



TRUTH • WISDOM • CONTEXT

Cohort Training for Pastors &  
Replanters

**PASTOR  
WORKBOOK**



# RE Pastor Cohort Pastor Workbook

RE is a movement of God's leadership seeking to strengthen God's Church and transform a community through the power of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Utilizing thirteen intentional lessons we will seek to equip you to lead God's people to advance God's mission in your context.

RE is not a manual for church revitalization, but a guide to help you get started on a long journey as a pastor called to serve an at-risk church. Seeking to create the right conversations to encourage pastors and replanters to focus their time on elements essential to church revitalization, each lesson in RE will challenge you to consider Biblical truth and wisdom from other practitioners before challenging you to apply what you have learned to your specific context.

This workbook is intended to help you prepare for a pastor cohort guided by a facilitator to create discussion and coaching environments essential to further your learning and preparation to lead a congregation toward a hopeful future.

Church revitalization is hard work over a marathon tenure as pastor to God's people. So, set your pace and let's start the journey together for the glory of God!

May the Lord strengthen His Church through this resource and the faithfulness of men seeking to serve for God's glory.

RE COHORT Pastor Workbook,  
Edited by JAMES NUGENT, 2021  
Updated 4/24, v. 4



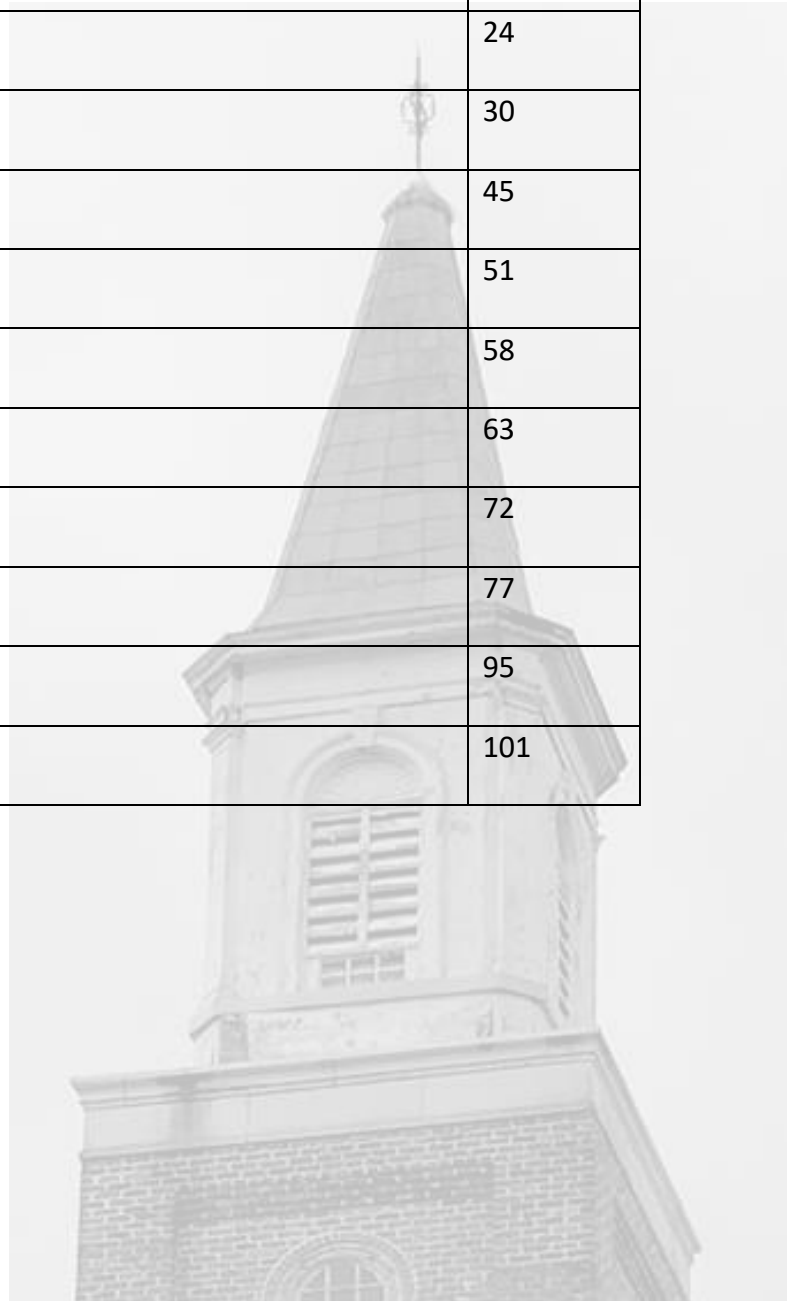
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RE is a movement of God’s leadership seeking to strengthen God’s Church and transform a community through the power of the gospel of Jesus Christ. RE is not a manual for church revitalization, but a journey to help you fulfill your calling as pastor leading an at-risk church toward a hopeful future.

RE creates the right conversations for revitalization pastors and replanters to focus on elements essential to strengthening the church by examining Biblical truth and wisdom from others before applying them to any context.

**Biblical TRUTH → Primary Resource WISDOM → Application in any CONTEXT**

**TRUTH - Thirteen lessons developed by practitioners moving participants from Biblical truth to contextual application.**

- |  |   |  |
|--|---|--|
| 1. Pastoral Qualifications & Pursuing God        | 5. Vision & Values                              | 10. Developing Leaders                     |
| 2. Prayer  | 6. Evangelism/Missional Engagement in Community | 11. Polity & Processes                     |
| 3. Biblical Leadership & Pastoral Assessment     | 7. Preaching & Teaching                         | 12. Adversity, Perseverance & Partnerships |
| 4. Gospel Centrality & Marks of a Healthy Church | 8. Discipleship & Member Care                   | 13. Multiplication & Sending               |
|  | 9. Worship                                      |  |

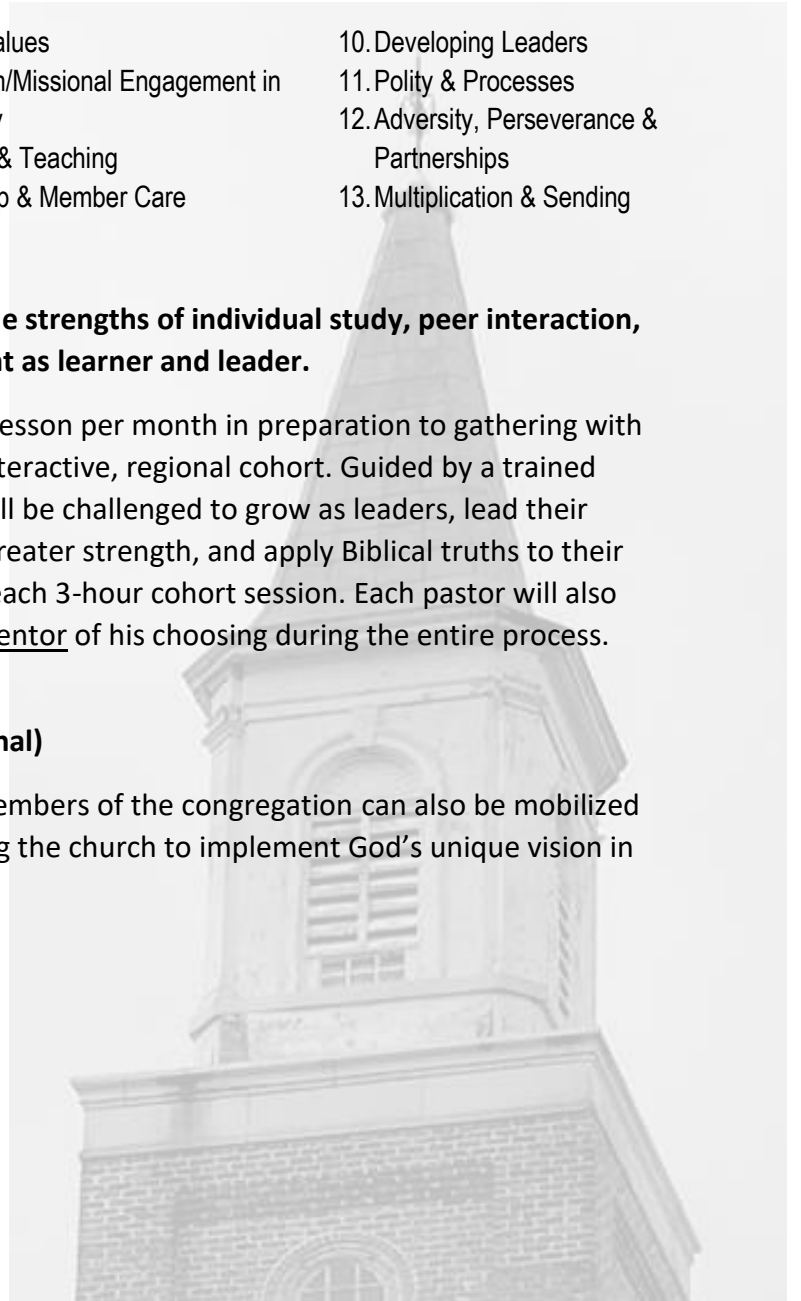
**WISDOM -The Pastor’s Learning Path utilizes the strengths of individual study, peer interaction, and pastoral mentoring helping each participant as learner and leader.**



Pastors will complete one lesson per month in preparation to gathering with 5-7 other pastors for an interactive, regional cohort. Guided by a trained facilitator, participants will be challenged to grow as leaders, lead their congregations toward greater strength, and apply Biblical truths to their unique context during each 3-hour cohort session. Each pastor will also meet with a pastoral mentor of his choosing during the entire process.

**CONTEXT - Church Consultation Process (Optional)**

As pastors are developed, the leadership and members of the congregation can also be mobilized through an optional consultation process guiding the church to implement God’s unique vision in their community.





## Primary Resource List

Each lesson contains at least one recommended resource for wisdom to accompany the lesson and several books as recommended for additional reading. Resources are individually linked below:

1. **Orientation/ Pastoral Qualifications & Pursuing God**
2. **Prayer**
  - [\*Developing a Powerful Praying Church\* by Richard Blackaby and Rick Fisher](#)
3. **Biblical Leadership**
  - [\*Spiritual Leadership: Principles of Excellence For Every Believer\* by J. Oswald Sanders](#)
4. **Gospel Centrality & Marks of a Healthy Church**
  - [\*The Gospel: How the Church Portrays the Beauty of Christ\* by Raymond C. Ortlund Jr.](#)
5. **Vision & Values**
  - [\*Seeing Your Context in Preparation for Kingdom Advance\* \(article\)](#)
6. **Evangelism/Missional Engagement in Community**
  - [\*Evangelism and the Sovereignty of God\*, by J.I. Packer](#)
7. **Preaching & Teaching**
  - [\*3 Benefits of Preaching Exegetically in Church Revitalization\* \(Article\) by Mark Clifton](#)
8. **Discipleship & Member Care**
  - [\*Rediscovering Discipleship\* by Robby Gallaty](#)
  - [\*No Silver Bullets: Five Small Shifts that will Transform Your Ministry\* by Daniel Im](#)
9. **Worship**
  - [\*Worship Essentials: Growing a Healthy Worship Ministry without Starting a War\* by Mike Harland](#)
10. **Developing Leaders (Choose one - See lesson first)**
  - [\*Prepare Them to Shepherd: Test, Train, Affirm, and Send the Next Generation of Pastors\* by Brian Croft](#)
  - [\*On Being a Leader for God\* by Warren W. Wiersbe](#)
  - [\*Building Leaders: Blueprints for Developing Leadership at Every Level of Your Church\* by Aubrey Malphurs and Will Mancini](#)
  - [\*On Being a Deacon: The Marks, Duties, and Joy of Servant-Leadership\* by Mark Hallock Jim Noble, Scott Thistlethwaite, and Phil von Kaenel](#)
  - [\*Leaders Who Last\* by Dave Kraft](#)
  - [\*Lead: 12 Gospel Principles for Leadership in the Church\* by Paul Tripp](#)
11. **Polity & Processes**
  - [\*Leading Change with the Word\* by Mark Hallock \(blog series\)](#)
12. **Adversity, Perseverance & Partnerships**
  - [\*Finish Period: Going the Distance in Ministry\* by Sonny Holmes](#)
13. **Multiplication & Sending**
  - [\*Gaining By Losing: Why the Future Belongs to Churches that Send\* by JD Greear](#)

## Orientation/ Preparing for Your First RE Cohort Session

As you await your first cohort session, let's begin with a few preparatory steps for your journey through RE.

- 1) Begin a 30-day personal prayer strategy for personal revitalization. Some options might include:
  - Consider reading a resource to grow a particular spiritual discipline
  - Schedule a weekend prayer retreat
  - Begin a prayer journal just for this season of revitalization
  - Adjusting your schedule to allow for more uninterrupted times of prayer
  
- 2) Secure a pastoral mentor. You will need to select a pastoral mentor to meet with you regularly as you complete your revitalization journey. We feel it is better that you choose a mentor that can:
  - Meet about once a month for an hour to discuss a few pre-written questions related to the RE content.
  - Provide wisdom and encouragement
  - Commit to praying for you and the church you serve
  
- 3) Review and sign the RE Pastor Covenant bring it to your first cohort session (p.7).
  
