192	22
1998	614	314	246	1174	26
1999	531	301	245	1071	26
2000	482	268	237	987	22
2001	528	212	254	994	18
2003	615	323	295	1233	26
2004	408	192	184	784	19
2005	655	314	333	1302	29
2006	496	184	265	945	28
2007	361	165	203	729	28
2008	296	165	183	644	22

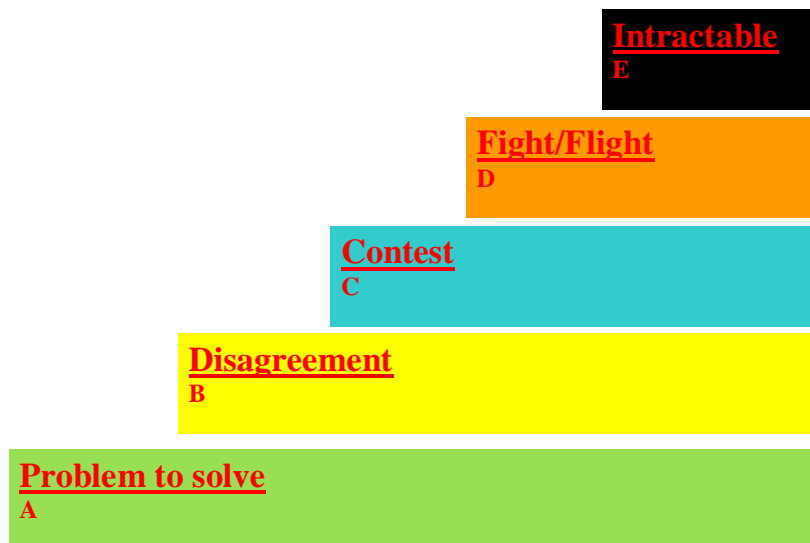
**The leading causes in descending order**

1. Control issues (Who will control the church?)
2. Poor people skills on the part of the pastor
3. Church is resistant to change
4. Pastor's leadership style is too strong
5. Prior unresolved church conflict (church already in conflict when pastor arrived)
6. Decline in attendance and/or conditions
7. Pastor's leadership style is too weak
8. Pastor lacks administrative competence
9. Sexual misconduct
10. Disagreement over doctrine
11. Conflict with other church staff
12. Ethical misconduct (mismanaged money, dishonesty)

Kenneth Haugk in his book *Antagonists in the Church* mentions three kinds of antagonists. There are moderate antagonists; these people seek to be involved in conflict or “What’s going on.” There are major antagonists; these people refuse to be reasoned with. Their demands cannot be satisfied. They are dishonest and have a drive for power. There are hard-core antagonists. They are psychotic. They continually cause conflict. They cannot be reasoned with.

There are also a group of people we would call Clergy Killers. These people are destructive and toxic—they poison almost everything they touch. These people are determined. They are not interested in a solution. Their goal is to destroy. These people are deceitful. They work by spreading lies, innuendoes, gossip, rumors and exaggerated tales. These people are in denial. They cannot see their own problems. It is always someone else’s fault. These people are demonic. They are devilish. Cruelty, dishonesty, hatefulness, destructiveness and dissension are their pattern.

### Structural levels of conflict



### Case Study in Conflict-

Deacon’s meeting was at 7 pm after evening worship. The goal of the chairman and the hopes of the pastor were to be finished by 8 pm in time for Sunday night football. That did not happen. When the deacons were going around the room sharing their concerns one deacon remarked, “The grass sure needs cutting.” Another deacon affirmed the problem, “Yes, it is as high as I’ve ever seen it and it does not help the looks of our church.” (Problem to solve) Deacon Bob contributed information, “The lawn mower is broken and I doubt it can be repaired.” Deacon Sam said, “I move we buy a new Snapper mower.” Deacon Bob quickly interrupted before a second could be made, “Wait a minute, we always buy Sears Craftsman, We don’t need a high dollar Snapper.”

The next thirty minutes was a disagreement over Snapper vs. Sears. (disagreement) At 8:15 pm the chairman said, “My grandkids are at the house watching the game on my wide-screen, and I have got to go. Let’s continue this at a later meeting. I move that we adjourn. Pastor, close us in prayer.”

The older men quickly got in their pick-up and headed home. Three of the younger deacons gathered around their mini-vans and rehashed the meeting. Sam said, “I am tired of always buying the cheapest. I am going to make the motion next week at business meeting that we buy a Snapper mower and I will cut the grass.” The other two agreed and they headed home. The next morning at the DQ, a group of older deacons rehashed the previous night’s Cowboy game and then Bob said, “Listen men, if we don’t get a hold of this problem, these new young deacons are going to break this church financially. I am glad they are coming, but they are not our kind of people, and they need to accept our ways.” (Contest)

