

The Eight Essentials for a Healthy and Thriving Congregation: Developing a Strategy for Success

A Three-Part Large Group or Congregational Study
Including A Leader's Guide

(To be used in conjunction with *The Eight Essentials for a Healthy and Thriving
Congregation*, available January, 2006)

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Table of Contents

Acknowledgements	2
Introduction	3
Leader's Guide	4
Session I	7
Session II	10
Session III	13
APPENDIX	
Session I, Section 1 A	16
Session I, Section 1 B	18
Session I, Section 2 A	19
Session I, Section 2 B	20
Session I, Section 2 C	22
Session I, Section 3 A	23
Session I, Section 3 B	24
Session II, Section 1 A	26
Session II, Section 1 B	28
Session II, Section 2 A	29
Session II, Section 2 B	30
Session II, Section 3 A	33
Session II, Section 3 B	36
Session III, Section 1 A	37
Session III, Section 1 B	40
Session III, Section 2 A	41
Session III, Section 2 B	44
Session III, Section 3 A	46
Session III, Section 3 B	49
Author's Biography	50
The Eight Essentials Pocket Reminders (Printable)	51

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Introduction

Welcome to the second part of a unique study with one purpose: to help your church become a healthy and thriving congregation.

The Eight Essentials for a Healthy and Thriving Congregation, an eight-week small group study, was launched on the MCC website in January 2006. For those small groups who would like to embrace this study and put a plan of action into place, *Developing a Strategy for Success* is for you!

While the original *The Eight Essentials* was developed as a small group study, *Developing a Strategy for Success* is set up for a larger group, or even congregational study presented in three day-long sessions. *Developing a Strategy for Success* takes *The Eight Essentials* to the next phase and helps move a congregation toward a realistic plan of action.

The large group may consist of all the small groups who went through the eight-week study, church leadership, or even an entire congregation! It is highly recommended that people from the small group study be in attendance.

Although the times can be flexible, it is suggested that these three sessions be set up one Saturday a month, from 9:00am to 3:00pm for three consecutive months. Each session is broken down into sections:

- Scripture
- Skit
- Pocket Reminders
- Small Group Work
- Reporting Back to the Group at Large
- Creating a Plan of Action

You will note in the Leader's Guide that breaks and a lunch time are built into each day.

The ultimate objective is for your church to have a strategy in place that presents long and short term goals that lead toward developing a healthy and thriving congregation.

THE LEADER'S GUIDE

The Setting:

While *The Eight Essentials for a Healthy and Thriving Congregation* was developed for use in a small group, *Developing a Strategy for Success* is designed to use in a larger setting. This can include both the small groups from the first study and other members of the congregation.

The meeting place should provide a gathering space with chairs for all the participants as well as tables and chairs for small-group work.

The small groups should be a random mix of those attending each session, though it will be helpful to have at least one person who participated in *The Eight Essentials* in each small group. Having them count off by fours would be one way to divide them into the small groups. The one's would then be at a table, the two's at another table, and so on. Each group should have a minimum of two people. When possible, each group should have the same number of people.

The Large Group Leader Job Description:

- Should be familiar with *The Eight Essentials for a Healthy and Thriving Congregation*. S/he will not be a part of the small group discussions, but will be available in the event that clarification is needed.
- Come to the study prepared.
- Remember that this is a group discussion rather than a lecture.
- Listen to others and respect their opinions no matter how different they are from your own.
- Facilitate rather than dominate.
- Have someone who attended *The Eight Essentials* as a moderator/facilitator for each small group if possible. Since these people are familiar with the original material, they can offer insight and clarity if needed. This moderator/facilitator may select someone to record the work from their small group discussion, and someone to report it back to the larger group.
- Assign small-group leaders and Essential Players in advance of each session.
- Be prepared to assist the larger group in developing a plan of action. That plan may be to implement something from the study or delegate a team or committee to further research or action. Be sure the plan is recorded in writing!

Suggested Materials:

- Something large to write on so the large group can easily view it.
- Markers to write with.
- Pocket Reminders for each Session and Section (enough for every participant)
- One copy of the discussion questions/project for each small group. See Appendix
- Scripts for *The Essential Players* for each section. See Appendix
- Tables with chairs for the small groups.
- Pens/Pencils/Paper at each small group table.
- Breakfast snacks/coffee/tea/etc.

-Arrangements for a quick lunch such as a brown bag or potluck.

Special Notice Regarding Scripts and Skits:

Because not everyone will have attended the eight week small group study on *The Eight Essentials*, the skits for each section will give a brief topic overview. It is suggested that you ask for volunteers to participate in these skits. The material refers to these participants as *The Essential Players*. Be sure they have the skits prior to each session. These are simple readings that do not need to be memorized in advance. It can be done as a reader's theatre or with some action; this would be the participants' choice. You may have the same *Essential Players* for each skit, or change out to different people.

Suggested Time Line For Each Session:

- Intro/Opening 15 minutes
- Small Groups 20 minutes
- Report Back 25 minutes
- Develop a Plan 30 minutes

*Please note that this is a "suggested" time line. You may find that your group moves more slowly or more quickly through any given section. Below is an example, beginning at 9:00am and closing by 3:00pm

9:00am

- Welcome and opening prayer.
- *At the first session you will want to explain that the primary goal is to make a plan of action for your congregation, using *The Eight Essentials for a Healthy and Thriving Congregation* recently studied in your congregation.

Section 1

- Scripture
- Skit
- Pass out the Pocket Reminders and the discussion questions/project for each small group.

9:15am

- Break into small groups for discussion or project.

9:35am

- Small groups report back their discussion or findings to the larger group. Have someone record the findings.

10:00am

- Develop a plan of action.

10:30am

- BREAK

Section 2

10:45am

- Scripture
- Skit
- Pass out Pocket Reminders and the discussion questions/project for each small group.

11:00am

- Small Groups

11:20pm

- Small groups report back their findings to the large group.

11:45pm

- Develop a plan of action.

12:15pm

- LUNCH

Section 3

1:00pm

- Scripture
- Skit
- Pass out Pocket Reminders and the discussion questions/project for each small group.

1:15pm

- Small groups

1:35pm

- Small groups report back their findings to the large group.

2:00pm

- Develop a plan of action.

2:30pm

- Wrap things up.
- Announce the next session date and time.
- Thank everyone for coming!
- Close in prayer.

Session I Details

Section 1

9:00am:

- Welcome and opening prayer.
- Explain briefly that this is the first part of a much larger process, based on the eight-week study *The Eight Essentials for a Healthy and Thriving Congregation*. The purpose of this larger group study is to develop a strategy that, when implemented, will lead to a healthy and thriving congregation.
- Let people know that part of the day will be spent in the large group setting and part of it will be spent in the smaller group setting.
- Read the scripture: II Corinthians 13:10
- Introduce *The Essential Players*.
- Skit (See Appendix: Session I, Section 1 A)

9:15am

- Pass out the Pocket Reminders: "Set up a Contextual Analysis of Your Church".
- Have the group count off in fours. Send the ones to a table, the twos to a table, and so on. Be sure to have a facilitator/moderator designated for each small group. Have that person request one volunteer to record what they will report back, and another to make the verbal report.
- Distribute the discussion questions/project to each table. (See Appendix: Session I, Section 1 B) Announce that the groups will come back together again at 9:35am, and should be prepared to briefly report back their discussion and any findings.