- 4) Assessment
  - Read the article *13 Essential Characteristics of Effective Revitalizer* by Jimbo Stewart (pp. 8-9).
  - Complete a self-assessment of 13 Essential Characteristics referenced by Jimbo Stewart (pp. 10-11). You may also take the survey online at <https://www.namb.net/church-replanting/join/>.
  - Ask 3-5 members of your congregation or trusted peers to complete the 13 Essential Characteristics assessment and return it to you in preparation for Session 3, Biblical Leadership. NOTE: You may need to create a way for them to return them anonymously to ensure accurate feedback.
  
- 5) Order the primary resource for next lesson: [Developing a Powerful Praying Church by Richard Blackaby and Rick Fisher](#)



# Pastor Covenant

As pastors and co-laborers, we covenant together on this journey of strengthening and serving the local church, so that the hope of the gospel of Jesus Christ may be declared starting in our community.

- Committing to invest the needed time for prayer and preparation for each lesson trusting God will use me to lead my church well.
- Committing to meet with my mentor regularly for wisdom and encouragement.
- Committing to encourage my fellow pastors in my cohort.
- Committing to hold each other accountable as we labor together.
- Committing to follow the Spirit of God as He leads me to accomplish God's mission in my midst.

For the sake of God's glory, my sanctification and development, and for those entrusted to my leadership as pastor, I covenant together with my brothers in Christ.

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## 13 Essential Characteristics of Effective Revitalizer by Jimbo Stewart

As we begin our journey toward strengthening a local congregation for a hopeful future, we encourage you to consider how God has uniquely equipped you as a pastor to lead and serve the church that has called you. In order to do so, we invite you to review an article published by the North American Mission Board Replant Team to identify your strengths and potential growth opportunities as a pastor. While written originally for replanters, many of the same characteristics are also essential to any pastor seeking to lead a church toward a hopeful future.

As part of your preparation for your first RE session, we would ask you to assess your leadership in light of the characteristics described below and then compare your self-assessment results with those of 3-5 members from your congregation using the accompanying form.

**Visionary Shepherd** — A visionary shepherd has the ability to sense and see God’s next steps for a congregation and the capacity to lead the church forward as a loving shepherd. He is patient, wise, strategic and relational.

**Gospel Orientation** — Gospel orientation refers to aligning the culture and practice of the church in such a way that the core doctrine of the gospel drives its mission and practice in preaching, managing conflict and leading organizational change.

**Missional Focus** — Pastors with a missional focus make it a priority to equip and mobilize the congregation to live life on mission in their community and beyond for the sake of Christ and His gospel.

**Organizational Awareness** — A pastor with organizational awareness is adept at understanding how power dynamics work within the church, anticipating how changes would be received, recognizing where change may produce friction and- showing an awareness of how current practice and changes affected their position in the community in which they served.

**Pastoral Grit** — Pastoral grit is the ability to persevere through the inevitable difficulties of replanting and remain steadfast to shepherd the church forward as God uses the replanter to turn a dying church around.

**Spousal Perseverance** — The pastor’s wife possesses a love for Jesus and the church. She is emotionally and spiritually prepared for the challenges that come with replanting a dying church.

**Resourceful Generalist** — A resourceful generalist possesses the ability to speak into and lead in a variety of areas in order to lead the church well. There is no task beneath him.

**Tactical Patience** — Tactical patience is the ability to skillfully implement change at a pace that is appropriate to a specific congregation’s health and needs. It is about having the discernment of knowing when something must be changed and how it should be changed.

**Initiative** — The pastor with initiative leads the church with a passion rooted in biblical convictions and demonstrated in a bias for action. He proactively works to avoid problems, as well as finding or creating new opportunities.



**Emotional Intelligence** — Emotional intelligence is the capacity to be aware of, control and express one's own emotions and to handle interpersonal relationships judiciously and empathetically.

**Affinity for Multi-Generational Ministry** – A pastor with an affinity for multi-generational ministry is able to connect easily with both the young and old in his congregation so each group knows they are loved, valued and heard and so all ages are pastored well.

**Respect for a Church's Legacy** – A pastor with respect for a church's legacy knows how to love and build off of a church's past without allowing people in the congregation to idolize it in an unhealthy way.

**Willingness to Confront** — The pastor with a willingness to confront is able to willingly (not eagerly) navigate conflict with directness, love, humility, patience and wisdom – driven by a love for the church and her members.

I am praying that God will continue to increasingly call men who possess these characteristics and the biblical qualifications of a pastor to the work of leading and guiding a church toward renewal and hope.

**PUBLISHED MARCH 16, 2022**

Source: <https://www.namb.net/church-replanting/resource/13-essential-characteristics-of-effective-replanters/>

## SURVEY: 13 Essential Characteristics of a Revitalization Pastor / Replanter

*Directions: Score each of the following on a scale of 1 (not a consistently strong characteristic) to 10 (consistently displayed strong quality) based on the description provided.*

\_\_\_\_\_ **1. Visionary Shepherd** — A Visionary Shepherd has the ability to sense and see God's next steps for a congregation and the capacity to lead the church forward as a loving shepherd. He is patient, wise, strategic, and relational.

\_\_\_\_\_ **2. Gospel Orientation** — Gospel Orientation refers to aligning the culture and practice of the church in such a way that the core doctrine of the gospel drives its mission and practice in preaching, managing conflict, and leading organizational change.

\_\_\_\_\_ **3. Missional Focus** — Pastors with a Missional Focus make it a priority to equip and mobilize the congregation to live their life on mission in their community and beyond for the sake of Christ and His gospel.

\_\_\_\_\_ **4. Organizational Awareness** — A pastor with Organizational Awareness is adept at understanding how power dynamics work within the church, anticipating how changes would be received, recognizing where change may produce friction, and showing an awareness of how current practice and changes affected their position within the community in which they served.

\_\_\_\_\_ **5. Pastoral Grit** — Pastoral Grit is the ability to persevere through the inevitable difficulties of replanting and remain steadfast to shepherd the church forward as God uses the replanter to turn a dying church around.

\_\_\_\_\_ **6. Spousal Perseverance** — The pastor's wife possesses a love for Jesus and the church. She is emotionally and spiritually prepared for the challenges that come with replanting a dying church.

\_\_\_\_\_ **7. Resourceful Generalist** — A Resourceful Generalist possesses the ability to speak into and lead in a variety of areas in order to lead the church well. There is no task beneath him.

\_\_\_\_\_ **8. Tactical Patience** — Tactical patience is the ability to skillfully implement change at a pace that is appropriate to a specific congregation's health and needs. It is about having the discernment of knowing when something must be changed and how it should be changed.

\_\_\_\_\_ **9. Initiative** — A pastor with Initiative leads the church with a passion rooted in biblical convictions and demonstrated in a bias for action. He proactively works to avoid problems, as well as finding or creating new opportunities.

\_\_\_\_\_ **10. Emotional Intelligence** — Emotional Intelligence is the capacity to be aware of, control, and express one’s own emotions, and to handle interpersonal relationships judiciously and empathetically.

\_\_\_\_\_ **11. Affinity for Multi-Generational Ministry** – A pastor with an Affinity for Multi-Generational Ministry is able to connect easily with both the young and old in his congregation so each group knows they are loved, valued, and heard, and so all ages are pastored well.

\_\_\_\_\_ **12. Respect for a Church’s Legacy** – A pastor with Respect for a Church’s Legacy knows how to love and build off of a church’s past without allowing people in the congregation to idolize it in an unhealthy way.

\_\_\_\_\_ **13. Willingness to Confront** — A pastor with a Willingness to Confront is able to willingly (not eagerly) navigate conflict with directness, love, humility, patience, and wisdom – driven by a love for the church and her members.

Based on the source: <https://www.namb.net/church-replanting/resource/13-essential-characteristics-of-effective-replanters/>

Everything a pastor or facilitator needs for RE Cohort can also be found by accessing [REcohort.com](http://REcohort.com).

Below are a few screenshots to illustrate the available resources.

## 2. Prayer

- Complete pastor lesson ([Download](#)) prior to cohort session.
- Additional resources related to objectives:
  - [A Passion for Prayer](#) by Dr. Tom Elliff
  - A collection of prayer books by E.M. Bounds online from CCEL.org
    - [The Necessity of Prayer](#)
    - [Purpose in Prayer](#)
    - [Essential of Prayer](#)
    - [Power Through Prayer](#)
  - Revitalization Devotional, [Morning Sacrifice](#), South Carolina Baptist Convention
  - Online article: [Prayer Is the First Step in Revitalization](#), HopeforChurches.org
- Order the primary resource for your next lesson , Biblical Leadership: *Spiritual Leadership: Principles of Excellence For Every Believer* by J. Oswald Sanders

Pastor Lesson download link. Each lesson can be printed out or completed digitally using a computer or tablet

Link to order the next primary resource in preparation for the NEXT lesson allowing time for delivery.

## 4. Gospel Centrality & Marks of a Healthy Church

- Complete pastor lesson ([Download](#)) prior to cohort session.
- Video Teaching Series: *9 Marks of a Healthy Church* at <https://www.9marks.org/about/the-nine-marks/>
- Additional resources related to objectives:
  - [What does it mean to be Gospel-centered?](#) Video produced by Crossway Publishers
  - [What Does it Mean to be a Gospel-Centered Church](#) (book) by Ray Ortlund
  - [Your Church May Not Be as Gospel-Centered as You Think](#) by Tony Merida
  - [The Gospel: How the Church Portrays the Beauty of Christ](#) by Raymond C. Ortlund Jr.
  - [9 Marks of a Healthy Church](#) (2004 expanded edition) by Mark Dever
- Order the primary resource for Lesson 5, Vision & Values: [Church Unique: How Missional Leaders Cast Vision, Capture Culture, and Create Movement](#) by Will Mancini

Links to additional resources for each lesson

## 5. Vision & Values

- Complete pastor lesson ([Download](#)) prior to cohort session.
- [Video overview of Kingdom Concept](#) (password: "churchstrategies")
- [Kingdom Concept Template](#) and [Kingdom Concept Quick Reference](#)
- [Video overview of Vision Frame](#) (password: "churchstrategies")
- [Vision Frame Template](#)
- [Our Preferred Portrait: Defining Marks of Our Congregation](#)

Links to video or template resources referenced in the lesson.

### Overview

God has always communicated with His creation. From one of the first recorded conversations with Adam in the garden in Genesis 3 to the conversations He is having with people today, God has conversations with His creation. God has had, is having, or will be having a conversation with you as a leader seeking to revitalize His church ***if you are willing to listen to Him***. Church revitalization cannot happen apart from the direction and instructions of Almighty God. In this lesson, we will look at a few scriptures that help us understand how great men of God learned to pray and how they practiced praying. The goal is for the pastor to dig deep into his experience of prayer with God and be able to verbalize and practice what God says to him about the church he is leading in a process of revitalization. The ability to hear from God clearly and train others to hear is the foundation upon which the process of revitalization will be built. The key to be successful in this lesson will depend on how honest you are with God and yourself. If I were writing scripture today, I may write something like this: “The effectual, fervent prayer of a righteous pastor will provide the basis for a great church.”

### Learning Path

*Objective 1: Deepen your biblical understanding of prayer and a pastor’s dependence on prayer*

*Objective 2: Consider how a pastor’s prayer life is essential to leading a congregation*

*Objective 3: Develop a plan for leading God’s people to pray through a personal and intentional commitment*

### Revitalization Outcomes

1. Pastor will take a serious look at his prayer life and establish a biblical pattern of prayer which can be a model for his congregation.
2. Pastor will create an accountability plan under the guidance of a mentor/coach to strengthen the spiritual discipline of prayer.
3. Pastor will develop a prayer strategy for his congregation.

### Primary resource used in this lesson:

**Additional resources related to objectives:**

1. [A Passion for Prayer](#) by Dr. Tom Elliff
2. A collection of prayer books by E.M. Bounds online from CCEL.org
  - a. [The Necessity of Prayer](#)
  - b. [Purpose in Prayer](#)
  - c. [Essential of Prayer](#)
  - d. [Power Through Prayer](#)
3. Revitalization Devotional, [Morning Sacrifice](#), South Carolina Baptist Convention
4. Online article: [Prayer Is the First Step in Revitalization](#), HopeforChurches.org

**Objective 1: Deepen your biblical understanding of prayer**

There is overwhelming Biblical evidence of prayer's importance to God. With all but five books in the Bible mentioning or recording prayers, and over 1100 verses on prayer in the Bible, we can conclude that prayer should be of ultimate importance to us.

Lessons from the Old Testament:

There are many examples in the Old Testament of great men of prayer – Noah, Abraham, Moses, Joshua, and others – any of whom would be a worthy study. Samuel was one of the judges and a man of prayer who learned to listen to God in prayer through his mentor, Eli, and in turn, mentored David. David is one of the greater examples of prayer in the Old Testament and suited for this lesson. We could look at any number of the Psalms, David's battles, his sins, and repentance, but sometimes seeing how it ends reveals the nuggets. During the 320 years after David's death, the Bible over and over says, "...I will do this or that because of my servant David." A man like that is worth looking into. After all, God described David in I Samuel as "a man after God's own heart."