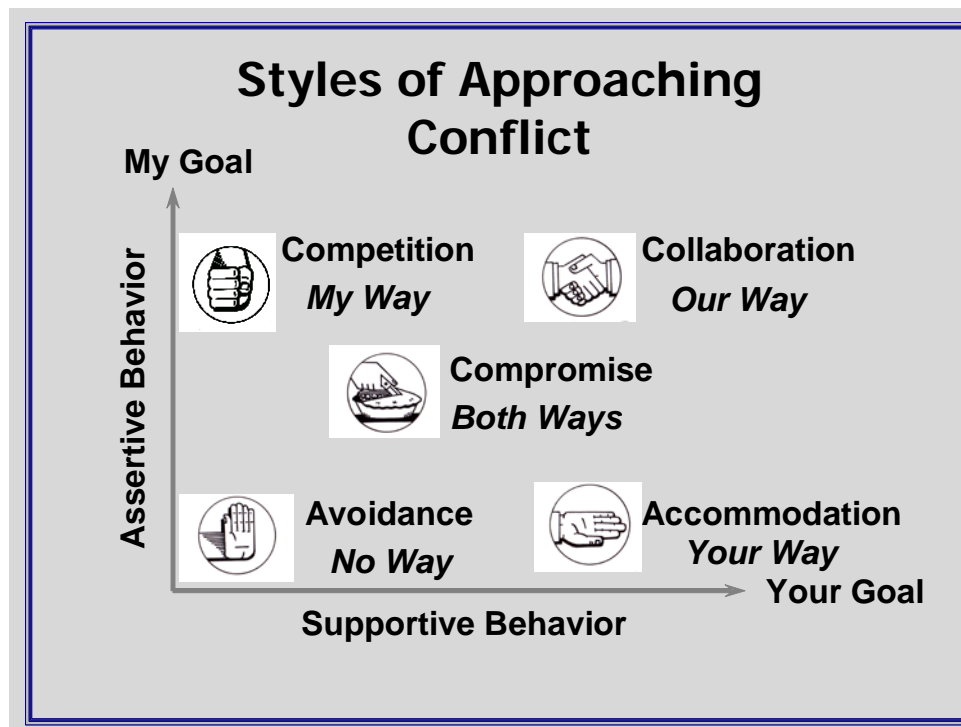
At the business meeting, Sam stood and said, “I move that we buy a Snapper mower, and I will cut the grass.” A second was made and an hour and a half of heated discussion followed. A vote was taken and defeated by ten votes. Sam stood and said, “I cannot worship with a group of faithless, cheap church goers. So my family and I will be leaving.” (fight/flight)

Sam and three other deacons along with four other families walked out. Deacon Bob stood and read from the Constitution and By-laws that the chairman (his brother) and vice chairman (Bob) of deacons are the property committee and they make the selection of all property. (intractable) Bob said, “See the trouble with these new people; they don’t want to follow the rules. We will be fine without them.”

## **Styles of Approaching Conflict**

A creative perspective sees conflict as an opportunity for “both/and” solutions. This model of conflict management changes the linear approach into a matrix, creating a number of new conflict possibilities. The vertical axis defines “My” goals or interests. *Assertive Behaviors* are those actions that promote the achievement of my goals. The horizontal axis represents “Your” goals or interests. Anything I do to support your success is called *Supportive Behavior*. Combining these two axes introduces a wider array of conflict strategies than a linear perspective.

The objective in any conflict situation should be to achieve a wise solution as efficiently as possible and in a manner that protects or even enhances the relationship. Depending on the circumstances, any of these five styles could achieve this objective. The key is to be able to choose the style most appropriate for the circumstances. There are also potential risks if the style is inappropriate to the situation. Compromise is the least desirable option. Relevant uses and possible risks for each style are found on the following pages.



There are several strategies for conflict management. One must admit conflict exists. One must believe conflict can be constructive and not destructive. One must communicate the biblical way of dealing with conflict. After reading Matthew 18:15-17, we can see Jesus' conflict management style. Jesus demonstrates for us that we should go privately and confront, go promptly, go peacefully, go prayerfully, go persistently. You should take 2-3 with you if a private meeting does not resolve the conflict. We should go purposefully to the church if a private meeting and group meeting do not resolve the conflict. One must be determined to pursue unity in the body. It is helpful to elect and train a Conflict Management Team (Peacemakers).

There are seven A's of Confession found in Matthew 7:3-5; 1 John 1:8-9; and Proverbs 28:13. We should address everyone hurt or affected, accept consequences, avoid using the words "if, but and maybe," alter your behavior, admit specifically, ask for forgiveness and apologize. The "Circle of Confession" should be no greater than the "Circle of the Offended."

Mediation is a third-party process to resolve conflict. Mediation is the art of listening and negotiating. Mediation can be beneficial in: member-member conflicts, member-pastor/staff conflicts, staff-pastor conflicts, staff conflicts, and business meeting/church-wide conflicts. The purpose of the Conflict Management Team (Peacemakers) is to help preserve the unity of the church by encouraging members in biblical reconciliation.

The mediation process includes three stages: entry, enlightenment and empower. During the entry stage, someone contacts you for help. You listen to their concerns. You ask if

the principles in Matthew 18 have been followed. If not, ask them to do so and return if mediation is still needed. One must explain the mediation process. Make it clear that you cannot help without being empowered by the pastor, church, and/or both conflicted parties. Clarify terms of the mediation agreement. Arrange for a meeting. At the meeting, explain the process again and have parties sign the mediation agreement.