9:35am

- Call the small groups back into the large group. Appoint someone to record the findings up in front where everyone can see them. Ask for someone from each group to report back their work to this large group. Look for commonalities.

10:00am

- Develop a plan of action. Keep a record this plan.
**Example: To form teams or committees assigned to write out, in detail, the church's history, culture, theology, and relevant experiences in the church's history. This information will be compiled into one document. This contextual analysis will be made available, in writing, to all leadership in the church to serve as a guide for future decisions.*

10:30am

- BREAK

Section 2

10:45am (return to the large group)

- Once again read II Corinthians 13:1-10
- Explain (See Appendix: Session I, Section 2 A)
- Skit *The Essential Players* (See Appendix: Session I, Section 2 B)

11:00am

- Instruct the group to return to assigned small groups.
- Pass out the discussion questions/project to each table (See Appendix: Session I, Section 2 C)

11:20am

- Have each group report in, demonstrating how they used a contextual analysis. Have someone write each group's main uses of the contextual analysis so that everyone can see them.

11:45am

- Develop a plan of action for the use of a contextual analysis in the decision making of your church. List some ways it could be helpful to a congregation. *Examples: Developing a mission statement, developing a vision statement, developing core values, developing a welcome statement, pastoral search, programming, etc.*

12:15pm

- LUNCH

Section 3

1:00pm

- Read the following scripture passages: Mark 1:14-19
Mark 3: 13-19
Mark 6: 7-12
Matthew 28: 16-20
- Skit (See Appendix: Session I, Section 3 A)
- Pass out the Pocket Reminders: "Develop Healthy Leadership"

1:15pm

- Send everyone to their small groups.
- Hand out the discussion questions/project for each table. (See Appendix: Session I, Section 3 B)

1:35pm

- Have the groups report in.

2:00pm

- Develop a plan of action.

2:30pm

- Wrap things up—briefly summarize the action plans.
- Thank everyone for coming.
- Announce the time and date for the next session.
- Close in prayer.

Session II Details

Section 1

9:00am

- Welcome and opening prayer.
- Briefly explain that this is the second part of a much larger process based on the eight-week study *The Eight Essentials for a Healthy and Thriving Congregation*. The purpose of the larger groups study is to develop a strategy that, when implemented, will lead to a healthy and thriving congregation.
- Remind people that part of the day will be spent in the large group setting and part of it will be spent in the smaller group setting.
- Read the scripture: Matthew 22:34-40
- Introduce *The Essential Players*.
- Skit (see Appendix: Session II, Section 1 A)

9:15am

- Pass out the Pocket Reminders: "Practice Loving Relationships"
- Invite them to move to their small groups. You may use the same groups as during the last session, or divide them differently.
- Distribute the discussion questions/project to each table (See Appendix: Session II, Section 1 B).

9:35am

- Call the small groups back into the large group to report back their findings.

10:00am

- Develop a plan of action.

10:30am

- BREAK

Section 2

10:45am (large group setting)

- Read Scripture: Jeremiah 48:11-12
- Skit (See Appendix: Session II, Section 2 A)
- Pass out Pocket Reminders: “Be Willing to Move On and Go Where God Calls You”

11:00am

- Return to the small groups.
- Distribute the discussion questions/project to each table (See Appendix: Session II, Section 2 B)

11:20am

- Return to large group; small groups present reports.

11:45am

- Develop a plan.

12:15pm

- LUNCH

Section 3

1:00pm

- Read the following scripture: Acts 10:1 - 11:18
- Skit (See Appendix: Session II, Section 3 A)
- Pass out the Pocket Reminders: “Open the Doors Wide”

1:15

- Move into the small groups.
- Hand out the discussion questions/project for each table (See Appendix: Session II Section 3 B)

1:35pm

- Have the groups report in to the large group.

2:00pm

- Develop a plan of action.

2:30pm

- Wrap things up—briefly summarize the action plans established.
- Thank everyone for coming!
- Announce the time and date for the third session.
- Close in prayer.

Session III Details

Section 1

9:00am

- Welcome and opening prayer.
- Explain briefly that this is the third part of a much larger process, based on the eight-week study *The Eight Essentials for a Healthy and Thriving Congregation*. The purpose of this larger group study is to develop a strategy that, when implemented, will lead to a healthy and thriving congregation.
- Remind people that the day will be spent in both the large and small group settings.
- Read the scripture: Nehemiah 1:1-4; 2:11-18
- Introduce *The Essential Players*
- Skit (See Appendix: Session III Section 1 A)

9:15am

- Pass out the Pocket Reminders: “Build Strong Ministry Using Passionate People”.
- Break into small groups.
- Distribute the discussion questions/project to each table (see Appendix: Session III Section 1 B)

9:35am

- Call the groups back into the larger group. Have each group report in.

10:00am

- Develop a plan of action.

10:30am

- BREAK

Section 2

10:45am (Large group)

- Read the Scripture: Matthew 6:19-24
- Skit (See Appendix: Session III Section 2 A).

- Pass out Pocket Reminders: Promote a Spirit of Generosity.

11:00am

- Move into small groups.
- Distribute the discussion questions/projects to each table (See Appendix: Session III Section 2 B).

11:20am

- Return to the large group and have the small groups report in.

11:45am

- Develop a plan of action.

12:15am

- LUNCH

Section 3

1:00pm

- Read the following scripture: John 10:10.
- Skit (See Appendix: Session III Section 3 A).
- Pass out the Pocket Reminders: "Reflect the Abundant Life".

1:15pm

- Instruct everyone to return to their small groups.
- Hand out the discussion questions/project for each table (See Appendix: Session III, Section 3 B).

1:35pm

- Have the groups report in.

2:00pm

- Develop a plan of action.

2:30pm

- Wrap things up—briefly summarize the action plans.
- Briefly summarize the action plans from all three Sessions.
- Thank everyone for coming!
- Close in prayer.

APPENDIX
Session I, Section 1 A
SKIT

“Set Up a Contextual Analysis of Your Congregation”
Presented by *The Essential Players*

Cast:
Michon
Pastor

Michon: Thanks for visiting with me today, pastor. I've been coming to your church for three Sundays now, and while I like some of it, there's parts I really don't like.

Pastor: Well, Michon, I'm glad you came to talk with me about this. Perhaps I can be of some assistance.

Michon: Well, I love being able to come to a church that's so open to gays and lesbians and all. I came out five years ago and this is the first church I've ever seen that's so open to everybody.

Pastor: Great! I'm glad you found us!

Michon: I am too, but well, no offense or anything, but your music's killin' me.

Pastor: What do you mean? Is the piano out of tune again? I thought we just had that taken care of a short time ago.

Michon: Nah, it's just that all you *have* is a piano. I'm used to some rockin' church music, you know? My old church really had some music goin' on: drums, guitars, bass, electronic keyboards....

Pastor: Wow, that sounds awesome!

Michon: Yeah, but they believe gays are all going to hell so I don't feel too comfortable there anymore.

Pastor: So have you attended our Praise & Worship service yet?

Michon: You have one? I didn't know that.

Pastor: It's on the fourth Sunday of every month. We have two guitars, drums and someone plays the piano. They do more upbeat and popular praise and worship music.