- Read I Chronicles 28-29: This is at the end of David's life but is a summary of what he had learned about prayer and God.
- Questions for reflection:
  - Based on your reading, how clearly did David hear what God said?
  - Would you have responded the same way if God had a plan contrary to the one you had longed for over several years?
  - How important was it that David shared what God said with his son, Solomon, and the other leaders?

- How did God honor David's prayers?
- What did you learn from these chapters that encourages you to pray more and listen even more?
- Why is it important for God's leader to pray?

### Lessons from Jesus:

In all of history, no one's prayers have been read, prayed, or studied more than those of our Lord Jesus. His practice of prayer is to be modeled in every way. Though we can learn much from the prayers of Jesus in the scriptures, the most famous and maybe the most meaningful for our purpose is the Lord's Prayer, and sometimes called the Model Prayer or the Disciples' Prayer.

- Read and think about the prayer that Jesus told His disciples to pray in Matthew 6:9-13 and Luke 11:2-4.
- Questions for Reflection:
  - As you read the prayer, what captured your attention most?
  - Do you see a pattern in the prayer that Jesus was trying to teach His disciples?
  - What were the key elements of Jesus' model prayer?

### Personal Reflection of Your Prayer Life

Be honest as you begin to think through how you can make prayer of utmost importance in your life and the lives of your church members.

- Is there anything that needs to change in the way you pray after reflecting on these passages?
- Think about your public prayers and the public prayers of your parishioners. How could you utilize these opportunities to teach others to pray?

### **Objective 2: Consider how a pastor's prayer life is essential to leading a congregation**

- Read [Developing a Powerful Praying Church](#), by Richard Blackaby and Rick Fisher

### Personal Reflection for Your Leadership:

- How would you summarize the main ideas in the book?
- What were the top 3 takeaways that God would have you consider?
- What adjustments, if any, are needed in your prayer life in order to effectively lead the church to be impactful in the community and beyond?
- Prayer in church can be ritualistic. How can you lead your church to develop a better understanding and practice of prayer?

### **Objective 3: Develop a plan for leading God's people to pray through a personal and intentional commitment**

Every church considers itself a praying church. Most love to talk about prayer, but very few pray. A church must pray to and depend on God to strengthen the congregation as each member walks in faithful obedience to God's plan. The revitalization pastor must be known as a prayerful person and model his prayer life before the church. Your people may not be asking, "Pastor, teach us to pray like you pray," but they are learning from your life and ministry.

- What is your personal plan for making and keeping prayer a priority in your life? Be specific.
- If your deacons were to say, "Pastor, teach us to pray," what steps would you take to teach them?
- How do you sense God leading you to make prayer a priority for the congregation? What are your options to help the church reprioritize their dependence on God?

If God's people could truly become a praying people, hearing God speak together, and then doing what He says together, the result will be a unified church following God in all things and making a tremendous impact on the community, city, and world.



**About the Author:**

Dr. Jerry Sosebee recently retired from his position as Director of Church Strategies with the South Carolina Baptist Convention. Serving as a denominational servant and pastor for many years, he has faithfully led congregations to seek the face of God and follow God's mission for reaching their community.

## Overview

God has always provided leadership for His people. From the very first vision given to Abram to Paul's installation of pastoral leaders in new churches, God has led His people through called men, set apart, and installed in a local congregation. Church revitalization cannot occur without qualified pastors leading God's people to accomplish God's mission in a local context. In this lesson we will review a few characteristics of Biblical leadership and apply them to a particular revitalization context to encourage and equip pastors as they seek to serve God's Church to fulfill God's mission starting in their community.

## Learning Path

*Objective 1: Deepen your biblical understanding of pastoral leadership*

*Objective 2: Reflect on common pastoral leadership characteristics*

*Objective 3: Identify your strengths and growth opportunities for pastoral leadership*

*Objective 4: Create a personal development plan for strengthening pastoral leadership characteristics*

## Revitalization Outcomes

1. Pastor will gain a deeper understanding of his strengths and growth opportunities as he seeks to lead a congregation through a revitalization process.
2. Pastor will create a personal development plan under the guidance of a mentor.

## Primary resource used in this lesson:

[\*Spiritual Leadership: Principles of Excellence For Every Believer by J. Oswald Sanders\*](#)

## Additional Resources related to objectives:

1. [13 Essential Characteristics Article & Assessment](#) (See Orientation directions, p. 6)
2. Book: [\*Pastoral Leadership is...: How to Shepherd God's People with Passion and Confidence\*](#) by Dave Earley
3. [Article: \*Pastor, Church Revitalization Begins With You\*](#) - HopeforChurches.org

## **Objective 1: Deepen your biblical understanding of pastoral leadership**

### Lessons from Moses:

Moses was called to lead God's people to a place they had never been before. The task wouldn't be easy due to both external and internal challenges, but he wouldn't be leading in isolation for both God and Aaron were with him. Pastoral leadership today is tremendously challenging and even more so for churches in need of revitalization. But God is always at work among His people, so let's reflect on a couple of Biblical leaders and trust God will prepare you for the task at hand.

- Read Exodus Chapters 3-7 & 18
- Questions for reflection:
  - Based on your reading, what four words would you use to describe Moses' leadership? Briefly explain why you chose these words.
  - What challenges did he face? How did he overcome them?
  - How did God demonstrate His faithfulness to Moses?
  - What leadership characteristics or insights did you glean from these chapters?

### **Lessons from Jesus:**

Jesus is a solid Biblical example for transforming religious culture and ushering in a new vision. He faced opposition from religious leaders and countless challenges created by generations of religious practice. Even after he gathered a few followers, he struggled to cast vision and mobilize them for ministry. Let's read a couple excerpts from his short tenure of leadership and trust God to strengthen your ability to lead.

- Read Matthew 10 & Luke 10:1-23
  - Based on your reading, how would you describe Jesus' leadership? (Focus only on these 2 passages)
  - Using the details of these passages, how did he mobilize others for ministry? (Be specific)
  - When the disciples return after their mission, how does Jesus respond to their reports? Why do you think he responded this way?
  - What leadership characteristics or insights did you glean from these chapters?

## Personal Reflection for Your Leadership

These leaders and others are preserved by God for our benefit as we seek to lead others to accomplish God's mission today in communities that need the hope of the Gospel. Take a few minutes to reflect on what you read as you answer the following questions about your opportunities to lead today.

- What similarities exist between your current context seeking to lead God's people today and the two contexts in your Bible reading of Moses and Jesus?
- What 1 or 2 things have you learned about leading God's people as you reflect on these passages?
- How have these passages challenged or encouraged you as a leader of God's people?
- What next steps have you identified during your reflection time?

### **Objective 2: Reflect on common pastoral leadership characteristics**

In J. Oswald Chambers book, *Spiritual Leadership: Principles for Excellence for Every Believer*, he states, "If the world is to hear the church's voice today, leaders are needed who are authoritative, spiritual, and sacrificial" (18). As you read our primary resource for this lesson, I invite you to consider how God can use you to revive the voice of God's church so that your community and ultimately the world will hear the good news of Jesus Christ.

- Read Chapters 1-10 (81 pages) from J. Oswald Chambers, *Spiritual Leadership: Principles for Excellence for Every Believer*

### **Personal Reflection for Your Leadership**

- What insights did you gain from your readings on *Spiritual Leadership*?
- Was there a section that really challenged you as a pastor/leader? How will you respond to the challenge?
- At this time in your life, which of the qualifications listed in chapter six do you feel need to be strengthened? When strengthened, how will it equip you to become a better leader?
- Of the qualities discussed in chapters eight & nine, which are your strongest qualities and why? (Choose three)

- What role does the Holy Spirit have in leading you as you seek to provide pastoral leadership to others? (Chapter ten)

### **Objective 3: Identify your strengths and growth opportunities for pastoral leadership**

Every leader has God-given strengths that he can leverage for leading himself and others to accomplish God's mission. As a revitalization pastor or replanter there are several characteristics that are beneficial to the work of a pastor in this setting.

### **Personal Reflection for Your Leadership Assessment**

- You should have completed a self-assessment of 13 essential characteristics of effective replanters as instructed during orientation. If you have not done so, you'll need to complete #1-3 below before proceeding.
  - 1) Take a few minutes to review the revitalization pastor / replanter characteristics listed in Jimbo Stewart's article, [13 Essential Characteristics of Effective Replanters](#).
  - 2) Using the self-assessment in the Orientation section of your Pastor Workbook (p.8), score your competency for each characteristic as instructed.
  - 3) Ask 3 members of your congregation or trusted peers to complete the same characteristic assessment at the end of this lesson and return it to you.
- Review your results.
  - In review of your self-assessment and the feedback of others, which characteristics are your greatest strengths?
  - Which are your greatest opportunities for growth?
- A closer review. Compare your results again with the feedback of others.
  - What characteristics received lower scores from your peers/members than your own self-assessment? These could be potential **blind spots**.  
List your potential **Blind Spots**:
  - What characteristics received higher scores from your peers/members than your own self-assessment? These could be potential **untapped strengths**

List any potential **Untapped Strengths**:

- Consider a recent time when you struggled as a leader. What circumstances made it a challenge? What did you learn about yourself afterwards that may help you in the future?
- How do you respond to stress? Personal criticism?
- If church revitalization requires 3-5 years of consistent leadership to restore vitality to a church, is there anything in your assessment results that indicates you'll be able to lead well over a long period of time?

***Objective 4: Create a personal development plan for strengthening pastoral leadership characteristics***

Church revitalization demands that pastoral leadership be committed to continued growth and development. With an overbooked calendar, this will be a challenge requiring that you have discipline and accountability, so take time now to prayerfully consider how you can continue to grow as a pastor under the guidance and encouragement of your mentor by creating a personal development plan.

Developing a Personal Development Plan (PDP) Based on Your Assessment & Reflection

Every PDP has at least three components:

- 1) *Desired Outcome or Goal* – What will be the fruit of your development?
- 2) *Action steps* – What specific things will you do to accomplish your desired outcome?
- 3) *Time* – How much time will you allocate? How long will you continue?

In addition to developing your skills for leadership as a revitalization pastor, how would God have you grow in your character, physical/emotional well-being, or relationships? Go ahead and answer the questions below to help you brainstorm potential opportunities.

- 1) *Skills* - Which revitalization pastor characteristics would you like to develop further?
- 2) *Character* – Who do you need to be as a disciple/leader/man?

3) *Physical/Emotional* – How will you seek to care for yourself as you seek to lead others?

4) *Relationships* – Who else needs to be in community with you as a leader/man?

There are certainly more categories and components to consider, but to get started on your development plan, let's work to create three goals from any combination of the categories you have considered above. Use the following link to create your [personal development plan](#).

- Which three categories will you use to start your personal development plan (skills, character, physical/emotional or relationships)?
- Why did you choose these three categories?
- What is the desired outcome for each category?
- What specific things will you do to accomplish your desired outcome?
- How much time will you need to allocate to reach your goal?

Go ahead and set an appointment with your mentor and share your plan with him.

**About the Author:**

James Nugent serves as the Director of Church Strategies at the South Carolina Baptist Convention. Before his role as a denominational servant, he served as Transitional Pastor, and Associate Pastor for several churches in South Carolina leading churches to find strength through making disciples in their community.

## Overview

Bowhunting is a big deal in my community. For weeks, guys will spend hours getting ready for the first few weeks of deer season, where they will be able to head out with just their bow, a strategic plan on where the best spot to shoot a deer will be, and the desire to be able to fill the freezer with some venison! But every bowhunter I know will tell you that you can have all these things, and still never shoot a deer if you are missing the most important part: accuracy. The best bow, the most state-of-the-art arrows with the most aerodynamic heads, and the very best spot for hunting will yield nothing but frustration if you cannot shoot with accuracy and hit the intended target!

Church Revitalization is very similar. You can have the best strategies, a congregation that has expressed willingness, and all the available resources you need, and still the church will fail to breathe new life if it is missing the most important aspect: accuracy. You need to know where you are headed, what you are shooting at, and you need to be able to aim accurately at the target. The target? A healthy church.

The goal of this lesson is to be able to fire the arrow of church revitalization accurately, shooting at the target, or goal, of a healthy church. What is the arrow that hits the target's center? Gospel Centrality. In order to do this, we will need to do three things. First, we will define what it means for a church to be focused on the Gospel. Second, we will define what a healthy church is. Finally, we will think through how to fire the arrow of Gospel focus at the target of a healthy church.

## Learning Path

*Objective 1: Gain a deeper Biblical understanding of how a Gospel-focused church is a healthy church*

*Objective 2: Consider and apply what it means for a local church to have Gospel centrality*

*Objective 3: Prayerfully reflect on what the marks of a healthy church are in your context*

*Objective 4: Identify initial steps for leading a congregation toward greater Gospel centrality and health*



## Revitalization Outcomes

Through this study, the participant will create an overarching strategy for revitalization by learning to view all aspects of church health and life through the lens of the Gospel.