During the enlightenment stage one must request all relevant documents. This might include the constitution, by-laws, history or minutes. One might need to make church-wide or leadership surveys or conduct individual and/or group interviews. One will need to analyze all the information and report back to the entry party and decide the next step.

During the last stage, empower, there are things that need to happen prior to and during the meeting. Before the meeting agree on time, place and sign a mediation agreement. You will also need to arrange a room so that conflicted parties can face each other. You will also need to pray before the meeting occurs. During the meetings you can think of the word GOSPEL to help you out.

- G - greet and set ground rules.
- O - opening statement, Scripture reading and prayer.
- S - storytelling.
- P - problem identification and clarification.
- E - explore solution to the conflict.
- L - lead to agreement.

Norris Smith is quoted as saying, “It takes a church 12-24 months to heal and get back on track after major conflict.”

Galatians 6:2 says, “Bear ye one another’s burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ (KJV).” This is a picture of restoration. Restoration is a ministry that gives care to one who is hurt. The ministry is varied in its methods. Restoration can take place through prayer, counseling (LifeWay, professional, friend), support groups, financial assistance and Barnabas house (housing, food, job placement).

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## ENDNOTES

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- <sup>5</sup> Jim Cymbala, *Fresh Wind, Fresh Fire* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1997), 27.
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- <sup>7</sup> The chart on page 80 and the copy for biblical principles, kingdom results, and church practice on pages 88-93, 99-101, and 103-106 have been adapted from Gene Mims, *Kingdom Principles for Church Growth, Revised and Expanded* (Nashville: LifeWay Press, 1994, 2001) and Gene Mims, *The Kingdom-Focused Church* (Nashville: B&H, 2003).
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"How blessed is the one who finds wisdom,  
and the one who finds understanding".  
Proverbs 3:13

**John Doe**

**6-15-2009**

### Understanding Strengths and Blending Differences

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## INTRODUCTION

Welcome! You have just taken a significant step in the process of understanding the unique strengths that God has designed in you. This report will provide insight into your natural strengths and how those strengths are operating in your life. As you learn more about yourself and God's plan for the uniqueness of strengths, you will also begin recognizing and valuing the strengths in others.

There are several sections in this report and each contributes to the knowledge and understanding that will produce the greatest transformation in your relationships. Therefore, please commit yourself to read and explore this report completely.

In I Corinthians 12:12-18 we read that although the body is one, it is made up of many parts. Each part has a vital function and is no less a part of the body because it is different. As you study the passage, it is apparent that God not only intentionally created differences, but He designed them very specifically. God's desire in our relationships is for our differences to unite us not divide us. These Biblical principles establish a foundation for understanding ourselves and our relationships and to see that our differences are strengths when allowed to function as God designed.

The mission of Ministry Insights is to transform relationships worldwide. We believe this transformation takes place as you discover God's plan for your unique strengths and the unique strengths of others. As you learn more about yourself and others it is our prayer that your eyes will be opened to clearly see God's divine design for differences.

Additional supporting resources are available at [www.ministryinsights.com](http://www.ministryinsights.com).



### Interpreting Your Natural Strength Chart

Let's begin with a look at your natural strengths. Your Natural Strengths Chart presents a visual picture of the predictable ways that you naturally approach or respond to problems, information, change and risk. In each of these four scales, there are two different strengths that you may possess; therefore, there are eight strength possibilities. There is a vertical line in the center of the chart that is referred to as the energy line. Proceeding in each direction from that line is a 10 point scale. The number on the scale indicates the intensity of the strength. There may be situations in which you utilize a strength different from you natural strength, but it will require energy for you to do so. (This will be discussed further in later sections)

If your score on any scale is within 2 points of the energy line, it is indicated as neutral. This means you can move towards either of the strengths outlined in the scales based on the current situation. As opposed to someone that exhibits a clearly observable strength in an area, it will not require as much energy for you to move from one strength to the other in that area. You will tend to take a neutral position until you understand clearly what strength is required.

These strengths are a part of who you are and will remain relatively consistent over time. Typically only very small changes in your natural strengths are observed throughout your life. It is not often that we see major shifts in someone's natural strengths, but it is possible. Such a shift is normally due to a major life changing event.

#### The Problem Solving Scale (L Scale)

Your score on this scale indicates whether your natural strength is more reflective or aggressive in the way in which you approach problems. If you plot on the reflective side of the scale, we can predict that you will take a more reflective or calculating approach to solving a problem or challenge. If you plot on the aggressive side of the scale, it is predictable that when a problem or challenge arises you will take a more aggressive or assertive approach to solving that problem. Depending on the problem or issue, each side of the scale can highlight an important strength



### The Processing Information Scale (O Scale)

Your score on this scale indicates whether your natural strength is to be more optimistic or realistic in the way in which you process information. If you plot on the optimistic side of the scale, it is predictable that when processing new information you will be more trusting and accepting. If you plot on the realistic side of the scale, you will be more skeptical and want to validate information before trusting. Again, each side of the scale represents a strength in processing information.