Michon: Well that's what I'm talking about! But why only one Sunday a month? Why not every Sunday?

Pastor: To be honest with you, it's been a touchy subject, Michon. We had some folks who wanted to incorporate more upbeat music into our Sunday morning worship service. We decided to give it a try and I had so many complaints you wouldn't believe it. Our attendance dropped by a third. So, trying to have a little something for everyone, we tried having a praise and worship service on the fourth Sunday of each month. Attendance is much lower on that fourth Sunday, but we believe it's meeting a need, so we're trying to keep it going.

Michon: Well, given the choice, that's the only one I'd really want to come to—no offense!

Pastor: None taken! But let me explain a little bit about our congregation. We are obviously living in a more conservative part of the country. Folks here grew up in conservative churches, not fundamentalist, per se, but more conservative. What they seem to want in our church is the same sort of church setting they grew up in, only open and affirming of all people. If you look around you'll see that the majority of our people are white, over forty, and from Lutheran or Catholic backgrounds.

Michon: So you can't shake them up a bit? (grins)

Pastor: We gave it a try, and the fourth Sunday of the month is our compromise for the time being.

Michon: It's just so different from the church and place where I grew up! But I think I understand. Hey, do you think they might want a bass player for that fourth Sunday?

APPENDIX
Session I, Section 1 B
Small Group Materials

“Set Up a Contextual Analysis of Your Congregation”

First Table: HISTORY OF YOUR CHURCH

- What year was your church founded?
- How was it founded?
- Where has it met throughout the years?
- Who have your pastors been?

Project:

- Write out the history of your church with as much detail as you can give.

Second Table: THE CULTURE OF YOUR CHURCH

- What are the demographics of your church? Who attends? What does your congregation look like? Include gender, race, age, sexual orientation, class, creed, etc.

Project:

- Write a segment describing the culture of your church.

Third Table: THE THEOLOGY OF YOUR CHURCH

- What are the religious/spiritual beliefs of your congregation?
- What are the primary messages/themes preached regularly?
- What is taught about God? About Jesus? About The Holy Spirit? About the Bible? About Heaven? About Hell?
- What else is taught?

Project:

- Write a segment describing the religious and spiritual beliefs of your congregation. What are the primary principles taught?

Fourth Table: WHAT ARE THE MAJOR EXPERIENCES THAT HAVE
AFFECTED YOUR CHURCH?

- What experiences have shaped and honed who your church is? This might include challenges as well as celebrations. Include as many as you can think of. It might include things like a death, picketers, Troy Perry visiting, a new church building, etc.

Project

- Write a segment listing the major experiences that have touched your church, and how they affected the congregation.

APPENDIX
Session 1, Section 2 A
Large Group Material

“Set Up a Contextual Analysis of Your Congregation”

Study Leader: No two churches are alike. Every church is shaped by its history, culture, theology, and experiences.

Let's take a moment with the scripture you've now heard twice today. I don't know about you, but I think Paul sounds very harsh in this writing. If he'd written that to our church I think we'd have wondered what it meant to be the Christian church!

It's important to remember that Paul is writing to a different church, a church he has evidently visited twice. He has given them some sort of warning in the past and now is threatening disciplinary action towards anyone who challenges his authority in Christ. He tells them to examine themselves and to get honest about what's in their hearts rather than rebelling against him. It sounds like if they can get honest and do what's right he won't take any disciplinary action against them.

Let's use a simple contextual analysis as a tool for understanding this situation between Paul and the church in Corinth.

Let's call on *The Essential Players* to give us a hand!

APPENDIX
Session I, Section 2 B
SKIT

“Set up a Contextual Analysis of Your Congregation”
Presented by *The Essential Players*

Characters:

Tom

Sue

Bev

Sue: So, our assignment from last week’s Bible study was to analyze the context in order to find out why Paul was so upset with the Corinthian church.

Tom: I’ll start if that’s OK with you two. Well, first of all I learned that a context is any situation or place. Contexts are always changing. Our meeting here is a context. If someone else walks into the room the context just changed.

Bev: Well if they are always changing, why do an analysis? It’ll just change anyway.

Tom: Yes, but churches and systems don’t change as fast as the context of people in a coffee shop or class room.

Sue: So, what about the history involved in this scripture, Tom?

Tom: Well, Paul was a missionary with a passion for starting new churches. The church in Corinth is one of the churches he started. Though he probably stayed in Corinth with that church longer than any other church he started, he always moved on to start another church. He stayed in touch with them via letters and the leaders he appointed there.

Bev: So he started a church but didn’t want to stay there and be its pastor?

Tom: Correct!

Sue: Well this wasn’t just a simple little church! Let me fill you in on the culture of this church in Corinth. The city of Corinth was just a narrow peninsula only four miles long. It was situated in an area that made it one of the greatest trading and commercial centers in the ancient world. If a person from Corinth was ever shown on the stage in a Greek play, they were always shown drunk and acting immorally.

Tom: Gosh! That sounds like a rough crowd!

- Sue: Absolutely! Can you imagine trying to start a new church there? Paul must have had his hands full.
- Bev: Well let me tell you about the theology of the context. Corinth, it seems had a Jewish synagogue and at least twelve temples dedicated to various gods and goddesses. Along with these temples came temple priestesses who were used as sacred prostitutes. It was in this wild city with its Greek, pagan and Jewish influence that a Christian church was founded. It's a wonder they could survive with all of that influence!
- Sue: No kidding! Paul is trying to teach them about Jesus and there would be all these other influences as well.
- Tom: Well, along with all of that comes the experiences of the church Paul was dealing with. I found out that he was trying to deal all sorts of issues like divisions in the church, and what it meant to be a Christian.
- Bev: Not only that, he had been trying to confront moral and ethical issues as well.
- Tom: It sounds like Paul had his hands full! The people evidently weren't listening to him, or were going back to their old ways once he left.
- Bev: Now I understand what was going on in that scripture from II Corinthians 13. We have to look at the big picture of where that church was at that place and time. We need to look at their history, their culture, their theology and their experiences. There they were in the midst of Corinth! How could they possibly be everything Paul wanted them to be?
- Sue: But on the other hand, I can see why Paul was so firm. He wanted them to keep striving to stay pure from all of those influences around them. He had invested a great deal of time and energy with them and he must have felt like he had to write and warn them that he wouldn't tolerate any challenge of his authority.
- Tom: You know, it all makes sense now. Paul wouldn't write that sort of letter to all the new churches. He was looking at the big picture, the context.
- Sue: If we look at the Corinthians from a "YOU ARE HERE" standpoint, we have a much bigger picture of who they are and what they are up against.
- Bev: And if a church knows where "YOU ARE HERE" is, it has a much better chance of knowing where it's going!

APPENDIX
Session I, Section 2 C
Small Group Materials

“Set Up a Contextual Analysis of Your Congregation”

First Table: Use the basic history, culture, theology and experiences of your congregation to work through the following situation:

- Your church is looking for a snappy new mission statement that best describes who you are. You want it to be short, sweet and easy to remember. One of your members argues that the mission statement should read, “Don’t just watch us grow, come grow with us!” Another person believes it should be “With Peace and Justice for All”. Still another wants it to say, “We’ve never seen a need we can’t meet”.

How could doing and using a contextual analysis help in this situation?