### Primary resource used in this lesson:

1. The Bible
2. Book: *The Gospel: How the Church Portrays the Beauty of Christ* by Raymond C. Ortlund Jr.

Reminder: The videos and additional resources can also be found online at [REcohort.com](http://REcohort.com)

### Resources related to objectives:

1. *What does it mean to be Gospel-centered?* Video produced by Crossway Publishers
2. *Your Church May Not Be as Gospel-Centered as You Think* by Tony Merida
3. Book: *9 Marks of a Healthy Church* (2004 expanded edition) by Mark Dever

## Objective 1: Gain a deeper Biblical understanding of how a Gospel-focused church is a healthy church

“I want my church to be healthy.” This phrase has been uttered from the lips of every well-intentioned pastor who desires to see his church change and grow. But what does it mean to be healthy? To think about church health, let’s look at the metaphors the Bible uses for the church.

- Read John 15:5.
  - How does Jesus describe believers?
  - Based on this passage, how would you describe a healthy church?
- Read the following passages: Romans 12:4-5; 1 Corinthians 12:12; 1 Corinthians 12:27; Ephesians 5:23, 30.
  - What is the metaphor being used to describe the church?
  - Now, think about your own body. What is going on when your physical body is healthy?
  - Based on these passages, how would you describe a healthy church?
- Read the following passages: 2 Corinthians 6:18; Matt. 12:49-50; Ephesians 2:19. What is the metaphor being used to describe the church?
  - What is going on when a family is healthy?

- Based on these passages, how would you describe a healthy church?
- Read the following passages: Hebrews 3:6; 1 Timothy 3:14-15. What is the metaphor being used to describe the church?
  - What is going on when a house is healthy?
  - Based on these passages, how would you describe a healthy church?
- Now, using everything you have journaled so far, make your own definition, thinking about what all these metaphors have in common:

**A healthy church is....**

So, how can you get there? We focus on the thing that is, according to the Apostle Paul, “of first importance” (1 Corinthians 15:3).

**Objective 2 – Consider and apply what it means for a local church to have Gospel centrality**

Now that we have defined what a healthy church is, how do we get there? Before we can think about individual aspects of revitalization, we have to think about the overarching mission of the church. What is the church about? That’s where “Gospel centrality” comes into play.

The idea of Gospel centrality has gained traction over the last 10 years in church life. But the whole Bible moves us as individuals and churches towards a single-minded focus on the Gospel. Let’s think through what that might mean.

1. The word we translate from the Gospel literally means “good news.” Consider the everyday information that floods your world from news, online posts, etc., what would you consider to be good news from any of these sources of information?
2. What elements are essential that differentiate “good news” from any other news?

Let’s define Gospel centrality based on 1 Corinthians 15:1-5. Paul is writing to a very troubled church, reminding them to lay aside their divisions, repent of their sins, and focus on the Gospel as they strive towards unity. Sounds like a familiar scene in many of our modern

churches, doesn't it? Before chapter 15, Paul has exhorted them in several ways, hoping to correct sinful behaviors in the church. But now, he stops, to remind them of the single most important thing: The Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Read 1 Corinthians 15:1-5 and think through the following questions:

1. Look at verses 1 and 2. Pay special attention to the action words in these verses describing the Gospel Paul preached. What do you learn about the importance of the Gospel?
2. Read verse 3 again. What does Paul mean when he says the Gospel is "of first importance?"
3. Now, read verses 4 and 5. What are the contents of this Gospel Paul is preaching?
4. Why was it so important for Paul to help the Corinthian church to focus on the Gospel? What do you think he was hoping to achieve?

So, as we think through 1 Corinthians 15:1-5, we see that unity in the church comes through being focused on the Gospel. Max Lucado says, "Everything about you finds its purpose in the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ." If that is so, then we can expand that out a bit more:

**Everything about *the church* finds its purpose in the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ!**

***Objective #3 – Read Ray Ortlund's book, *The Gospel: How the Church Portrays the Beauty of Christ* and prayerfully reflect on what it means to be a healthy church in your context?***

*Ray Ortlund writes, "The primary barrier to the ministry of the gospel through your church is not out in the world; the primary barrier is within your church itself. Every church, to some extent, clogs and hinders the gospel, even as we intend to advance the gospel. So each one of our churches should examine itself" (pg. 108-9).*

Questions for reflection:

- 1. According to the author, how can a correct understanding and application of the gospel produce a healthy church in your context? What is currently inhibiting a gospel-centered culture in your church context?*
- 2. What steps can you take to create a more fruitful gospel-centered culture among your members and leaders?*
- 3. What specific areas of ministry will you hope to see strengthened as the church culture begins to shift toward a gospel-centered culture?*

## Objective 4: Identify initial steps for leading a congregation toward greater Gospel centrality and health

Church health comes through Gospel focus. It is that simple. In future cohort sessions you will consider how to strengthen specific ministries and functions of your church and refocus everything on the Gospel and its transforming power.



For now, let's consider the current health of your church from your perspective. Imagine each of the following ministries were arrows in a target with the Gospel at the center. Where would they land? Using a scale from 1 (outer ring of target) -10 (bullseye) rate their Gospel focus.

- |                           |   |
|---------------------------|---|
| ___ Prayer                | ___ Partnerships w/ Other Organizations |
| ___ Preaching/ Teaching   | ___ Church Vision / Mission             |
| ___ Discipleship          | ___ Outreach Events                     |
| ___ Worship / Music       | ___ Mercy Ministries / Benevolence      |
| ___ Budget / Expenditures | ___ Adult Ministries                    |
| ___ Facility Usage        | ___ Church's Website, Social Media      |

Let's end by identifying two initial steps you can personally take to begin to lead your church towards greater Gospel centrality and health. Reflect on the above assessment and answer the following questions:

1. Which areas of your leadership and ministry need greater Gospel centrality?
2. Which ministry needs your immediate attention to become more Gospel-centered?

Be prepared to share your findings with your mentor and next cohort session.



### **Overview**

What is God's vision for the church? Gallons of ink have been spilled through the years helping churches answer this one question. In fact, you may have spent hours laboring over this question of vision yourself, hoping to discern a new, compelling, fresh vision for the church. The good news is that we don't have to create a vision for the church! In fact, it has already been given to us in God's Word! The reality is that no church belonging to Jesus Christ has a new vision; they all have the same exact one. What is unique to your congregation is the way you are to execute that vision with the resources and people entrusted to you. In contextualizing God's vision for the church, you will be introduced to some helpful questions as we think together about advancing God's mission and actualizing God's vision for His church.

### **Learning Path**

*Objective #1: Deepen your biblical understanding of how God leads his Church through vision.*

*Objective #2: Exegete your current context to discover needs and opportunities in preparation for Kingdom advance.*

*Objective #3: Develop a rough draft of a Vision Frame to help guide the local congregation through development of key ministry objectives.*

### **Revitalization Outcomes**

1. Pastor will seek to be a visionary leader for God's people.
2. Pastor will help leaders and members understand their current contextual needs and opportunities for Kingdom advance.
3. Pastor will develop a rough draft of a Vision Frame to communicate mission, values, strategy and measures for the next 3-5 years.

### **What are the primary resources you will utilize during this lesson?**

- [Seeing Your Context in Preparation for Kingdom Advance \(article\)](#)
- Demographic survey for your context (contact your local association, state convention or NAMB)

**Additional Resources related to objectives:**

1. Church Unique: How Missional Leaders Cast Vision, Capture Culture, and Create Movement by Will Mancini.
2. [Bellevue Baptist Church Vision Frame](#) (Link to Video)
3. Example Vision Frame (recohort.org)
4. Re:Vision: The Key to Transforming Your Church by Aubrey Malphurs and Gordon E. Penfold.
5. Visioneering: Your Guide for Discovering and Maintaining Personal Vision by Andy Stanley

***Objective #1: Deepen your biblical understanding of how God leads his Church through vision.***

God is a visionary

God has continually cast vision for his people. From Genesis to Revelation, Scripture is filled with repeated drips of God's vision for the future. He created all things with a plan and is renewing all things according to this same plan.

- Read Genesis 1-2 and Revelation 21-22
- Questions for reflection:
  - Based on your reading, how do you see God as a visionary?
  - How would you describe God's vision according to these verses? What other Biblical authors and verses would you reference to provide supporting evidence to your description?
  - If God is truly a visionary, what does this truth require of you?

God gives vision to his leaders

If God is a visionary, doesn't it make sense that his Church should also have a vision to advance God's greater vision on earth? As you reflect on how God guided his people to advance his Kingdom, he consistently gave vision to leaders and entrusted a group of people into their care.

- Read Genesis 12:1-9; 15:1-20 and Acts 1:1-11
- Questions for reflection:
  - Based on your reading, how did God provide vision for his leaders? How does he provide vision for his leaders today?
  - What stands out to you the most when you read the vision given by God in Genesis 12 & 15?
  - If you were to utilize Jesus' words in Acts 1 as a model for casting vision, what elements do you see that could be considered essential for casting vision to God's people today?

God's gives vision to His Church

Scott Catoe, Pastor of Slater Baptist Church writes, "The Great Commission is the cornerstone of evangelical Christian mission. It is the marching orders for God's people, who serve as soldiers and servants in the Kingdom of God." The words preserved for us in



Matthew 28 are our marching order from God to join Him on mission making disciples both in our context and everywhere else God is at work. God's mission is our mission beginning in the community we gather to worship God. The only question we must answer, is how are we best positioned to be on mission with God today and for the next 5 years?

- Read Matthew 28:16-20
- Questions for reflection:
  - How does God give His vision for making disciples to the gathered believers? Specifically, who did He utilize? What circumstances framed the moment?
  - Historically, how has this vision been applied to your context?
  - What 3 things must change for the members in your congregation to devote their lives to fulfilling God's mission in your immediate context?
  - What is required of you as God's leader mobilizing a congregation of worshippers to be on mission fulfilling the Great Commission?

### Personal Reflection for Your Leadership

These examples of vision and visionary leadership are preserved by God for our benefit as we seek to lead others to accomplish God's mission today in communities that need the hope of the gospel. Take a few minutes to reflect on what you read as you answer the following questions about your opportunities to lead today.

- What 1 or 2 things have you learned about casting vision and being a visionary leader for God's people as you reflect on these passages?
- How have these passages challenged or encouraged you as a leader of God's people?
- What next steps have you identified during your reflection time?

### ***Objective #2: Exegete your current context to discover needs and opportunities in preparation for Kingdom advance.***

For many of our churches, the only windows to our community are stained glass windows. While they hold a beauty of their own for those inside the building to enjoy, they can also prevent us from seeing through the windows and noticing the potential to advance God's Kingdom in our context. Just beyond the decorated glass is a community in need of hope and a people longing to be known and loved. Our Savior saw them.

***When He saw the crowds, He felt compassion for them, because they were weary and worn out, like sheep without a shepherd.” Matthew 9:36***

This exercise will help you see your context more clearly and begin to discover a fresh vision for making disciples with the resources and opportunities God has provided to your congregation.

- Read the article, *Seeing Your Context in Preparation for Kingdom Advance*
- Create a rough draft of the Fourfold Panoramic Assessment for your Church and Context by answering the following questions for each of the 4 sections:

<b>CHURCH INSIDER</b> <i>Who are we?</i>	<b>COMMUNITY INSIDER</b> <i>Who are our neighbors?</i>
<b>CHURCH OUTSIDER</b> <i>What are our partnership opportunities?</i>	<b>COMMUNITY OUTSIDER</b> <i>What are the trends &amp; needs in the community?</i>

○ **Church Insider: Who are we?**

- What are 3 or 4 unique characteristics for our congregation?
- What are the top 3 or 4 things we value as a congregation?
- What resources are currently available to accomplish God’s mission (people, finances, facilities, etc.)?
- When it comes to accomplishing God’s mission or making a difference in our community, what are we most passionate about? (Think about recent conversations or prayer requests and list 3-4 things)
- What 3-4 areas of brokenness in our community concern us most?

○ **Community Insider: Who are our Neighbors?**

Here’s a simple exercise to help rediscover your neighbors. Pick an afternoon or early evening to visit the neighborhoods or gathering places in your community and talk to people you meet. Ask the Lord to give you opportunities to have a neighborly conversation with 4 or 5 people and get to know more about their story. (If your context is more rural or if your mobility is limited, consider starting conversations at a local shopping center, park, ballfield, or anywhere people might gather.)

- Make a list of the people you met and make note of the things you learned during your conversations and their answers to the suggested questions found in the article you read.

○ **Church Outsider: What opportunities exist for ministry & partnership?**

Consider your opportunities for ministry by answering the following questions:

- What other religious entities/non-profits in the area are actively seeking to reach the community with the gospel? (May not all be SBC)
- What like-minded gospel partnership opportunities exist?
- What other organizations are seeking to meet the needs of the community (i.e. schools, community groups & associations)?
- What opportunities might our membership have to serve in any of the above-mentioned entities?

○ **Community Outsider: What are the trends & needs in the community?**

This last window utilizes demographic data and interviews to better understand your context for ministry. Based on the report(s) you reviewed, answer the following 3 questions:

- What did you learn about your community that surprised you?
- What captured your attention or concern most in the data?
- Based on the data, how could the church build bridges to any of the segments of your community and increase your opportunities to make disciples?