### The Managing Change Scale (G Scale)

Your score on this scale indicates whether your natural strength is to be more dynamic or predictable in the way you manage change. If you are on the dynamic side of this scale, you will tend to be fast-paced. You are comfortable managing many projects simultaneously, and you allow change to drive your plan. If you plot on the predictable side of the scale, you will lean toward a slower pace. You prefer to focus on one project at a time, and you tend to want to plan for change. Managing change effectively requires a combination of these strengths.

### The Facing Risk Scale (B Scale)

Your score on this scale indicates whether your natural strength is to be more structured or pioneering in the way you face risk. If you are on the structured side of the scale, you will tend to follow the established procedures and rules and see them as a source of protection. Therefore you will tend to be a lower risk taker. If you are on the pioneering side of this scale, you will tend to view rules and established procedures as broad guidelines and tend to push the envelope of risk. You may even view them as obstacles standing in the way of your progress. Each of these strengths is important and needed for balancing the risk scale.

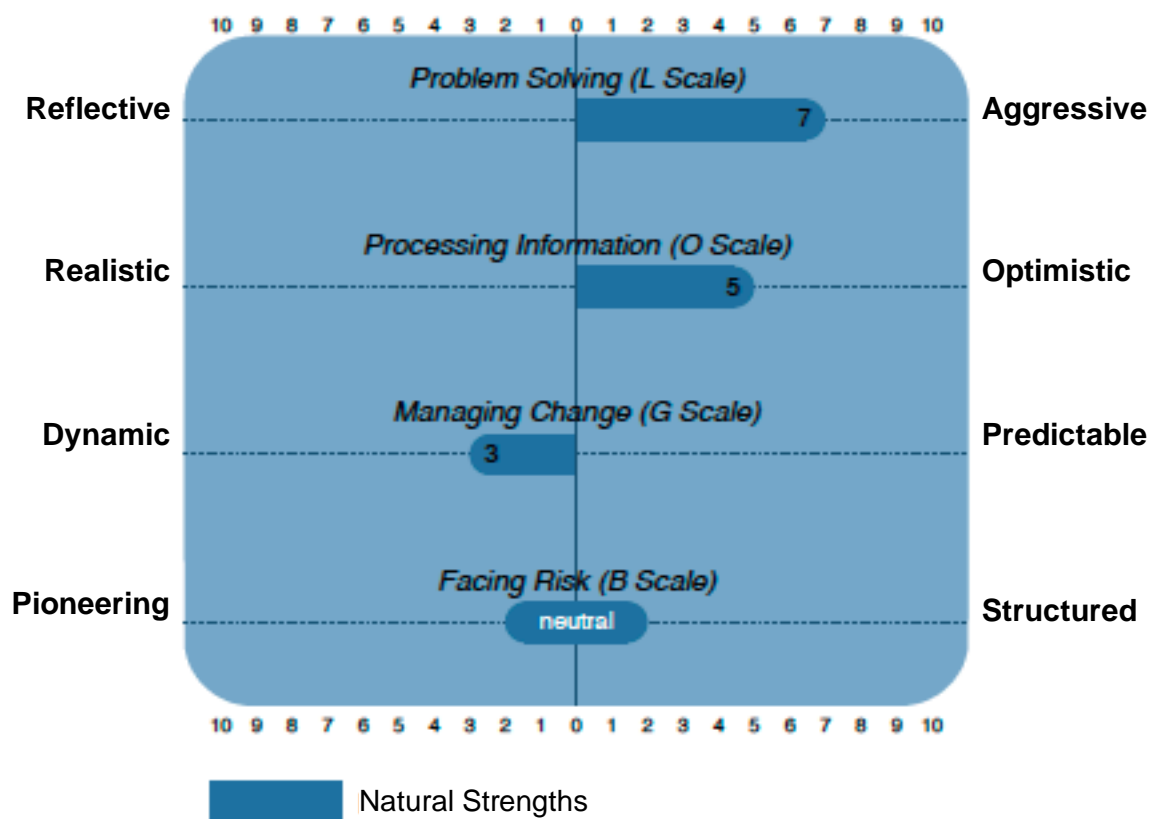
In any relationship – from the team you work with, to your closest friendships, to your marriage, or even your relationship with your children – you'll find that understanding your natural strengths and those of others in these predictable measures is crucial to building trust, closeness, commitment and caring. In fact, by understanding where people differ in these areas, you may even discover a “great secret” – that the differences of others are actually designed to complement your strengths, enabling you to function in that relationship more fully. Living out our strengths and valuing the strengths of others allows us to be more than we can be on our own.



Here are some last thoughts before you move on to your strengths chart. The order in which the information on the chart is presented is not an indication that one scale is more important than another. Also, you are a combination of strengths, so while each scale is important individually, they are not independent. Your unique combination of strengths will give you a better understanding of who you are. Therefore, the pages of text that follow your Natural Strengths Chart are essential to help you interpret your mix of strengths into a word picture that will give you a comprehensive understanding of your strengths. They will also serve as an objective platform to facilitate discussion with others.