Second Table: Use the basic history, culture, theology and experiences of your congregation to work through the following situation:

- A new family begins attending your church. They have four children ages 14, 10, 7, and 2, and have insisted upon a children’s program, a youth program, and a nursery for the toddler.

How could doing and using a contextual analysis help in this situation?

Third Table: Use the basic history, culture, theology and experiences of your congregation to work through the following situation:

- Your church has begun a pastoral search for an Associate Pastor to handle all of the Christian Education needs in your church. You had no applicants until one day a member of your church mentioned that his sister is interested in applying for the position. You receive her application and learn that she is an ex-Catholic nun with no MCC experience.

How could doing and using a contextual analysis help in this situation?

Fourth Table: Use the basic history, culture, theology and experiences of your congregation to work through the following situation:

- Your Director of Worship and you Choir Director are arguing about the music and order of worship—again.

How could doing and using a contextual analysis help in this situation?

APPENDIX
Session I, Section 3 A
SKIT

“Develop Healthy Leadership”
Presented by *The Essential Players*

Characters:

Bob: Workshop Leader

Katherine: Workshop attendee

Tim: Workshop attendee

Bob: Good morning! Thank you for inviting me to your church to do a workshop on the subject of leadership. I'm here to teach you how to put the cart before the horse.

Katherine: Wait a minute! Don't you mean you want to teach us how to put the horse before the cart?

Tim: Yeah, this guy must be confused. It's going to be a long afternoon!

Bob: (laughing) Actually, I do mean the CART before the horse, so let's get started!

Tim: OK, he's got my attention now.

Katherine: Mine too. What IS this cart?

Bob: Glad you asked! CART is an acronym to lay out what I believe is most needed by leaders in today's churches (writing on the board):

C is for COMMITMENT

A is for ACCOUNTABILITY

R is for RESPONSIBILITY

T is for TEACHABLE SPIRITS

Katherine: I get it! If the church is the horse, you want to put leaders in place who are trained to be: Committed, Accountable and Responsible, with Teachable Spirits, thus putting the CART before the horse.

Bob: A+

Tim: I understand the need for commitment, accountability and responsibility in leadership, but what's this “teachable spirit” stuff?

Bob: It's the willingness to change, grow, and learn new ways of doing things.
Tim: So not staying stuck in the ways we've always done things before.

Bob: Another A+! Many leaders get caught up in the seven deadliest words in the history of the Christian church.

Katherine: Oh yes, we know these!

Tim & Katherine: (counting the words on their fingers) "We've Never Done It That Way Before."

Bob: Bravo! People who have teachable spirits are willing to put those words away and try new things.

(The Leader passes out Pocket Reminders and invites everyone to return to their small groups)

APPENDIX
Session I, Section 3 B
Small Group Materials

“Develop Healthy Leadership”
According to the Gospel of Mark

- Mark 1:14-20 Jesus called people to come into leadership
- Mark 1:21-2:27 Jesus became a role model for the people when he:
 - drove out an evil spirit
 - healed
 - prayed
 - called others to leadership
 - answered tough questions
 - dealt with confronting religious leaders
- Mark 4-5 He got selective and appointed a core group out of those he originally called. These would be sent out to do ministry.
- Mark 6:7-13 He broke the chosen twelve into teams of two and gave them explicit instructions on what to take and not take, and how to handle rejection.

These trained leaders went out and taught, healed the sick, dealt with those struggling with inner demons, and anointed just as Jesus had taught and modeled for them. We know that while they went out, they likely weren't all that far from Jesus at any given time. He could then:

- Supervise
- Give support and encouragement
- Assist if needed

While these twelve were ministering to the people Jesus could:

- Do more preaching and teaching, His primary tasks.
- Prepare His followers for the time he would no longer be with them.
- Show that God could work through people other than Him.

HOW DOES YOUR CHURCH TRAIN ITS LEADERSHIP?

Does it use the training model we found in Mark?

Does your church put the CART before the horse?

Appendix
Session II, Section 1 A
SKIT

“Practice Loving Relationships”
Presented by *The Essential Players*

Characters:

Beverly

Elizabeth

Elizabeth: Hi Beverly, it's nice to see you! How was your week?

Beverly: Oh, hi, Elizabeth. Stressful! It was a very stressful week.

Elizabeth: Do you want to talk about it?

Beverly: I don't know, maybe our Bible study is going to be the death of me.

Elizabeth: The Bible study? What's going on?

Beverly: A long story short: Jim, a guy I work with, said some really nasty things about me to Angie, another co-worker. Angie and I are friends so she thought she should come and tell me what he said.

Elizabeth: That sounds awful. What did you do?

Beverly: My first response was to just blow it off, but as the day went on I realized that I was really mad at Jim. I couldn't keep my focus and I couldn't bring myself to even speak to him at lunch.

Elizabeth: Ahhh. I think I'm getting the picture of where that Bible study fits in here.

Beverly: Yes, in keeping with that study, I decided I had to go to Jim and talk to him about all this. It's easier said than done, you know.

Elizabeth: I'll bet. But it's important that we follow what the scripture says about dealing with conflict. So how did it go?

Beverly: At first he was really mad at Angie for telling me. He was so red in the face that I felt sorry for him. He didn't actually own up to anything, but he didn't deny it either. He just stormed off.

Elizabeth: I'll bet that was pretty uncomfortable.

Beverly: It got worse. A couple of hours later I had Angie in my cubicle yelling at me because I'd confronted Jim and now he wasn't speaking to her.

Elizabeth: So, you went directly to Jim and told him how you felt about what he had said about you, and then he went to Angie and yelled at her for telling you?

Beverly: You've got it! Then when Angie came up for air, I told her that I'd rather she had stopped Jim in the first place, and told him that she didn't want to hear it; if he didn't like something I had done he should come to me directly rather than talking behind my back.

Elizabeth: Say, I'm impressed! So what did Angie say?

Beverly: She wanted to know what planet I was from. She said the whole situation was ridiculous and that she would be very careful about what she told me in the future.

Elizabeth: That sounds like a good thing doesn't it?

Beverly: I didn't think so in the moment, but later in the week Angie and Jim asked me to meet them for coffee after work.

Elizabeth: Uh oh.

Beverly: Actually, it went really well. Jim apologized for what he'd said about me and then explained what led up to it. Then Angie apologized to both of us. She also told Jim that the next time he issues with someone he was to go to that person directly and not bring her into it.

Elizabeth: Wow! That went really well, didn't it?

Beverly: You know, it did go well, but overall, it was really a lot of work. I think the best thing that came out of it is that they now know that I am going to be direct in relationships. Once people know that about you it makes things easier. At least I hope it will.

Elizabeth: Well, that's wonderful news, Beverly! I can see why you've been stressed out this week, but I'm really proud of you for practicing loving relationships. You'll have a great story to tell at Bible study this week!

APPENDIX
Session II, Section 1 B
Small Group Materials

“Practice Loving Relationships”

In the video “God, Gays and the Gospel Millennium Edition”, the Rev. Elder Troy Perry was speaking about Jesus’ greatest commandments when he said:

“When He was asked one time, ‘What’s the greatest commandment?’ He didn’t say ‘thou shalt not commit adultery’ or even ‘thou shalt not kill.’ He could have, but He didn’t. He said, ‘The greatest commandment is this, and on this hangs all the law and the prophets. The first commandment is that you’re to love the Lord thy God with all your heart, your mind and your strength. And the second is likened to the first, [;] you’re to learn to love your neighbor as yourself.’ And brothers and sisters I tell you this day, if we could learn that lesson, if we could just live by those two commandments, everything would be all right.”