**List 3 options.**

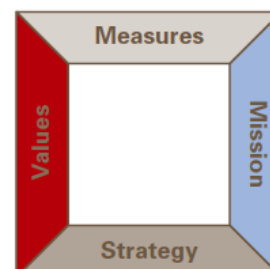
*(Example: with 1/3 of families with children being single-parent households, the church could provide monthly mother's day out evenings for single moms to drop off their children for a few hours of structured play while they went shopping or ran errands.)*

**Objective #3: Develop a Vision Frame for the local congregation.**

With the Fourfold Panoramic Assessment complete, let's frame your current reality and start to cast vision for making disciples in our context. We will reference a tool, the Vision Frame, introduced in the book *Church Unique* as a visual tool for communicating the key elements to a church's vision. The remainder of this lesson will walk you through how to create a rough draft of your vision frame in preparation for your next cohort session.

"The Vision Frame contains five components that define your church's DNA and creates a platform for all vision casting" (Unique, 113). These components will help you answer five critical questions: (see p. 113)

1. What are we doing? (**Mission**)
2. Why are we doing it? (**Values**)
3. How are we doing it? (**Strategy**)
4. When are we successful? (**Measures**)



## Developing a Vision Frame for the local church

1. Let's start with your *Mission* to answer the question, "*What are we doing?*"

God has already provided a mission to make disciples, but perhaps you'd like to phrase this eternal mission in a unique way for your context. Again, you are creating a rough draft, so don't overthink the exact wording. You can go back and refine it later.

➤ Our **Mission** is...

2. Now let's develop your **values** to answer the question, "*Why are we doing it?*"

**"Values are constant, passionate, sacred core principles that drive your ministry."**

**~Aubrey Malphurs**

- Values are a key part of the unique fingerprint of your church defining the character of your ministry and presence. What are 3-5 words that distinguish your church and ministries as an expression of your passion and principles?

*Examples might include (Worshiping families, Authentic community, Simple stewardship, Transformational discipleship, etc.)*

➤ Our **Values** are...

3. Let's consider your **strategies**. What 4 strategies will you need to accomplish your mission. This is where you seek to answer the question, "*How will we do it?*"

Remember there are often multiple ways to implement strategy, so don't get lost in the details of a certain ministry or program. Think about categories or priorities instead of events on a calendar (discipleship, worship, missions, fellowship, prayer etc.).

*Note: Since you are casting vision for the future, these strategies may not exist yet, so prayerfully consider what you need to do to accomplish the mission God has given you as a congregation.*

**"Clear strategy helps you do fewer things with better quality so your people can do less church activity and live more for Jesus." ~ Will Mancini**

- Our **Strategies** for accomplishing our mission are:

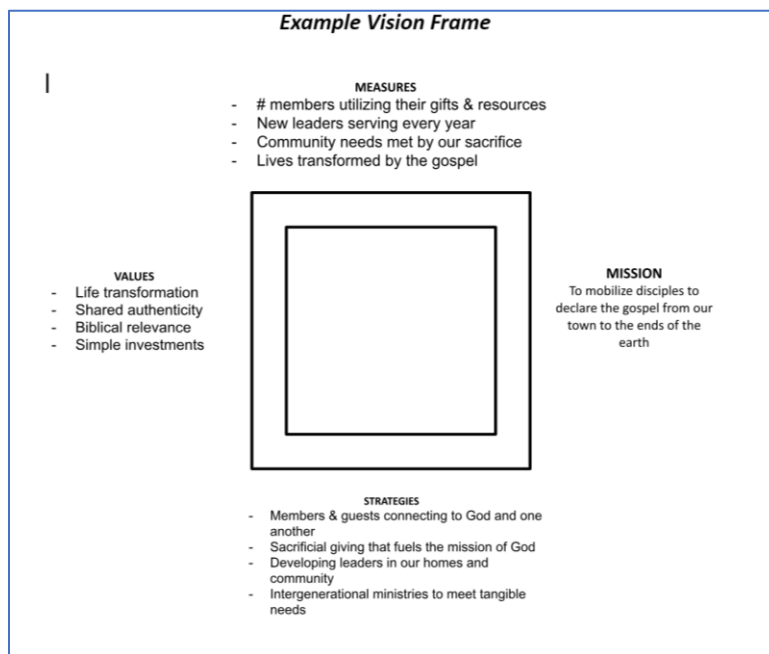
4. Lastly, let's consider your **measures** or those tangible outcomes that will help you determine how well you are accomplishing your mission. This is the fruit of your strategies that answers the question, "*When are we successful?*"

For years churches have tracked budgets, baptisms and attendance. These are good measures, but there are probably better measures for church health that are unique to your congregation that will help you gauge success.

What are 4-5 measures that you'll want to track to determine your mission progress as a congregation in your context? (*Examples: # people in small groups, # people volunteering in the community, % worshippers giving to mission partners, etc.*)

➤ Our **Measures** are:

Let's put all the pieces together in preparation for your cohort session. Use the blank Vision Frame worksheet at the end of this lesson to combine all the elements into a single visual.



*Example Vision Frame*

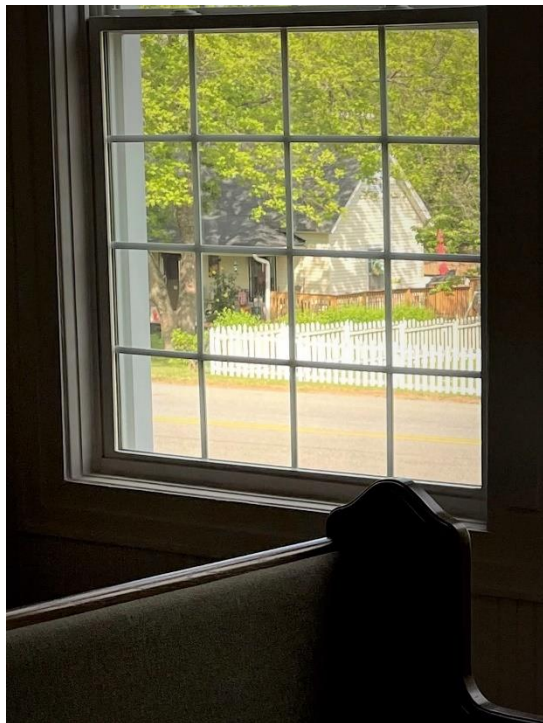
In preparation for your cohort, be prepared to share your Vision Frame in a way that is clear, concise, compelling, and contextual. Pretend you have less than 5 minutes to share your vision with a guest attending worship over Sunday lunch. How will you encourage them to join the vision at your church? Quick. Pointed. Inviting. Specific.

Great work on a lengthy lesson! We'll see you at the next cohort session.

**About the Author:**

James Nugent serves as the Director of Church Strategies at the South Carolina Baptist Convention. Before his role as a denominational servant, he served as Transitional Pastor, and Associate Pastor for several churches in South Carolina leading churches to find strength through making disciples in their community.

## Seeing Your Context in Preparation for Kingdom Advance



A glance through a window can reveal opportunities that are often overlooked by our focus on what is inside the building. When we shift our gaze to the world outside of the walled structure, our minds are captivated by the potential of the world around us. And if we allow our gaze to linger long enough, your mind begins to engage with the world beyond the window asking questions and thoughts like, “I wonder who lives there?” or “I never noticed that before.” These thoughts create interest and curiosity that God can use to connect us to our neighbors beyond the windows.

For many of our churches, the only windows to our community are stained glass windows. While they hold a beauty of their own for those inside the building to enjoy, they can also prevent us from seeing through the windows and noticing the potential to advance God’s Kingdom in our context. Just beyond the decorated glass is a community in need of hope and a people longing to be known and loved. Our Savior saw them.

**When He saw the crowds, He felt compassion for them, because they were weary and worn out, like sheep without a shepherd.”**

**Matthew 9:36**

I want to share a tool that has been helpful to many churches rediscover their community and their potential for making disciples with the resources and opportunities in their context, the 4 Windows Assessment. This tool has been adapted from the *Fourfold Panoramic Assessment* originally created by Keelan Cook.<sup>1</sup>

Through a prayerful assessment of four areas, a church can gain a better understanding of future options to continue its mission of proclaiming the hope of Jesus in its community and beyond.

<p><b>CHURCH INSIDER</b> <i>Who are we?</i></p>	<p><b>COMMUNITY INSIDER</b> <i>Who are our neighbors?</i></p>
<p><b>CHURCH OUTSIDER</b> <i>What are our partnership opportunities?</i></p>	<p><b>COMMUNITY OUTSIDER</b> <i>What are the trends &amp; needs in the community?</i></p>

*4 Windows Assessment Tool and Accompanying Questions*

<sup>1</sup> Adapted with permission from Keelan Cook, author of *Fourfold Panoramic Assessment: How to carefully examine your local church in its mission context*. 2017. Last accessed at [https://keelancook.files.wordpress.com/2020/08/6bd85-pnd\\_fourfold-panoramic-assessment-1.pdf](https://keelancook.files.wordpress.com/2020/08/6bd85-pnd_fourfold-panoramic-assessment-1.pdf)



### **Church Insider: Who are we?**

God has gathered the Church in a particular context for His mission and glory. There are unique qualities and characteristics about your congregation that can be leveraged for making disciples, but there are also barriers and limitations that hinder your effectiveness in fulfilling the Great Commission. Asking the question, “Who are we?” may require a bit of introspection, but the hard work will pay off later.

The Church Insider assessment seeks to answer questions to help a congregation discover their current identity and characteristics:

- What is unique about our congregation?
- What are the things we value as a congregation?
- What is our history and purpose?
- What resources are currently available to accomplish God’s mission (people, finances, facilities, etc.)?
- When it comes to accomplishing God’s mission or making a difference in our community, what are we most passionate about?
- What concerns us most about the current state of our community?
- What internal challenges are we facing that might limit our opportunities to advance God’s mission?

### **Community Insider: Who are our Neighbors?**

Most churches were originally established in a particular location to serve a designated community or mission field. Families that once lived in close proximity and tight-knit relationships have been replaced by families commuting from multiple communities with less opportunities to share life.

Who are your neighbors? We may know their name or a little information from social media posts, but do we really know them? Imagine you have recently been commissioned as a missionary and placed in your community to begin a new work. Who would you meet? How would you build bridges into their lives to share the gospel?

Here’s a simple exercise to help answer those questions. Pick an afternoon or early evening to visit the neighborhoods or gathering places in your community and talk to people you meet. Ask the Lord to give you opportunities to have a neighborly conversation with 4 or 5 people and get to know more about their story. (If your context is more rural or if your mobility is limited, consider starting conversations at a local shopping center, park, ballfield, or anywhere people might gather.)

Don’t act like a census worker filling out a survey, just be a neighbor and have a conversation. If you need questions to help overcome your introverted tendencies, consider the following (but don’t print them out and read them during your conversation!):

- What’s your story? (Name, ethnicity, approximate age, marital status, # children)
- How long have you lived in the community?
- Are you employed? What do you do?

- What challenges do you face each day/week?
- What do you think about attending church services?
- How can you pray for them or serve them?

When you get back home, after the conversation is finished, record a few notes in your phone to help you remember details. Based on your conversations and experiences, how would you describe your neighbors?

**Church Outsider: *What opportunities exist for ministry & partnership?***

Every community has a host of ways to improve lives and provide resources to its community members. Food pantries for the hungry, job training for the unemployed, reading buddies at the local school, etc. There are non-profit organizations and government providers in every community that could become partnership opportunities for the body of Christ to serve and share hope. Consider your opportunities for ministry by answering the following questions:

- What other religious entities/non-profits in the area are actively seeking to reach the community with the gospel? (May not all be SBC)
- What like-minded gospel partnership opportunities exist?
- What other organizations are seeking to meet the needs of the community (i.e. schools, community groups & associations)?
- What opportunities might our membership have to serve in any of the above-mentioned entities?

**Community Outsider: *What are the trends & needs in the community?***

This last window utilizes demographic data and interviews to better understand your context for ministry. This data should not only give you a clearer picture of your neighbors, but also how your community may be transitioning over the next 3-5 years.

- Review community demographics & trends
  - Who lives here? How many? What are their characteristics?
  - What needs exist that may be opportunities for ministry?
  - What are the projected trends over the next 5 – 10 years?
- How do the demographics compare to the current membership?

Free demographic data can be obtained by contacting either the [SC Baptist Convention Church Strategies Group](#), your local associational leadership, or the North American Mission Board.

**A View Through All 4 Windows**

Taking time to look through all four windows will hopefully help you and your congregation gain a clearer understanding of your current reality and the potential for making disciples in the future. As you have now seen the crowds and better understood their need for eternal hope, this 4-window view

has the potential to create a fresh vision for the future leading to new strategies for evangelism, discipleship, worship, prayer, etc.

As you consider the view through your 4 Windows, what vision is God developing for you to discuss further with your leadership? What strategies are needed to reach your full Kingdom potential as a church in your context?