## YOUR NATURAL STRENGTHS CHART





## GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS

*Based on John's responses, the report has selected general statements to provide a broad understanding of his strengths. These statements identify the "Natural" strengths that he brings to the position or relationship. That is, if left on his own, these statements identify how he would choose to carry out his work and relate to others. Use the general characteristics to gain a better understanding of John's "Natural" strengths.*

John may have difficulty dealing with others who are slower in thought and action.

Nothing bores John more than the status quo, things becoming routine and people always agreeing, or pretending to agree. He is the type of individual who, under pressure, has a tremendous sense of urgency and need to get things done. He is forward-looking, aggressive and competitive. His vision for results is one of his positive strengths. John prefers an environment with variety and change. He is at his best when many projects are underway at once. Under pressure, John has a tendency to actively seek opportunities which test and develop his abilities to accomplish results. He has the ability to question people's basic assumptions about things. He prides himself on his creativity, incisiveness and cleverness. He likes to be forceful and direct when dealing with others. His desire for results is readily apparent to the people with whom he works. John displays a high energy factor and is optimistic about the results he can achieve. The word "can't" is not in his vocabulary. He has high confidence in himself and may be viewed by some as egotistical. John finds it easy to share his opinions on solving work-related problems. He should realize that at times he needs to think a project through, beginning to end, before starting the project. He will work long hours until a tough problem is solved. After it is solved, John



## GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS

may become bored with any routine work that follows. Sometimes he may be so opinionated about a particular problem that he has difficulty letting others participate in the process. John prefers authority equal to his responsibility. When faced with a tough decision, he will try to sell you on his ideas. He likes to make decisions quickly.

Sometimes he becomes emotionally involved in the decision-making process.

John likes people who give him options as compared to their opinions. The options may help him make decisions, and he values his own opinion over that of others! He may lack the patience to listen and communicate with slower acting people. He should exhibit more patience and ask questions to make sure that others have understood what he has said. He tends to influence people by being direct, friendly and results-oriented. John may lose interest in what others are saying if they ramble or don't speak to the point. His active mind is already moving ahead. He challenges people who volunteer their opinions. His creative and active mind may hinder his ability to communicate to others effectively. He may present the information in a form that cannot be easily understood by some people. He may sometimes mask his feelings in friendly terms. If pressured, John's true feelings may emerge.



## VALUE TO THE TEAM

*This section of the report identifies the specific talents and strengths John brings to the ministry. By looking at these statements, one can better identify his role. Understanding these strengths can help capitalize on John's God-given strengths that make him an integral part of the team.*

- People-oriented.
- Self-starter.
- Forward-looking and future-oriented.
- Optimistic and enthusiastic.
- Negotiates conflicts.
- Team player.





## CHECKLIST FOR COMMUNICATING

*Many people find this section to be extremely accurate and important for enhancing communication with John. Whether at work, home or in the ministry, understanding how best to communicate with others can be a great relationship asset. This page provides a list of things to DO when communicating with John. Review each statement with John to identify the statements which are most important to him. We recommend highlighting the most important "DO's" and provide this list to those who communicate with John frequently.*

Do:

- Provide questions, alternatives and choices for making his own decisions.
- Support the results, not the person, if you agree.
- Provide testimonials from people he sees as important.
- Plan interaction that supports his dreams and intentions.
- Ask for his opinions/ideas regarding people.
- Be clear, specific, brief and to the point.
- Present the facts logically; plan your presentation efficiently.
- Leave time for relating, socializing.
- Support and maintain an environment where he can be efficient.
- Motivate and persuade by referring to objectives and results.
- Ask specific (preferably "what?") questions.
- Talk about him, his goals and the opinions he finds stimulating.



## DON'T ON COMMUNICATING

*This section of the report is a list of things NOT to do while communicating with John. Review each statement with John and identify those methods of communication that result in frustration or reduced performance. By sharing this information, both parties can negotiate a communication system that is mutually agreeable.*

### Don't:

- Leave decisions hanging in the air.
- Come with a ready-made decision, or make it for him.
- Legislate or muffle--don't overcontrol the conversation.
- Drive on to facts, figures, alternatives or abstractions.
- Be redundant.
- Ask rhetorical questions, or useless ones.
- Try to build personal relationships.
- Be curt, cold or tight-lipped.
- Take credit for his ideas.
- Ramble on, or waste his time.
- Try to convince by "personal" means.
- Let disagreement reflect on him personally.
- Waste time trying to be impersonal, judgmental or too task-oriented.



## IDEAL ENVIRONMENT

*This section identifies the ideal environment based on John's God-given strengths or "Natural" Style. Use this section to identify specific duties and responsibilities that John enjoys and also those that may create frustration.*

- Nonroutine work with challenge and opportunity.
- Freedom of movement.
- Tasks at home or work that change from time to time.
- Forum to express ideas and viewpoints.
- Democratic supervisor with whom he can associate.
- Evaluation based on results, not the process.
- An innovative and futuristic-oriented environment.
- Tasks involving motivated groups and establishing a network of contacts.
- Assignments with a high degree of people contacts.