Rev. Elder Troy D. Perry

How are these two commandments played out in the life of your church?

How does your church deal with conflict?

How and where does your church teach/promote the ideas around practicing loving relationships?

APPENDIX
Session II, Section 2 A
SKIT

“Be Willing to Move On and Go Where God Calls You”
Presented by *The Essential Players*

Characters:

Charley

Marilyn

Sandra

Marilyn: So what do the two of you think about the ministry areas at our church?

Charley: What’s to think? We do the same things month after month, year after year. Some day they’ll unearth our congregation and find one big fossil.

Sandra: You know, I recently attended a study that talked about this sort of thing. The scripture was taken from somewhere in Jeremiah, and was about this city, Moab, that didn’t want to change. God had some great things for the city, but the city wanted to stay the way it had always been.

Charley: So what happened?

Sandra: Well, God loved the city and knew what was best for it, so God sent circumstances that forced change. Then the city could see a new vision for themselves and go where God was calling them. Or, at least that’s how I think the story went.

Marilyn: You know, the Bible says something about the need for a vision. What’s that scripture? “Without a vision the people perish”. I don’t know where it’s at in the Bible, but I’ve heard it before.

Charley: It’s from Proverbs, I think. So, what do you think is the vision of our church? I’ve never heard of anything we’re working toward.

Sandra: Me neither. Maybe we need a vision statement. I know that there are other churches that have one.

Charley: And how do we know that God is calling us to move on into something new?

Sandra: Well, we talked about that in the study I was telling you about last

week. I have my notes with me. Should I pull them out?

Charley: I'm game!

Marilyn: Me too!

Sandra: Well, here's what I have in my notes: We can discern that God is calling the church to move on when:

The people seem dissatisfied with just about everything in the church; especially the church leadership. There's overall frustration within the life of the church and people feel like God has moved on and left the church behind.

Chuck: Oh my gosh, that sounds like OUR CHURCH!

Marilyn: It does, doesn't it? So what can we do?

Sandra: Actually, I have that in my notes too. Let's see here:

- We can become more open to change. We can look at what's happening in other churches, study the scriptures and the way God has moved through people in the past. We also have to stop using the seven deadliest words in the history of the Christian Church.

Chuck: What are they?

Sandra: "We've Never Done It That Way Before".

Marilyn: Wow, someone said almost those exact words at the council meeting the other night! Remember?

Sandra: If we're going to move on and go with God we need to be:

Committed
Accountable
Responsible

Charley: To what exactly?

Sandra: To the teachings of Jesus, and God's purpose. It was suggested that we look at our church mission statement to see if it accurately describes who we are today.

Marilyn: I don't know what our mission statement is. Do we have one?

Charley: Beats me!

Sandra: We also need to have a vision. We need to know where we are going and how we're going to get there.

Marilyn: How can we have a vision if we don't have a mission? We can't know where we're going if we don't know who we are.

Sandra: One more thing: We need to be flexible as a congregation. I recall the study leader saying that the weeping willow weathers a storm better than the mighty oak.

Chuck: So the three of us recognize that our church has some major work to do if we want to be all God is calling us to be. But what do we do with it?

Sandra: I think we need to make an appointment with the pastor and share all of this with her. Hopefully she'll invite us to bring this information to the next council meeting.

Marilyn: And let's pray! Let's pray for our pastor and for the council, and each other.

Chuck: And let's pray for our congregation that we don't end up fossilized, but learn how to walk a journey of faith hand-in-hand with God.

Marilyn & Sandra: Amen!

APPENDIX
Session II, Section 2 B
Small Group Materials

“Be Willing to Move On and Go Where
God Calls You”

**Does your church have a current mission statement in place?
If so, what does it read?**

Does it accurately describe your church today?

**Does your church have a current vision statement in place?
If so, what does it read?**

**Where is your church, today, in regard to that vision statement?
Are you making adequate progress toward your goals or are you stuck?**

**Is God calling your church to move on at this particular time?
If so, what would need to change?**

Leadership expert John Maxwell says that there are three times when people are ready to change. Circle the one that best describes your congregation:

When they hurt enough that they have to

When they learn enough that they want to

When they receive enough that they're able to

APPENDIX
Session II, Section 3 A
SKIT

“Open the Doors Wide”
Presented by *The Essential Players*

Characters:

Ken

Ron

Sue

(A Bible Study Setting)

Ken: I don't understand why everyone's not open to diversity. I don't get why the gay community isn't embraced by other minorities.

Sue: I heard a pastor tell their story about something that happened at an MCC conference in Atlanta back in 1995. The MCCers were marching in a peaceful demonstration from the conference hotel to the Martin Luther King Center. Just as they passed Ebenezer Baptist church she noticed an African American man get out of his car with a small boy. He seemed to be reading the signs and banners and then turned to his little boy and said, “Oh baby, you'd better cover those jewels cause these people want them.” Horrified, she watched that little boy put his hands protectively over his genitals with a look of absolute terror on his face.

Ron: That's horrible! Why would that guy say such a thing? He of all people should understand that march of freedom!

Sue: That's exactly what that pastor said. But then she said that it had been a defining moment for her. It was then and there that she realized that though minorities may share in similar journeys, no two experiences are the same.

Ken: Well, that makes sense, I guess. The Native American journey is different from the African American journey. The LGBT journey is different from both of them.

Ron: And what about the Asians and Hispanics?

Sue: And people who are differently-abled?

Ken: I never thought about them.

Sue: Well, I'm sure glad I attend a church that's open to everyone!

Ken: (looking uncomfortable) Are you sure we're that open?

Ron: I think I know what you're getting at. I've heard some people in our own church make some comments that aren't very open and affirming.

Sue: Oh c'mon! Like what?

Ken: I once heard someone say that we didn't need straight people coming to our church. They have their own churches to go to.

Ron: I was at a meeting where we were talking about making a place for wheelchairs. Remember when Patrick was bringing the folks from that group-home to Sunday night services?

Sue: Oh yeah. People were complaining because the wheelchairs left marks on the carpet, and the residents from that group home were loud and distracting.

Ron: Well, the other comments were from people who didn't want to have to remove pews from the sanctuary to accommodate a wheelchair space.

Ken: There was also talk about how we could get people in wheelchairs into the social hall downstairs. The last I heard we weren't going to spend any money on it, we were just going to bring snacks upstairs to them.

Sue: This doesn't sound good, does it?

Ron: And then there's those two families who bring all the kids.

Ken: There's a lot of complaints about those kids being so noisy and running around during church. Oh, and what about the comments about needing to tighten up on security because that one family's a different nationality than the rest of us?

Sue: You know, I hadn't really looked at all this before. I guess I want to believe that we're the perfect church because we're open to gays and lesbians.

Ron: But are we also as open to bisexuals and people who are transgender? Whatever happened to the plans for a unisex bathroom?

Ken: The council thought it was too expensive and figured that everyone should know what bathroom they belonged in.