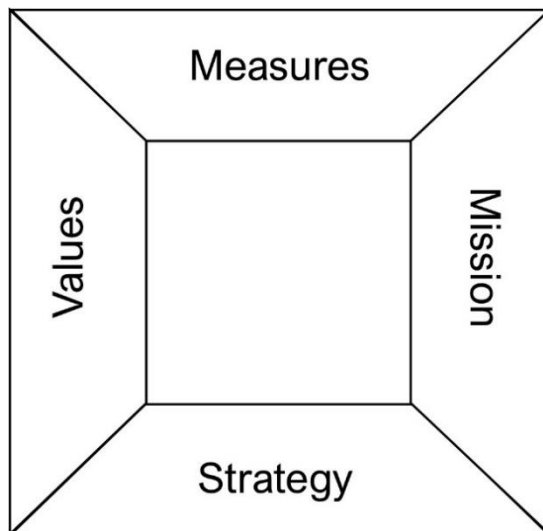
Now that you see the crowds and have compassion for them, ask the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest.

**Then He said to His disciples, “The harvest is abundant, but the workers are few. Therefore, pray to the Lord of the harvest to send out workers into His harvest.”**

**Matthew 9:37-38**

Article written by James Nugent, Director of Church Strategies, South Carolina Baptist Convention. 2024

## My Vision Frame



## Overview

We live in a day and age when evangelism and zeal for sharing the Gospel of Jesus Christ seem to burn hottest within those who are newer converts to the Christian faith. This demonstrates great and true hope for the life-change that one experiences when they're initially won over by the grace of God. However, this may simultaneously communicate the fallacy that God's grace becomes less exciting and less worthy of sharing over time.

In many churches, those who are perceived to be the more spiritually mature are also those who are more likely to be negligent to the task of evangelism. It could be argued that this is a result of the pastoral example they've witnessed over the years. Research estimates that the average pastor of an established church rarely ever evangelizes outside of his pulpit on Sunday mornings. Being that the Gospel is a message which should permeate the entirety of Christians' lives, and being that pastors are called to model what this lived-out permeation looks like, a lack of evangelistic zeal should be considered problematic in both the pastoral office and the church's membership.

In this exercise, we will look to God's Word and glean insight from J.I. Packer's *Evangelism and the Sovereignty of God* for the sake of helping to reignite an evangelistic zeal within pastors and members as they take steps to reengage their community with the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

## Learning Path

*Objective 1: Consider what God's Word demonstrates regarding evangelism. Then consider what obedience in modeling oneself after these demonstrations looks like.*

*Objective 2: Seek to bolster your evangelistic zeal by considering the dual agents of God's sovereignty and man's responsibility in the salvation of the lost.*

*Objective 3: Brainstorm and reflect on your life and ministry to cultivate personal, familial, and ministerial habits to help you, your family, and your church be more faithful in evangelism.*

## Revitalization Outcomes

- Renewed and increased pastoral faithfulness to the evangelistic task in his immediate context and community.
- In a practical sense, this exercise will also help pastors think of quality, everyday methods to make evangelistic zeal more natural for them and their flocks.

- Develop an action plan for mobilizing members of your church to serve needs within the community and share the hope of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

**Resources related to objectives:**

1. [\*Evangelism and the Sovereignty of God\*](#), by J.I. Packer
2. [\*9 Arts of Spiritual Conversations\*](#) by Mary Schaller & John Crilly
3. [\*Evangelism in a Skeptical World\*](#) by Sam Chan
4. [\*What if I'm Discouraged in my Evangelism\*](#) by Isaac Adams
5. [\*Conversion\*](#) by Michael Lawrence

**What is the primary resource that will be used in this lesson?**

The primary resource for this lesson is *Evangelism and the Sovereignty of God*, by J.I. Packer.

**Objective 1: Consider what God's Word demonstrates regarding evangelism. Then consider what obedience in modeling oneself after these demonstrations looks like.**

With a soft, introspective heart, consider how God's Word prioritizes evangelism and mission. Think about what type of evangelistic lifestyle would be pleasing to Him. In your considerations, evaluate your own life and habits to see if you're intentionally living in obedience to the truths and commands in Scripture. If necessary, repent and pray to ask God to help you be a more faithful evangelist. Lastly, ask Him to give you more opportunities for evangelism.

- Read Acts 17:16-34, with a focus on verses 16-17.
  - Ponder what is taking place:
    - How would you describe Paul's emotions and thoughts?
    - What does Paul do in response to what he sees?
    - Judging from the language of the passage, how consistent was Paul in his action?
    - Could Paul have made excuses to stop? If so, what excuses could have been made?
- Go back and read Acts 17:1-15 to gain context.
  - On whom was Paul waiting?
  - Why was he waiting on them?
  - Did he continue waiting when he saw the need for immediate action? Why or why not?

## Personal Application

- Read Acts 17:16-34 again.
  - Would you say that your heart, like Paul's, is *deeply distressed* when you observe sin and lostness around you? Why or why not? How can you foster a godly burden at sinfulness within your heart?
  - When you witness sin in your community, are you compelled to the point of action like Paul? Why or why not?
  - In knowing that sin certainly exists in your community, are you allowing time to be around sinners for the sake of evangelism? How are you doing this?
  - It's often an unintentional pitfall of pastors to wait until their churches are in good, healthy places before they begin thinking and acting evangelistically. There is some wisdom to this when considering the need to train members to evangelize well, but there is no merit for a pastor to wait on a certain ideal before engaging in evangelism himself. Paul didn't wait for his comrades to arrive in Athens. Do you find yourself making excuses for evangelistic apathy? If so, what excuses do you typically make? How can you begin putting those excuses aside to share the Gospel more faithfully beginning *NOW*?
  - Would you say that your evangelism reflects Paul's everyday consistency (verse 17)? If not, what can you do to be more consistent?

**Objective 2: *Seek to bolster your evangelistic zeal by considering the dual agents of God's sovereignty and man's responsibility in the salvation of the lost.***

Before reading J.I. Packer's *Evangelism and the Sovereignty of God*, answer the following questions:

1. Do you fully understand the role that mankind plays in God's salvific plan? If so, what is it? If not, what questions do you have?
2. What Biblical precedence is there for man to be faithful in evangelism? List at least 3 references from Scripture.

Read chapters 3 and 4 of J.I. Packer's *Evangelism and the Sovereignty of God*, then answer the following questions:

1. What is evangelism?
2. Why should you be compelled to evangelize?
3. What should be the outcome hoped for in evangelistic encounters?
4. What is a measurable way for you to set a realistic goal to do more evangelism?
5. What options do you have to provide accountability and encouragement to maintain your evangelistic fervor?
6. Who else within your sphere of influence could you equip for evangelism with the wisdom and truth you have gained from Objectives 1 & 2?



**Objective 3: *Brainstorm and reflect on your life and ministry to cultivate personal, familial, and ministerial habits to help you, your family, and your church be more faithful in evangelism.***

Personal planning

- List five non-Christians who you know or regularly encounter.
- List three places you go regularly where you can encounter non-Christians.
- Evaluate your calendar for the upcoming day/week/month.
  - Do your plans allow for you to frequently be around the non-Christians you listed - in the places you mentioned?
  - If not, consider what changes could be made to allow for more encounters with non-Christians.
- Pray and ask God to give you the necessary awareness, discernment, intentionality, and boldness to have regular evangelistic encounters.

Purposefully bolstering your family and church on toward evangelism

- How often do you share about your evangelistic encounters with members of your family or church? Might you need to do this more?
- Is there a time when your church is gathered (i.e. Wednesday night service, small groups, Sunday schools, etc.) that members can give evangelism reports? Celebrate and pray aloud for one another's evangelistic conversations.
  - If there is a time, what can you do to build this into your culture?
  - If there is not a time, what can you do to create one?

Purposefully creating opportunities to serve needs and share the hope of Jesus Christ

- What are the needs of the residents in the immediate context of the church? List five or more tangible, ongoing needs.
- What options exist for you to equip and mobilize members, small groups, or ministry teams to meet these needs? How could your membership regularly and repeatedly serve others and create opportunities to evangelize their community?
- How will you equip your members to implement a strategy for serving others and sharing hope, trusting that God will bring the increase of transformed lives?

- What will you do to help your members be intentional about leveraging their service of physical needs as supplemental to the service of people's more significant, spiritual needs?

Be prepared to share your thoughts and ideas generated by Objective 3 during your next cohort session. Until then, be prayerful and expectant as you continue to share the gospel in your context.

**About the Author:**

Trell Ross is currently leading the efforts to plant the Pioneer Church in Rock Hill, SC. He has been following the Lord for 15 years and has been serving the church in vocation for as a church planter and pastor. He's husband to Lauren and daddy to Oakland.

## **Overview**

Preaching and teaching God's word is essential in every season in the life of a church. This is especially true during church revitalization as you seek to feed a congregation starving for health and vitality. You are positioned to feed God's flock with a steady diet of truth that will be both encouraging and convicting. Through expository preaching you can address every problem in the church that has led to its decline and position the church to display the riches of God's grace beyond the walls of the sanctuary. Like preaching, your teaching ministry can strengthen small group and leaders through focused studies on key doctrines and values of the church. Both preaching and teaching are vital to every needed transition in the journey of church revitalization.

## **Learning Path**

*Objective #1:* Deepen your Biblical understanding for preaching and teaching as a means for strengthening the local church.

*Objective #2:* Evaluate your current preaching/teaching ministry in light of the current health of the church and wisdom from others.

*Objective #3:* Develop a long-range plan for preaching/teaching to nourish the flock and prepare members to implement God's vision for church revitalization.

*Objective #4:* Create a personal development plan to continue to grow as a teacher and expositor of God's Word.

## **Revitalization outcomes**

1. The pastor will understand the needs and concerns of the congregation.
2. Develop a preaching calendar to meet the needs and address any false teachings undermining the health of the congregation.
3. The pastor will design a strategy for continuing development as a teacher and expositor.

## **Primary Resource:**

[3 Benefits of Preaching Exegetically in Church Revitalization](#) (Article) by Mark Clifton

## **Additional Resources Related to Objectives**

1. [Facing Snarls & Scowls: Preaching Through Hostility, Apathy, and Adversity in Church Revitalization](#) by Brian Croft & James B. Carroll
2. [The Shepherd Preacher: A Practical Theology for Pastoral Exposition](#) by Mark Hallock
3. [8 Hours or Less: Writing faithful sermons faster](#) by Ryan Huguley

4. [Biblical Preaching class notes by Dr. Danny Akin](https://www.danielakin.com/biblical-preaching-class-notes-sec-13/) (Section 13 begins a series of lecture notes on expository sermon preparation). <https://www.danielakin.com/biblical-preaching-class-notes-sec-13/>

***Objective #1: Develop a preaching calendar to meet the needs and address any false teachings undermining the health of the congregation.***

1 Corinthians is one of the most interesting books in the New Testament. Paul wrote to the Corinthian church to address key doctrines and answer questions arising from a divided membership. If you squint your eyes slightly and adjust the cultural particulars, the church in Corinth is the spitting image of many churches today. A similarly potent mixture of false teaching, immorality, division, infighting, and all-around worldliness besets many churches today. These churches need radical surgery in order to save their lives and restore their health.

- **Read 1 Corinthians 1:18-25; 5:1-13; 6:1-8**

The following represents some of the issues and questions that Paul sought to address:

#### Divisions and Factions

Early believers saying, “I follow Paul,” or “I follow Apollos” (1:10-17). Even church attenders today are confused about who to follow placing more emphasis on the preacher than their Savior.

#### Sexual Immorality

Tolerance of sexual sin in the Corinthian church created serious issues that had to be addressed in an effort to keep the Bride of Christ pure and unstained by sin (5:1-13). Through direct confrontation in his letter, Paul instructed the Corinthian church to take the young man over to Satan so that his soul would be saved in the end.

#### Lawsuits Among Church Members

Love of money, power, greed, and selfishness created strained fellowship in God’s house (6:1-8). Paul make it clear that you cannot sue one another and be in right relationship with God.

#### Biblical Marriage

Our culture has glamorized fornication and adultery, so much, so that believers are confused over marriage and sexuality (7:1-40). Paul’s letter to the Corinthians was just as bold and countercultural as it is today.

#### Worship Preferences

Everyone has his or her worship preference! As a revitalization pastor, the church you serve has probably had lengthy discussions and arguments about worship style. The worship wars that plagued

the Corinthian church (chs. 11-14) have new battle fronts that need biblical, cultural, and ethical responses today.

### Evangelism & Apologetics

Paul sought to proclaim Christ to the Corinthians and teach them the truth of the Christ's life, death, and resurrection in the presence of false teachers and those who denied the truth. (ch. 15). He defended his faith and mobilized the church to engage others to proclaim Christ as risen from the dead. This is the work of any revitalization pastor. If the church is to be strengthened, her ability to proclaim the gospel and defend Biblical truths must be woven into all instruction.

#### ○ **Questions for reflection:**

1. What potential problems are you facing that need to be addressed through preaching and teaching in your effort to strengthen the congregation?
2. What fears do you have over engaging your congregation about these and other seemingly controversial or counter-cultural issues?
3. What in your personal life might give you pause to addressing any of these topics from the pulpit or a mid-week Bible study?
4. What other practices and/or attitudes currently exist in the congregation that need to be addressed through preaching and teaching?