## KEYS TO MOTIVATING

*Understanding what motivates a person is often found by understanding what it is he wants or values. This section of the report can help understand John's wants and desires. Those statements that ring true, but aren't a current part of his ministry, can become goals to reach.*

John wants:

- Group activities outside the work environment and ministry.
- To be seen as a leader.
- Power and authority to take the risks to achieve results.
- To be trusted.
- Control of his own future.
- Opportunity for rapid advancement.
- Prestige, position and titles so he can control the future of others.
- Freedom from control and detail.
- Rewards to support his dreams.
- Participation in meetings on future planning.
- A leader who practices participative management.
- A friendly work environment.



## KEYS TO LEADING

*In this section are some needs which must be met in order for John to perform at an optimum level. Some needs can be met by himself, while leadership must provide for others. It is difficult for a person to enter a motivational environment when that person's basic needs have not been fulfilled. Review the list with John and identify 3 or 4 statements that are most important to him. This allows John to participate in forming his own personal growth plan.*

John needs:

- To understand his role on the team--either a team player or the leader.
- To know results expected and to be evaluated on the results.
- To adjust his intensity to match the situation.
- A program for pacing work and relaxing.
- Objectivity when dealing with people because of his high trust level.
- To mask emotions when appropriate.
- More control of body language.
- To handle routine paperwork only once.
- To be confronted when in disagreement, or when he breaks the rules.
- Participatory leader.
- An awareness of the parameters or rules in writing.



## AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT

*This section lists possible "Natural" limitations or tendencies for John. It does not consider life and work experiences or formal education and training that he may have received to overcome these obstacles. Review with John and cross out those limitations that do not apply. Highlight one to three statements that are hindering his performance and develop an action plan to eliminate or reduce these tendencies.*

John has a tendency to:

- Blame, deny and defend his position--even if it is not needed.
- Have no concept of the problems that slower-moving people may have with his style.
- Be impulsive and seek change for change's sake. May change priorities daily.
- Dislike routine work or routine people--unless he sees the need to further his goals.
- Set standards for himself and others so high that impossibility of the situation is common place.
- Be so concerned with big picture; he forgets to see the little pieces.
- Overstep authority and prerogatives--will override others.
- Be crisis-oriented.
- Have difficulty finding balance between family and work.



*A person's actions and feelings may be quickly telegraphed to others. This section provides additional information on John's self-perception and how, under certain conditions, others may perceive his actions. Understanding this section will enable John to balance his emotions to be successful in different situations.*

### **“See Yourself As Others See You”**

#### **SELF-PERCEPTION**

John usually sees himself as being:

Pioneering  
Competitive  
Positive

Assertive  
Confident  
Winner

#### **OTHERS' PERCEPTION**

Under moderate pressure, tension, stress or fatigue, others may see him as being:

Demanding  
Egotistical

Nervy  
Aggressive

And, under extreme pressure, stress or fatigue, others may see him as being:

Abrasive  
Arbitrary

Controlling  
Opinionated



During your response to the online questionnaire we were able to identify more than just your natural strengths. We also identified your strengths movement. Strengths movement is a measure of how the current environment impacts your natural strengths. Some environmental issues impact your strengths in a positive way and some negative. The Strengths Movement Chart illustrates this impact on your natural strengths.

As stated earlier, your natural strengths will typically remain stable over time. However, it is common for you to adapt to your current environment based on your perception of whether your strengths are being valued or discounted, or whether they are different than what may be required by your current role.

The Strengths Movement Chart provides a picture of how much you feel you need to "change" or "adapt" your natural strengths to match the needs or requirements of your current environment. You will see the same strength indicators from your natural strengths chart, but an additional indicator is overlaid that displays a measurement of your strengths movement. That movement can be positive or negative, or there may be areas where there is no movement.

Areas without any movement could indicate that your natural strengths are in alignment with your environment. Areas that have positive movement could indicate that the environment may require you to use more of that strength. In both of these scenarios, you will typically feel valued and comfortable.

If there is negative movement in a scale, you may feel that your environment requires you to be something other than what you naturally are. You may want to explore these areas further. As you do, keep in mind that some adaptation is good and also necessary. However, long term adaptation consumes energy and can lead to stress and frustration. The greater the degree of movement away from your natural strength, the greater the degree of energy you are expending to adapt.

Changes in your current environment can dramatically impact the movement in your strengths. Therefore, it is our recommendation that you retake this assessment on an annual basis, or sooner, if there are significant changes in your current environment. This will provide an objective point of reference and help you to focus your natural strengths.