Sue: I guess that just because we're proclaiming to be an open and affirming congregation doesn't mean everyone's warm and fuzzy about each person who comes in through our doors. It makes me wonder what kind of doors we really have on our church? You know, the invisible ones.

Ken: That's a thought! All churches have physical doors, but there are also invisible doors as well, those doors we can't see with our eyes, but can sense with our spirits, especially if we look different from the cultural norm of our congregation.

Sue: Wow! Screen doors, revolving doors, back doors.....

Ron: Maybe we need to do a more intense study on this scripture from Acts 10. Maybe Peter's experience can be a guide to us.

Ken: You know, I've heard that the hour between 11:00am and noon, on any given Sunday morning, is the most segregated hour in America. I don't want our church to be segregated!

Sue: Well, let's read through that scripture again. Maybe we can begin to recognize and disassemble some of those invisible doors on our church.

Ron: Then we can truly open our church doors WIDE!

APPENDIX
Session II, Section 3 B
Small Group Materials

“Open the Doors Wide”

How does your church REALLY respond to someone who is different from the cultural norm at your church?

What’s at stake if you were to admit that your church isn’t perfect and has some invisible doors?

Make a list of all kinds of doors (every kind of door you can think of).

Which of those doors most honestly describes the invisible doors of your congregation? What is the primary message here?

How can Peter’s experience in Acts 10 inform your church?

APPENDIX
Session III, Section 1 A
SKIT

“Build Strong Ministry Using Passionate People”
Presented by *The Essential Players*

Characters:
Pastor
Laurie

Laurie: Thanks for seeing me today, Pastor. I’ve been coming to this church for three years now and I know this is the place for me! I just retired and I have some extra time to give. I’ve never really been involved in ministry here because of my work schedule, but here I am!

Pastor: Wow! That’s really commendable, Laurie! I’m so glad to hear that you have found a church home with us. Now, what sort of ministry area do you think you might be interested in?

Laurie: I’m not picky! Seriously! Just tell me where you need a warm body to serve and I’ll fill the position.

Pastor: Now that’s what I love to hear! Hmm, let me think here for a moment.

Laurie: Seriously, big or small, it doesn’t matter to me. I don’t need any glory, just the opportunity to serve.

Pastor: Actually, we have been hoping for someone to set up a social hour for each week after church. It would involve picking up pastries and setting up the new fifty-cup coffee maker.

Laurie: Well that sure sounds easy enough! Consider the position filled. How soon can I start?

Pastor: (laughing) How about this Sunday?

Laurie: Perfect!

++++
(Telephone Call)

Pastor: Hi Laurie, this is the pastor calling. I have called you several times and left messages. I hope everything’s OK. We haven’t seen you at church in four weeks now. The last time I heard from you, you needed me to find someone to cover for you in your ministry because you couldn’t get

to church. Please call when you get this message. I'm concerned.

++++
(reading a note out loud you'd just written and were preparing to mail)

Pastor: Dear Laurie, I'm quite concerned that I haven't heard from you over the last six weeks. I am holding you my prayers. Please know that I want to make myself available if there are any problems I could help with. In Christ's love, Pastor.

This just isn't like Laurie to miss this much church and not return my calls. What on earth is going on?

++++

Laurie: Thanks for being willing to meet with me today.

Pastor: Well, I'm glad you called. I could tell something was going on when I ran into you at the grocery store last week.

Laurie: (anxious laugh) Oh, because I bolted down the aisle and avoided you?

Pastor: OK, that was a pretty good indicator that something was going on. (laughs) So, can I get you a cup of coffee? There's a fresh pot.

Laurie: Oh, no thanks. I don't drink coffee.

Pastor: Oh, well how about some cookies? George brought in a plate of home-made chocolate chip this morning.

Laurie: No thanks, I'm diabetic. I don't touch anything with sugar in it.

Pastor: (with sudden realization) You know it must have been strange to have the social hour be your ministry area when you don't drink coffee or eat sweets!

Laurie: You don't know the half of it! (looking very sad) The first week someone said the coffee looked more like tea and tasted horrible. One guy actually ran to the bathroom to spit it out while some people laughed and cheered him on. I was so embarrassed! I didn't want anybody to know I'd made the coffee.

Then someone asked why anyone would bring boring old croissants when there's a delicious doughnut shop right down the street.

So, the next week I made the coffee stronger and brought doughnuts. Some woman called the coffee the "foulest sludge" she'd ever tasted. Then someone complained because all that sugar was going

to make her kids all hyper.

I don't drink coffee, so I don't know how to make it. I haven't eaten sugar in seventeen years. I don't have any kids! How was I supposed to know how to do this? I just felt so stupid. I knew I couldn't look you or anyone else in the eye. I was so embarrassed I just stop coming.

Pastor: I am SO sorry this happened. I don't know what else to say except that you aren't stupid! This simply wasn't a good ministry area for you.

Laurie: You can say that again!

Pastor: I hope you'll come back to church, Laurie. And when you feel ready, I'd like to help you find a ministry area that you feel passionate about, something you can get excited about and truly enjoy.

Laurie: Well, I'll try to come back this Sunday, but I don't know that I ever want to do ministry here again. Let's just wait and see, OK?

APPENDIX
Session III, Section 1 B
Small Group Materials

“Build Strong Ministry Using Passionate People”

The Older Testament book of Nehemiah talks about a passionate leader engaging others in ministry. Nehemiah was the leader, heartsick because the walls in Jerusalem were in ruins. Without a wall, the city had no defenses.

Nehemiah was positive, determined and creative! He rallied the people so that the wall could be rebuilt. Such a huge project could only be successful if everyone contributed, so Nehemiah first gave them a vision of a restored wall. Then he assigned everyone a task; they were to build the portion of the wall in front of their own homes. All the workers contributed to the city's need in the place they were the most passionate about. For the whole story, read Nehemiah 1:1-6:16.

The pastor in our skit heard about the problem and simply placed a warm body into a position. The results were disastrous! It cost the church a minister and it cost that minister her dignity.

What if that pastor had, instead, used Nehemiah's method of building by having passionate people build in the areas that they were passionate about?

How does your church make decisions about its workers and leaders?

Consider a current project going on in your church right now. What have you learned from Nehemiah that could help you better implement it?

APPENDIX
Session III, Section 2 A
SKIT

“Promote a Spirit of Generosity”
Presented by *The Essential Players*

Characters:

Barb

Nancy

Barb: Hi! How was your morning?

Nancy: Great! I've seen so many people already. The workshop I went to was awesome.

Barb: So was mine! I can't wait to show you the materials and talk with you about what I learned.

Nancy: Wait, the stewardship workshop? You're kidding, right?

Barb: Are all clergy as thick-headed as you are? It wasn't on stewardship, it was about giving out of a place of generosity.

Nancy: Huh?

Barb: No offense, but this workshop wasn't about the principles of tithing you preach about. According to the presenter, it's not about discipline, obligation or even spiritual maturity. Instead, giving out of a spirit of generosity is something that flows down and then comes back around as a blessing. It's about giving with abandon, because it all comes back around anyway.

Nancy: So, if it's not a discipline or obligation or spiritual maturity, how do you get people to give?

Barb: By modeling it! And by modeling the joy that goes along with giving. God loves a cheerful giver!

Nancy: You want us, as a couple, to give more?

Barb: Yes! And I want us to share our experiences in giving and receiving with others.