***Objective #2: Evaluate your current preaching/teaching ministry in light of the current health of the church and wisdom from others.***

- Read the attached article *3 Benefits of Preaching Exegetically in Church Revitalization* BY MARK CLIFTON

Clifton states, "If we want God to bring new life to our churches, we must stop preaching simple moralistic sermons by pulling a story out of context week after week. Instead, let's preach all of God's Word."

#### ○ **Questions for reflections and application to achieve objective:**

1. What impact do you envision the practice of "preaching exegetically" will have on your ability as a preacher? On your life and ministry as a pastor?
2. Do you agree with Clifton's comments regarding addressing sin in the congregation through exegetical preaching? Explain your position.

3. Reflect on Clifton’s third point, “Your people will develop an ear for good preaching.” What goals do you have for your preaching ministry? What characteristics do you hope to develop in the lives of your hearers as a result of your faithful preaching?
  
4. What other benefits do you hope to see as you seek to lead the congregation through a season of revitalization?
  
5. How will you measure the effectiveness of your preaching ministry?

*Objective #3: Develop a long-range plan for preaching/teaching to nourish the flock and prepare members to implement God’s vision for church revitalization.*

Since God has given you a platform every week as an instrument of sanctification and nourishment for His people, let’s take time to develop a plan for preaching and teaching as fuel for the fires of revitalization in your context.

1. What are the main goals for your preaching/teaching ministry?
  
2. What opportunities do you currently have for teaching/preaching? How could they best be utilized to strengthen the faith of your members and increase understanding of Biblical truth? Consider making a chart to help categorize each opportunity.

What opportunities do I have to preach/teach?	How can it best be utilized to accomplish my goals?
Sunday morning (example)	Expository preaching through large portions of Scripture to sanctify and equip the Church

3. In light of the goals and opportunities you listed, what will be your preaching/teaching plan for the next 3, 6, or 12 months? Make sure to include each reoccurring opportunity in your plan (i.e. Sunday mornings, Wednesday nights, deacon’s meeting, etc.)
  
4. What other pastor/teachers will you utilize to in your plan? Go ahead and tentatively assign them to opportunities and/or dates?

**NOTE: Be prepared to bring a copy of your plan for each cohort participant to your next session.**

*Objective #4: Create a personal development plan to continue to grow as a teacher and expositor of God's Word.*

“Pastors often seek affirmation and encouragement by surrounding themselves with those who think they are the greatest preacher, most compassionate counselor, and strongest leader. In doing so, they avoid those who have less flattering thoughts of them. Instead, the solution is to have a supportive, but unimpressed evaluation of your preaching.”<sup>2</sup> Intentionally taking time to refine your preaching/teaching ministry will make you easier to listen to, but hopefully also yield lasting fruit by the power of the Holy Spirit.

### Developing a Personal Development Plan (PDP)

Every PDP has at least 3 components:

1. *Desired Outcome or Goal* – What will be the fruit of your development?
  2. *Action steps* – What specific things will you do to accomplish your desired outcome?
  3. *Time* – How much time will you allocate? How long will you continue?
- Regarding strengthening your preaching/teaching ministry, what are 2 or 3 goals you would like to obtain in the next 12 months?
  - What are the best actions steps needed to reach each goal? Consider your options and resources prayerfully before crafting your steps.
  - How long will it take? When would you like to see your first fruits from each goal?

### **Be prepared to share your plan with your mentor and cohort.**

*“Don't let them settle for less than God's best. Give them the substance of God's Word and not the candy of spiritual pep-talks. Don't trade the eternal reward of faithful labor for the momentary applause of popularity.”<sup>3</sup>*

#### **About the Author:**

**Andre M. Rogers** is the founder and pastor of Concord Fellowship Baptist Church in Columbia, SC. He also serves as Special Assistant to the President and the Director of Doctor of Ministerial Leadership at Columbia International University.

<sup>2</sup> Brian Croft & James B. Carroll, *Facing Snarls & Scowls: Preaching Through Hostility, Apathy, and Adversity in Church Revitalization* (Glasgow: Bell & Bain, 2019), 113.

<sup>3</sup> Croft and Carroll, 132.

# 3 Benefits of Preaching Exegetically in Church Revitalization

BY MARK CLIFTON

**Editor's note:** This post is excerpted from Mark Clifton and Kenneth Priest's book, *Rubicons of Revitalization*.

**Source:** [3 Benefits of Preaching Exegetically in Church Revitalization](#)



During the past 40 years of ministry, I've come to believe with all my heart that the preaching of the Word of God effectually revitalizes a church. It's not all you need to do in a revitalization, of course. You'll also need to pray, evangelize, serve the community, make disciples, and everything else you're reading about in this book. But all of that flows from effectual preaching of God's Word.

Preaching can easily become a rubicon or a boundary on your church's revitalization work. We limit the activity of God when we don't preach effectively. Only God's Word transforms lives. Only the gospel regenerates a heart and brings a dead man back to life. That's

why it's so important we pay attention to these boundaries of preaching in revitalization so you're not limiting God along the way.

## **The boundary of Bible Bingo**

Early in my ministry, I was guilty of Bible Bingo. I'd pick and choose passages to preach from week to week, with little rhyme or reason. I preached whatever I felt like preaching. Usually that meant I'd focus on an easy text. I had no continuity. I'd bounce from one passage to another, sometimes even pulling stories and verses out of context to make my point.

I don't want to admit how many times I preached an Old Testament passage by pulling out three or four verses out and building a whole sermon around them. Those sermons were completely disconnected from the context of what God was doing in the lives of the Hebrews.

It's not just me though. I know pastors who each week pick a few verses out of nowhere and preach on them. That's why I call it Bible Bingo. There's no continuity in it.

If we want God to bring new life to our churches, we must stop preaching simple moralistic sermons by pulling a story out of context week after week. Instead, let's preach all of God's Word.



Let me be clear though. You don't have to preach exegetically every Sunday. You may have a Sunday every once in a while when you preach topically, but you should have enough of a base that your congregants know the difference.

You also don't necessarily need to preach through entire books. For example, I don't recommend you preach through the book of Romans all at once. You'd likely take three or four years to do that right. Instead, preach a few chapters of Romans, then a few Psalms, and then go back to Romans.

Preaching exegetically has three great benefits for churches in the revitalization process.

- 1. It will develop our preaching.** It forces us to look at every text and not simply skip the tough ones. It makes us work harder as we preach, instead of just preaching the easy texts that everyone does. That hard work will make us better preachers over time.
- 2. Every problem in the church is revealed.** When you preach through the whole Bible, God will shine a light on sin. No one can say you're picking out sin just to single someone out. If you've been in a passage for three weeks and God uses Scripture to point out sin, it's not the pastor — *it's God*.
- 3. Your people will develop an ear for good preaching.** You're training your people to connect the theological dots. That'll have a long-lasting impact upon their spiritual growth.

From the book [\*Rubicons of Church Revitalization\*](#) by Kenneth Priest and Mark Clifton.

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### Overview

At the very heart of a church and believer's vision is a core commitment to fulfilling the Great Commission. There is an imperative goal of making disciples at the center of this vision. In a revitalization process the pastoral leader and the believers who make up the local church must make discipleship or "disciple-making" not just something they do, but something that is a part of who they are. Some would refer to this as nurturing the disciple-making DNA that is present in the pastoral leader as well as the believers in their local church. In this lesson, leaders will explore the biblical mandate for disciple-making and its application in a local church revitalization process.

### Learning Path

*Objective 1: Deepen your biblical understanding of discipleship*

*Objective 2: Describe strengths and opportunities for growth personally as a disciple-maker and create a personal plan for making disciples as part of your faith journey*

*Objective 3: Develop a reproducible plan to make disciples in the context of the local church*

### Revitalization Outcomes

1. Pastor will gain and apply a deeper understanding of the biblical mandate to make disciples as a way of life.
2. Pastor will apply a strategic plan to nurture his gifts/strengths and grow stronger in areas of growth opportunities as they pertain to personal and local church contexts.
3. Pastor will develop strategic goals for strengthening the discipleship and member care ministries of the local church.

### Resources related to objectives:

*Rediscovering Discipleship*, Robby Gallaty

*No Silver Bullets* by Daniel Im

### What are the primary resources that you will use in this lesson?

[Rediscovering Discipleship](#) by Robby Gallaty

[No Silver Bullets](#) by Daniel Im

## **Objective 1: Deepen your biblical understanding of discipleship**

Understanding the heart of our Savior in terms of walking with other believers along the lifelong journey of discipleship (or spiritual formation) is a key to strengthening our leadership in the context of the local church. As you consider the “Great Commandment” and the “Great Commission” in terms of your motivation and your mission, you can experience revitalization in your personal disciple-making as well as in the disciple-making strategy of the local church. A clear understanding and renewed focus will be invaluable.

- Think about your passion for people and the joy you experience as you pass the torch of the gospel on to others and then see them cross over from death to life in their salvation experience. Read Matthew 22: 37-40.
- A lot of people oversimplify these verses with the cliché “Love God, Love People.” This is descriptive of the main theme in this Great Commandment but take some time to really think about your own personal walk with God and describe the evidence of how you are personally living out this commandment.
- What are some barriers pastoral leaders face that hinder the application of this Great Commandment in the home, church, community, and among the nations?
- Describe some ways you have been able to overcome some of those barriers.
- How do Jesus’ words to the lawyer (and Pharisees and Sadducees) in these verses provide the foundational motivation for effectively living out the disciple-making command in the Great Commission?

When talking about discipleship goals, church leaders often describe their goal or mission by using the phrase “making disciples who make disciples.” Read the following Bible passage and respond to the prompts/questions provided: Matthew 28:18-20; Acts 5:27-28; Acts 9:31; Acts 17:4-7; Colossians 1: 6.

- What an interesting and encouraging progression of the Gospel! Write the phrases from these verses that describe the expansion of the Gospel after Jesus first gave the Great Commission to His followers and biblical discipleship began in its infancy.
- Using your own personal knowledge of the Scriptures and the study tools, complete a brief word study on the three verbs that modify the commandment to make disciples in Matthew 28:18-20 (go, baptizing, and teaching them to obey).

- Having thought deeply about the passion behind the Great Commandment and the priorities in the Great Commission, reflect on the most influential disciple-maker you have personally known.
  - Describe examples of how this person applied the principles in the Great Commission.
  - Describe the personal characteristics that gave evidence of a life influenced by the Great Commandment.
  
- As Jesus closes the Great Commission, He assures His followers that He will be with them as they/we fulfill the command. When you think of your personal disciple-making commitment, what are some strengths you can identify that equip you for your mission and what are some areas for growth?

## **Objective 2: Summarize and reflect on key characteristics of biblical discipleship**

In Gallaty's book *Rediscovering Discipleship: Making Jesus' Final Words Our First Work*, he writes: "Until disciple-making becomes **the** ministry of the church and not **a** ministry in the church, we will never see our discipleship efforts impact the world the way that Jesus envisioned." Maturing Christians who are making disciples will certainly be instrumental in navigating through changes that will strengthen a local church. Whether we are discussing healthy churches, families, marriages, communities, etc., a common theme and goal is spiritual and relational vitality. Disciple-making has a direct relationship to spiritual vitality as believers grow deeper in their relationship with God and relational vitality as believers walk along in their spiritual journey together.

- Read through chapters 1-7 of Gallaty's book and reflect on these questions:
  - List some insights or "take-aways" you gleaned from the chapters.
  - In chapter 4 ("Disciple-Makers are Made, not Born"), which characteristics of a biblical disciple-maker do you feel correlates to your personal strengths?
  - Which characteristics correlate to your personal growth opportunities?
  - What are your next steps in personal growth toward becoming a more effective disciple-maker?

### **Objective 3: Describe strengths and opportunities for growth personally as a disciple-maker and create a personal plan for making disciples as part of your faith journey**

There are foundational principles for change and moving forward toward a goal that requires us to assess our current status, our strengths and growth opportunities, and our desired goals. In the first two chapters of Daniel Im's book, *No Silver Bullets*, he offers an opportunity to assess personal and church "posture for growth" toward spiritual maturity along a discipleship pathway.

- Read through chapters 1-2 of Im's book *No Silver Bullets*
- Complete the assessments and respond to the Reflection Questions at the end of each chapter. Be prepared to share and apply these results with your mentor and in your cohort gathering.
- As you reflect on your personal discipleship journey, would you describe it as a process focused on "destination" or "direction" (see pages 22-25)?
- For the most part, has your faith journey been one of low accountability or high accountability?
- What shifts need to take place in your personal life to be more consistent and effective in making disciples in your context?

### **Objective 4: Develop a reproducible plan to make disciples in the context of the local church**

Strengthening a church's ability to make disciples begins with a pastor's commitment to be a disciple maker. Having reflected on your commitment to live out the Great Commission and the Great Commandment in the previous objectives, let's turn our attention to multiplying disciples in the congregation so that every member is built up and maturing in faith and function (*read Ephesians 4:11-16*).