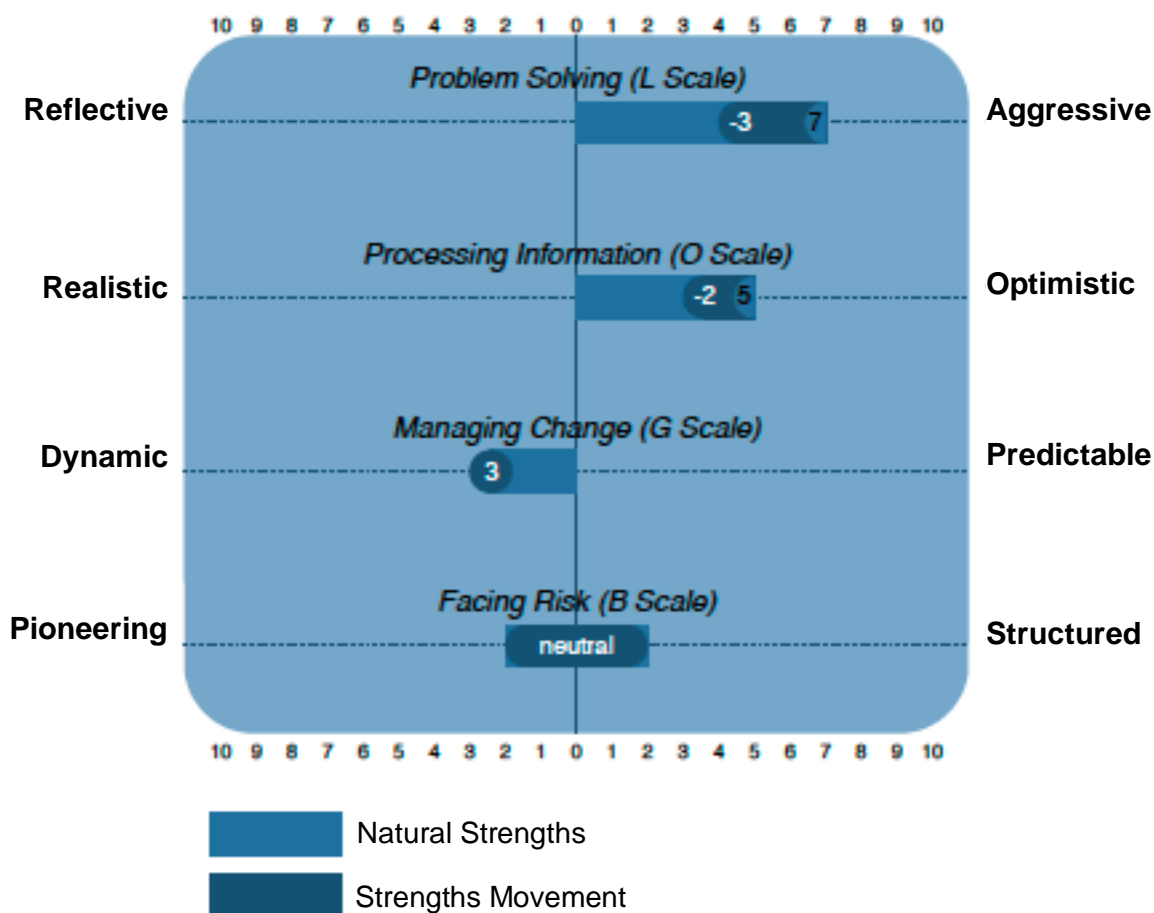
Following the Strengths Movement Chart are pages that interpret your strength movement mix into a word picture to help you explore this movement in your strengths. These subsequent text pages and the strengths movement chart can serve as an objective platform to facilitate discussion with others in your current environment.





## YOUR STRENGTHS MOVEMENT CHART

As you review this chart, pay special attention to areas where the movement is away from your natural strengths. Negative movement of 5 points or more and especially movement across the center (energy) line are areas that could be costing you energy and should be explored further.





## HOW ARE YOU HAVING TO “ADAPT?”

*This list of descriptions can give you a picture of the way John feels he may need to respond to the current environment to be accepted. If these statements DO NOT sound related, explore the reasons why as a key to understanding John's current situation and his need to “adapt” to be accepted.*

- Having the ability to see the "big picture" as well as the small pieces of the puzzle.
- Positive, outgoing, friendly behavior.
- Preferring people involvement over task focus.
- Making tactful decisions.
- Participative decision making.
- Contacting people using a variety of modes.
- Maintaining an ever-changing, friendly, work environment.
- Obtaining results through people.
- Dealing with a wide variety of activities.
- Flexibility.
- A good support team to handle paperwork.
- Skillful use of vocabulary for persuasive situations.
- A competitive environment, combined with a high degree of people skills



## NATURAL AND ADAPTED STYLE

John's "Natural" Style of dealing with problem solving (L), processing information (O), managing change (G) and facing risk (B) may not always fit what the environment needs. This section may provide valuable information related to the stress and pressure John may feel when he "Adapts" his style to the environment.

"Natural" Style	PROBLEMS – CHALLENGED	"Adapted" Style
John tends to deal with problems and challenges in a demanding, driving and "I'm going to win" manner. He is individualistic in his approach and actively seeks goals. John will attack problems and likes a position with authority and work that will constantly challenge him to perform up to his ability.		John's response to the environment is to be strong-willed and ambitious in his problem-solving approach. He seeks to remove all obstacles.

"Natural" Style	PEOPLE – INFORMATION	"Adapted" Style
John is enthusiastic about his ability to influence others. He prefers an environment in which he has the opportunity to deal with different types of individuals. John is trusting and also wants to be trusted.		John sees no need to change his approach to influencing others to his way of thinking. He sees his "Natural" Style to be what the environment is calling for.



## NATURAL AND ADAPTED STYLE

"Natural" Style	PACE – CHANGE	"Adapted" Style
John likes mobility and the absence of routine does not traumatize him. He feels comfortable juggling different projects and is able to move from one project to another fairly easily.		John sees his natural activity style to be just what the environment needs. What you see is what you get for activity level and consistency. Sometimes he would like the world to slow down.