Nancy: We're already giving ten percent, Barb!

Barb: It's not about the percent as much as it's about giving out of a place of generosity. I know it's hard to understand, but it's about joyfully giving and knowing God's blessings because we can give.

Nancy: Sounds like a strange workshop to me.

Barb: Listen, what do you feel like on Christmas morning when our son opens his gifts?

Nancy: That's easy. I feel incredible joy! I love watching his face light up when he tears the paper off and screams in delight.

Barb: So, back up a bit. What's it like when you shop for him for Christmas?

Nancy: I love Christmas shopping for him and for you, and for everyone on our list. It's great to give and watch the joy bubble over like a fountain.

Barb: So you give something and you get just as much joy out of it because you know it's blessing someone else.

Nancy: Exactly!

Barb: That's the same principle involved in giving out of a spirit of generosity. Give out of joy and let the fountain bubble because you know what a blessing it is to give!

Nancy: (laughs) I've heard of giving until it hurts, but this sounds like giving until you feel so good it all bubbles over.

Barb: You've got a teachable spirit after all! (laughing) But there's more. not only do we have to give as a family, we have to teach our church to give to other places out of a spirit of generosity. Then the church will experience that same joy In giving!

Nancy: Get real! We have a small church where every penny counts. The money in savings is set aside for special funds with a modest fund in the event of an emergency. We're always trying to MAKE money, how can I tell them we need to give it away?

Barb: Churches are non-profits that typically have the mind-set of stock-piling and saving up as much money as they can. Every church likes to have a nice checking and savings account! But Jesus said not to store up a lot more than we need because the moths can destroy it and the rust can eat it away. If we put our heart into how much food we have in our bins and barns we sell ourselves short. What we need

to do is to give the excess away. With joy!

Nancy: So if you put your heart into how much money you have in the account you miss the point of ministry?

Barb: You're getting it!

Nancy: Whew, I think you should preach that sermon instead of me. (smiles)

Barb: Actually, what I want to do is a workshop on the subject. But if you'd develop a sermon to go with it, I'd be grateful.

Nancy: From hoarders to giving out of a spirit of generosity. I predict this will be a long journey.

Barb: But a joyful one!!! And let it begin with me!

APPENDIX
Session III, Section 2 B
Small Group Materials

“Promote a Spirit of Generosity”

The skit you just saw is based on an actual conversation between a pastor and her spouse. They returned home after the conference and began to teach and preach the principles of promoting a spirit of generosity. Things moved slowly at first, but they moved. Within a few months the board voted for the church to participate in raising money for the upcoming Relay for Life (a community event designed to raise money in the fight for a cure for cancer). When it was announced how much money the church earned in this venture, the congregation gave a thunderous standing ovation!

At the very next board meeting came a proposal for the church to make a donation to the local Habitat for Humanity. The board was enthusiastic in approving the idea! The joy was catching!

Ten months later a local businesswoman called to ask if she could donate ten-percent of her earnings to the church. She wanted half of it to go into the church’s funds, but she wanted the church to give away the other half in the church’s name! She didn’t care where we gave it, only that we gave it from our church. At each board meeting there was such joy in deciding where to give that money!

That church went from being hoarders to feeling like Santa Claus! Money was given to a horse ranch for physically and mentally challenged children, to a health clinic that served impoverished people, toward the purchase of a new sound system for a gay bar in town, to PFLAG, to a social worker’s organization that provided needed items to children who had been removed from their homes, and more!

In addition new hymnals were purchased, a building fund was started, much-needed office and worship supplies were purchased, and the church added significantly to the conference fund for the coming year. The church had become a fountain; they started the flow but it just kept pouring out and running over.

“Give and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, will be poured into our lap. For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you.”

Luke 6:38

- Giving in general went up
- The level of joy went up significantly
- The church began to grow spiritually
- The excitement was contagious
- The church earned respect from the greater community

If you want to know blessings in your life and in the life of your faith community, promote a spirit of generosity!

What does your church teach about giving?

What metaphor best describes your church when it comes to giving:

- **A flowing fountain**
- **A dam**

How might your church finances be affected if your congregation embraced a spirit of generosity?

List some examples of places and organizations your church could consider giving to.

APPENDIX
Session III, Section 3 A
SKIT

“Reflect the Abundant Life”
Presented by *The Essential Players*

Characters:

Len

Sue

Hal

Sue: Well, that was sure depressing.

Hal: No kidding. It wasn't what I was expecting at all.

Len: Hey you two gloomy Gusses! What's up?

Hal: Have you ever been to that downtown mission?

Len: That homeless shelter down on 45th Street?

Sue: That's the one.

Len: I've been past it, but I've never been in it. Why?

Sue: We just got back from dropping off a donation from our church youth group. Remember the blankets, hats, mittens and socks they were collecting?

Len: Oh yeah, I remember. So what happened?

Hal: We were surprised at how quiet things were and mentioned it to the woman at the front desk. She told us that everyone was at the evening church service. Sue mentioned that it was amazing that every single person was attending church. She said something about how great their worship service must be.

Sue: Then she looked up at us and said rather sternly, “Well if they don't go to church they can't eat or sleep here. We take the spiritual needs of these people very seriously.

Len: No way! If they don't go to church there they don't get food or a bed? Are you serious?

Hal: Unfortunately we're very serious. They profess to offer the hands and heart

of Jesus but they give something far different.

Sue: Could you imagine being tired and hungry, knowing that you had to sit through an obligatory worship service before you could get food or sleep?

Len: I get distracted when my stomach growls in church. I can't imagine what it must be like for these people. What does this teach them about God?

Hal: And get this: The church service goes for an hour and a half!

Len: No way!

Sue: Oh yes! 6:00-7:30 is church. Supper is at 8:00pm and lights out is at 10:00pm.

Hal: And they have to be gone by 7:00am the next morning. They don't even serve breakfast.

Len: How can people live like that?

Sue: How can Christians treat them like that?

Len: Well, you know that when I become a pastor and get my own church, it will be different. I want a holistic approach to ministry. Jesus said that he'd come so that we might have life abundant. Life is more than going to church!

Hal: (laughs) And you're going to be a minister?

Sue: A minister with ATTITUDE! I like that! So what will your holistic ministry look like, Len?

Len: I want people to learn how to be healthy physically, mentally, emotionally, sexually and spiritually.

Hal: Sounds good, but what if you were running the mission?

Len: Then I'd want to offer an optional church service, but first I'd want the people to have food, a shower, and clean clothes. I'd also want to have peer counselors available to talk with people, and a resource list of doctors, counselors and clergy available at no cost.

Sue: That sounds wonderful!

Hal: Kind of idealistic though, don't you think?

Len: Yes, I admit that I don't know how I'd pull it all together, but I really do believe in living out an abundant life in Christ, and teaching that concept to others. Here's the other part: I not only want to teach the concept, I want to live it out in my own life and model it for others. Jesus reflected God in his teaching, preaching and actions. In the same way I believe we need to live out our lives caring for the physical, mental, emotional, sexual, and spiritual aspects of our lives. If others are watching, we can be positively reflecting the abundant life.

Sue: You're saying that the best way to reflect the abundant life in Christ is to live it out in our own personal lives?

Len: Yes! And then live it out in the life of our church, promoting a healthy congregation.