"Natural" Style	RULES – RISK	"Adapted" Style
John is independent by nature and somewhat self-willed. He is open to new suggestions and can, at times, be seen as somewhat freewheeling. He is most comfortable in an environment where the constraints can be "loosened" for certain situations.		John shows little discomfort when comparing his "Natural" Style to his response to the environment "Adapted" Style. The difference is not significant and John sees little or no need to change his response to the environment.



## THE STRENGTHS WHEEL

The Strengths Wheel is a powerful visual tool to help you see the natural strengths of a team or group of people. It can also help you understand how the team or group is moving their strengths collectively to meet the demands of their current environment. If you are part of a group or team who also took the assessment, it would be advantageous to use each person's Strengths Wheel to create a master Strengths Wheel that contains each person's "Natural Strengths" and "Strengths Movement". This allows for quick identification of potential issues and alignment.

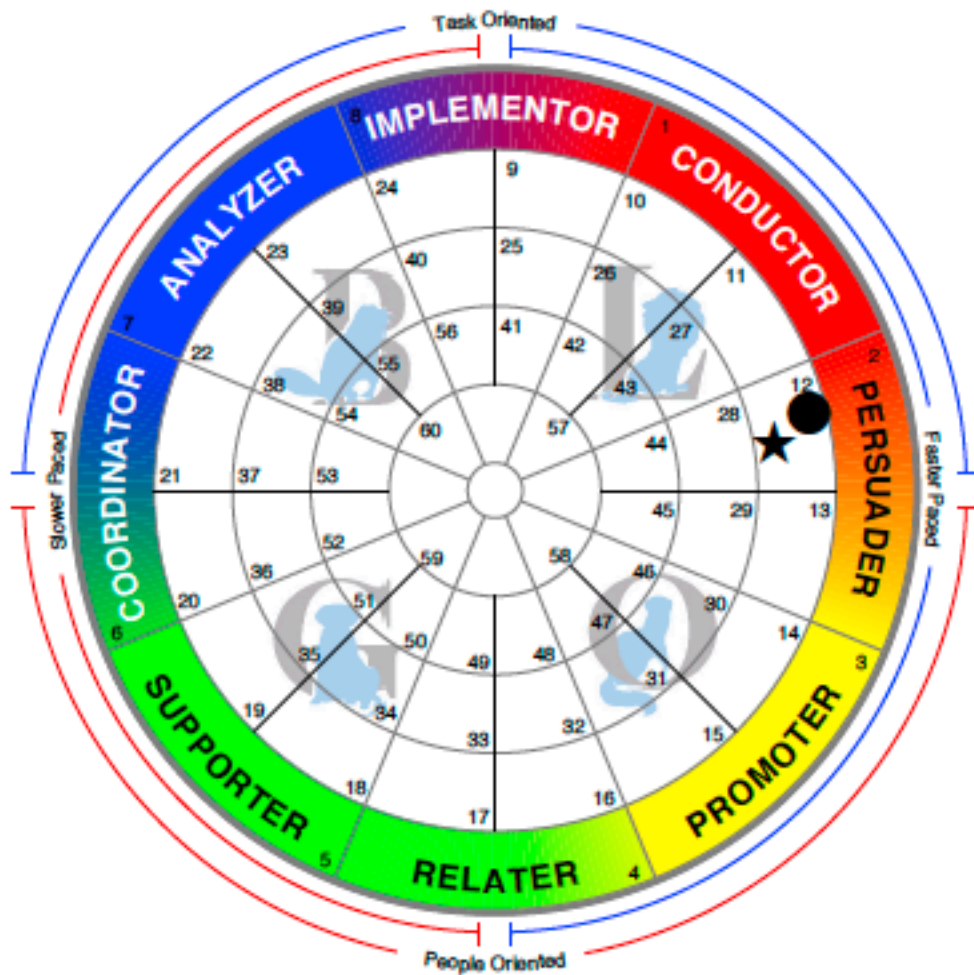
The circle represents your natural strengths. The star represents your strengths movement. The Strengths Wheel is divided down and across the middle. By looking at the top of the Strengths Wheel you will see that the L and B scales have something in common. They both represent task orientation. At the bottom of the wheel you will see that the G and O scales represent people orientation. Therefore if a team or group clusters in the top of the wheel we can predict the team will be task oriented and vice versa.

Taking another look at the wheel and you will see on the left side the B and G scales have something in common as well. They are slower paced. The opposite side of the wheel you will see that the L and O scales are faster paced. Therefore if the team or group plotted on the left side of the wheel we could predict a slower paced environment and so on.

Putting all the pieces together can give us a powerful picture of a team. It can drive objective discussion about what the natural strengths of the team are and how the team feels it needs to move, as a whole, to succeed in the current environment.

# THE STRENGTHS WHEEL

John Doe  
6-15-2009



“Adapted” Style: ★ (12) CONDUCTING PERSUADER

“Natural” Style: ● (12) CONDUCTING PERSUADER