Hal: I'll be coming to YOUR church, Len!

APPENDIX
Session III, Section 3 B
Small Group Materials

“Reflect the Abundant Life”

Since the church is not a building but a group of individuals, how can living out the abundant life as individuals influence the congregation? In other words, if individuals are striving to be healthy physically, mentally, emotionally, sexually and spiritually, how will that affect the church as a whole?

How does your church encourage individuals to become healthy and thus reflect the abundant life?

Brainstorm about some of the things your church could do to promote healthy living:

Author's Biography



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She has pastored churches in Louisiana, Oklahoma, Texas and Minnesota.

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OR

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Set Up a Contextual Analysis of Your Church

Scripture Reference

II Corinthians 13:1-10

Summary

A contextual analysis gives us a big picture of our churches. It helps bring to light challenges as well as opportunities. What we learn informs decision making in the life of the church. I have used it to deal with personnel issues, conflict management, church growth, and more. It is my hope that you will discover what a valuable tool this simple process can be in the life of your church.

Tips for Success

If you truly wish to have a positive and successful process you will want to consider conducting a contextual analysis. In other words, you're going to find the YOU ARE HERE marker for your church. Look at:

- 📌 **Your History**
- 📌 **Your Culture**
- 📌 **Your Theology**
- 📌 **Your Experience**

Your goal is to discover where your church is at this particular place and time.

Warning: You may believe that you know exactly where your church is, but doing this analysis may yield some surprises for you.

Develop Healthy Leadership

Scripture Reference

Mark 1:14-19; 3:13-19, 6:7-12

Matthew 28:16-20

Summary

Leadership is not about position or office. With commitment, accountability, responsibility and teachable spirits in our leadership the church can move on to where God is calling it to go.

Tips for Success

Healthy Leaders...

- 📌 Have **teachable spirits**
- 📌 Are **committed** with their time, gifts and talents
- 📌 Are **accountable**
- 📌 Are **responsible**, on time and reliable.
- 📌 **Exemplify the character of Jesus**—These people walk their talk
- 📌 **Can agree to disagree** during conflict
- 📌 **Deal directly and lovingly** with others in the church
- 📌 Have **healthy life priorities** in place
- 📌 Are both **encouraging and empowering** to others in the church
- 📌 Are **not threatened** by spiritual concepts different from his/her own
- 📌 **Encourage others** to find their own relationship path to God
- 📌 **Can admit** to not having all the answers

Practice Loving Relationships

Scripture Reference

Matthew 22:34-40

Summary

“Treat others the way you want to be treated”.

The Golden Rule

“Treat others the way they want to be treated.”

The Platinum Rule

Tips for Success

- 📌 **Solitude** - That time alone with God where there are no distractions such as the telephone, television, or people going in and out.
- 📌 **Silence** - Absolute quiet is required if we are to let go of the spinning of our minds and listen for the voice of God.
- 📌 **Intentionality** - Be intentional about taking time for your relationship with God.
- 📌 **Intimacy** - Be intentional about taking time for solitude and silence with God...so your relationship may become more personal and intimate.
- 📌 **Prayer** - Communicate with God.

Be Willing to Move On and Go where God Calls You

Scripture Reference

Jeremiah 48:11-12

Summary

How do churches become willing to go with God and not become so set in their ways that they find themselves fossilized? Be open to change. Be Committed, Accountable, and Responsible to Jesus' teachings and God's purpose. Be ready to venture forth in faith. Be Flexible.

Tips for Success

- 📌 Begin to **get honest and open** about the need to move on and go with God.
- 📌 **Open up to other churches** and find out how they keep from settling on their dregs.
- 📌 **Develop a self-imposed ruthlessness**...push ourselves to do our part.
- 📌 **Learn to listen**, even when it's agonizing.
- 📌 **Be patient**.
- 📌 **Be aware** of the cycles in your church
- 📌 **Take time to celebrate** achievements.
- 📌 **Continue to build** the body of Christ spiritually so that the next time God calls on us to move and grow in some area, we will understand what is going on.

Open the Doors Wide

Scripture Reference

Acts 10:1-11:18

Summary

All people can receive the Holy Spirit and come to God. We need to search out any doors of exclusion in place within our own congregations, as subtle as they may be, bring them to the awareness of the congregation and have them removed.

Tips for Success

Remember and Eradicate the Doors...

- 🌀 **Storm Doors** - Keep people out.
- 🌀 **Screen Doors** - Give the illusion that all is open, but there's a door there.
- 🌀 **Swinging Doors** - These doors swing in and out. Once inside or outside you had better take a step because if you don't the doors will swing back and whack you. Have you ever heard the saying, "Don't let the doors hit you on the way out?"
- 🌀 **Revolving Doors** - You can come in and you can leave with only worship in between. There is no commitment, accountability or responsibility.
- 🌀 **Back Doors** - You can come in but don't let anyone see you.
- 🌀 **Cellar Doors** - You can be here, but you must know your place.

Build Strong Ministry Using Passionate People

Scripture Reference

Nehemiah 1:1-6:16

Summary

What do you want to build in your church? It might be something that requires physical manual labor, or perhaps it is an area of ministry that is needed within the community. Use the story of Nehemiah to help understand the way to build your ministry successfully, while allowing passionate people to minister to their fullest.

Tips for Success

- 🌀 **Identify the issue/ministry**
- 🌀 **Let go** of the past
- 🌀 Fast in order to **get focused**
- 🌀 **Pray** for God to give you guidance and direction
- 🌀 **Meet with others** who can help advise you through their experience and/or finances (this includes resources outside the church as well as inside the church)
- 🌀 **Look closely** at the challenge and **get a handle** on what will be needed to get the job done
- 🌀 **Cast the vision**
- 🌀 Get the **right people** into the **right places**. (If you don't have the passionate people then perhaps it isn't time for that ministry to come into play.)

Promote a Spirit of Generosity

Scripture Reference

Matthew 6:19-24

Summary

"...it's about giving from a place of generosity, not obligation..." The scripture tells us that where our hearts are, there our treasure will be. "Give and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, will be poured into our lap. For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you." Luke 6:38

Tips for Success

- 🌀 **Avoid the things the moth can destroy** - that it's silly to set your heart on clothing because you can't wear more than one garment at a time.
- 🌀 **Avoid the things that rust can destroy** - Don't put your heart into storing up so much more than what you need, because there's nothing permanent about that stored-up food.
- 🌀 **Avoid the treasures of life that thieves can steal by digging through** - If you put your heart into how much money you have you miss the point of ministry.

Reflect the Abundant Life

Scripture Reference

John 10:10

Summary

If the individuals are striving to be healthy reflections of God, then the church will be a healthy reflection of God. Therefore, we must take care of the

- Physical
- Mental
- Emotional
- Sexual
- Spiritual

in our lives.

Tips for Success

How do we encourage individuals to become healthy and reflect the abundant life?

- 🌀 **Teach** (workshops, Bible studies, health fairs, special speakers)
- 🌀 **Preach** (creative sermons)
- 🌀 **Encourage** (support groups within the church, but also promote and advertise appropriate groups outside the church)
- 🌀 **Practice** (remember, if you don't practice you can't get good at something; practice doesn't make perfect, but it'll make you better)
- 🌀 **Model** (Wherever and whenever possible, model the abundant life)

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