- How would you describe the church's current discipleship ministry? What are its strengths? Weaknesses? Challenges?
- Which of the four "church personas" best describe the church you currently serve: Copy-Cat, Silver Bullet, Hippie, or Intentional Church? (see pp 27ff.)

- If you could start from scratch and design an effective means of making and multiplying disciples in your community, what elements would you include? How would you measure its effectiveness? Be prepared to share your plan with your cohort.
- As Paul states in Ephesians 4, discipleship and member care are natural compliments of one another. As members mature, they seek to build each other up and demonstrate sacrificial love to the whole body. What steps can you take to make sure these two congregational essentials work in tandem in your context? How can discipleship and member care be better tethered to each other?
- Specifically, how can you as lead disciple maker best set the pace for strengthening the discipleship ministry and member care in your context?

**About the Author:**

Bobby Howard serves as the Director of the Generations Group and Adult Discipleship at the South Carolina Baptist Convention. Before his roles as a denominational servant, he served as Associate Professor of Christian Studies and Student Ministry at Charleston Southern University and has served on local church staff as a Discipleship and Student Pastor at churches in North and South Carolina.

## Overview

We were created by God to worship. In fact, Paul commands us in Romans 12:1 to “*present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship.*” This means that every aspect of our lives is spent in worship to something or someone, and our aim as believers is to have that someone be Christ at all times. How do we teach our churches to embrace life in this way, let alone capture this principle in our weekly time of worship together? This lesson will be aimed at growing in our understanding of the corporate aspect of worship through Bible study, working with resources from experts in the field, and careful assessment of our practices. At the end of the lesson, you will create a plan of action on how to move forward with your church.

## Learning Path

*Objective 1: Deepen your biblical understanding of corporate worship*

*Objective 2: Develop a diverse definition of corporate worship from field experts*

*Objective 3: Listen to a story of church revitalization/merging and develop principles and practices for contextualization*

*Objective 4: Assess the strengths and weaknesses of your church’s approach to corporate worship by examining a standard worship service, Sunday bulletin or set list*

*Objective 5: Create a personal development plan for addressing needed changes in corporate worship*

## Revitalization Outcomes:

1. Pastor will identify needed areas of change and learn practical tips for exploring how to cultivate that growth as he seeks to lead a congregation through a revitalization process.
2. Pastor will create a corporate worship development plan under the guidance of a mentor.
3. Pastor will cultivate a deeper relationship with the worship leader by discussing each objective utilizing the discussion questions and next steps.

## Primary Resource:

- [Worship Essentials: Growing a Healthy Worship Ministry without Starting a War](#) by Mike Harland

### **Additional resources related to objectives:**

1. [Better Sundays Begin on Monday: 52 Exercises for Evaluating Weekly Worship](#) by David Manner
2. [Video: Worship in Church Mergers and Revitalizations](#) (Breakout from the 2020 Resourcing Worship Virtual Conference)

### ***Objective 1: Deepen your biblical understanding of corporate worship.***

I think every worship leader or pastor has had at least one thought like this during their time of ministry: *I just wish there was a book of the Bible called 1<sup>st</sup> Jubilations to tell us how to do corporate worship.* Unfortunately, that is not the case. What we find from scripture is that corporate worship is much more focused on who God is than what we do. The fact that the Bible does not prescribe every aspect of corporate worship for us gives us tremendous freedom to follow the Holy Spirit's leadership when we gather our folks together, and each church gives a unique reflection of the kingdom in their worship. This lesson will offer you six sections of Scripture that will help shape your view of the kind of worship for which God is looking.

#### Lessons from Moses:

After leading the Israelites out of Egypt, God chose to give His Ten Commandments to Moses (along with all the other laws). In the first few commandments, we get a picture of how God wants his people to relate to Him.

- Read Exodus 20:1-7
- Questions for reflection:
  - What kind of picture do these verses paint of God? How does that impact our posture in worship?
  - In what ways do we transgress what God commands here?
  - How do we respond in obedience to these commands in corporate worship?

#### Lessons from David:

The Bible tells us that David was a man after God's own heart. Long before he sat on the throne of Israel, David could be found out in the fields, tending the sheep, and writing songs of worship to God. Throughout his life, God would inspire David to write many songs that would be collected in the book of Psalms. While others contributed to this book, David was its most prolific author. In the Psalms, we see the full range of human emotion and experience being



raised to God in worship, prayer, and praise. Read the following psalms, taking note of the diverse types of themes and topics being expressed.

- Read Psalm 1, 3, 7, 8, 18, 51, 96, 121 (not to worry, most are fairly short)
- Questions for reflection:
  - What types of themes and topics were expressed in these psalms?
  - On any given Sunday, how does your church offer people who are feeling different emotions and experiencing different circumstances the opportunity to express themselves in worship along this spectrum?

#### Lessons from Isaiah:

As God's mouthpiece to rebellious people, Isaiah's job was far from enjoyable most of the time. But, as he is being used by the Lord, he is given a vision that would forever impact his life and every believer after him who has read this passage. Read the following excerpt and answer the questions.

- Read Isaiah 6:1-8
  - Summarize this passage in your own words:
  - How should Isaiah's experience be reflected in our times of corporate worship?

#### Lessons from Jesus:

The gospels are filled with teachings from Jesus on what the posture of our hearts and minds should be when it comes to following Him with our lives. All of this can be applied to how we approach corporate worship. In His interaction with the Samaritan woman at the well, we get a very distinct passage where Jesus is talking about worship.

- Read John 4:1-26
  - What does Jesus mean when He says, "worship in spirit and truth?"
  - In your church, do you seem to err on either the "spirit" side or the "truth" side? If not, how do you seek to incorporate this verse into your approach?

#### Lessons from Paul:

As Paul traveled around helping to establish and strengthen new churches in the well-known world, an area that needed to be addressed, was worship. The book of Romans offers us an incredible picture of the gospel in its first eleven chapters, reminding us of why we worship. Beginning in chapter 12, Paul transitions to the practical implications for life for people who believe in Christ.

- Read Romans 12:1-2
  - What does this passage mean for your life? The lives of your church members? How is this reinforced during corporate worship?

### Lessons from Eternity:

The book of Revelation offers us encouraging glimpses of worship in eternity. Conclude your time of study by thanking God for the future that awaits us and by asking for help of the Holy Spirit in shaping your corporate worship in expectation of this time.

- Read Revelation 7:9-12

### Pastor and Worship Leader Reflections and Next Steps

As pastors, we must admit that sometimes we forget the complexity of engaging people into a lifestyle of worship that culminates in congregational musical expressions on Sundays. Most of us have worship leaders that work extremely hard to lead our people well.

As a next step challenge, take your worship leader or worship volunteers to lunch. Over lunch, you have four objectives:

1. Enjoy friendship and fellowship with these people.
2. Share what you learned during your time of study.
3. Take time to specifically share areas of the worship ministry for which you are thankful.
4. Ask questions to your leader or team about their current perceptions of the ministry.

### ***Objective 2: Develop a diverse definition of corporate worship from a field expert that covers a wide variety of worship styles***

In Mike Harland's book, *Worship Essentials: Growing a Healthy Worship Ministry without Starting a War*, he says, "God has revealed himself to us and given mankind enough information about him to provoke a response of worship" (24). We would certainly agree with that statement, but the problem most of us face is: "How do I do that? How should our church approach that?" With years of worship ministry under his belt in the local church and with Lifeway Worship, Mike articulates a simple, yet compelling vision for how to accomplish biblical, Spirit-filled worship in your church.

- Read [\*Worship Essentials: Growing a Healthy Worship Ministry without Starting a War\*](#) by Mike Harland

## Personal Reflection on Your Church

- What insights did you gain from your reading of *Worship Essentials*?
- Was there a section that really challenged you as a pastor/leader? How will you respond to the challenge?
- Chapter 5 talks about making true disciples through worship ministry. How is your church doing at that? Where might this ministry need to change/adapt?
- How is your relationship with your worship leader? Do you work/plan services together or do you operate in silos? How might your relationship need to change to embrace a team approach to worship leadership?
- What distractions are currently getting in the way of your church experiencing corporate worship in the way God designed it? What steps will you take to address these issues? (Chapter 9)

## Pastor and Worship Leader Reflection and Next Steps

Over time, there may have been times where you and your worship leader have not completely agreed on something. Unfortunately, over the years of ministry, this can lead to bitterness, resentment, and lack of trust. We are fooling ourselves if we think our churches cannot sense this from their pew on Sunday morning.

Considering the challenges of worship ministry, your challenge is to take some time to pray and ask for the Holy Spirit to reveal any area of your heart that is harboring something against your worship leader and their ministry. Then, schedule a time to discuss these items with your worship leader, repent of any sin, and give them an open forum to share as well. This type of reconciliation will go a long way to healing your church and your personal relationship.

### **Objective 3: Listen to a story of church revitalization/merging and develop principles and practices for contextualization**

How do you change the worship culture of a church that refuses to engage in meaningful ways on Sunday mornings? How do you reshape theology that leads to life-giving doxology? How do you introduce new songs and elements without starting a war? Can we really serve every generation in the church with undistracting excellence? The following video is an interview with Matt Freeman, Associate Director of Worship and Music at the South Carolina Baptist Convention. He tells the story of planting Mill City Church and their most recent journey of

merging with First Baptist Church of Cayce. While the discussion is about mergers and revitalizations, the leadership of Mill City planned their approach to corporate worship based on biblical truths and theological principles, and then they contextualized for their specific church family. As you watch, engage with the questions below on how to best apply this teaching within your own congregation.



<https://vimeo.com/438559529/f918b92588>

### Questions for personal reflection:

- Do you know the story of the church that you serve? What events from the past mark the area of corporate worship? How did they come to their current identity?
- What were some of the big principles that Matt mentioned for casting a biblical vision for corporate worship? Which one do you see most reflected in your church? Which one would represent an area where your church needs to grow?
- What about your church would need to change to shift worship culture?
- What challenges might you face along the way? How could you plan ahead to handle these situations?
- Oftentimes, we focus so much on the “what” that we forget the “why.” Why is this so important for your church family? How can you begin to communicate this vision to the people you shepherd?

### **Objective 4: Assess the strengths and weaknesses of your church’s approach to corporate worship by examining a standard worship service, Sunday bulletin, or set list**

In *Better Sundays Begin on Monday: 52 Exercises for Evaluating Weekly Worship* by David Manner, he articulates that churches need a clear evaluative process by which they can assess every aspect of their corporate worship experience, from the way people arrive in their cars, to the parking lot, to the information they are handed on the way out the door.

While the entire book is a great resource for weekly growth and evaluation in this area, the Worship Evaluation Questionnaire in Appendix 1 is a wonderful way to consider your church’s

worship experience. The author, David Manner, has graciously allowed us to use it as a resource free of charge. You can either think back on a recent worship service or you can use the rubric to evaluate your church this coming Sunday. You may want to ask several trusted church members to evaluate alongside you over a period of a month.

- [Complete the Worship Evaluation Questionnaire from Appendix 1 of \*Better Sundays Begin on Monday\*](#). Once completed, use the information to answer the following questions.

### Personal Reflection for Your Church

- What are strengths in your worship experience that you identified that can be used as pillars upon which to build?
- What areas stuck out as overlooked issues that need to be addressed?
- Did you discover any information that surprised you?
- Were there any areas of evaluation that you had not considered as vital to the corporate worship experience?
- If you had anyone else from your church fill out the evaluation, what did you learn? What responses were similar? What was different?

### Pastor and Worship Leader Reflection and Next Steps

Ask your worship leader to fill out the worship evaluation questionnaire. After doing so, trade notes with him/her so that you can read each other's assessment. Then, each of you should identify the five key opportunities that your church has for growth and change based on the other person's assessment. Compare your notes and assess how closely your motives and purposes are to each other.

**Objective 5: Create a personal development plan for addressing needed changes in corporate worship.**

Now that you have walked through the first four objectives, let us work to create a plan of attack to outline the next steps needed for your church. Since you and your worship leader have worked together to re-establish your relationship and a teamwork approach, this activity will be accomplished together. Church revitalization inherently means that some things are going to have to change, but it does not have to happen all at once. Get your staff and lay leadership on board with these changes first, and then you can work to create a priority list for how to introduce these changes in the corporate worship setting. Contextualize the following steps in a way that makes sense for your church.

Step 1 – Prayerfully consider the first four objectives and ask God to reveal the needed changes

Step 2 – Talk through what you have learned from your worship leader and create a priority list

- What points do you agree?
- Where do you disagree?

Step 3 – Alongside your worship leader, introduce these ideas to the staff/lay volunteer team

- Cast a compelling vision for “why”, then let your team speak into the “how” and “what”.
- Create a priority list of ideas, and then plan how to schedule and accomplish them.
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Step 4 – Implement each change with scheduled time for the whole team to debrief

- What is the change?
- How do we determine whether or not it was successful?

Step 5 – If you have any members take the Worship Evaluation Questionnaire, ask them to take it again 6-12 months later or on an annual basis

- Take time to celebrate with your team the areas where noticeable growth has occurred.
- If a problem remains, prayerfully re-evaluate how to address the issue.

**About the Author**

Matt Freeman serves as the Associate Director of Church Worship and Discipleship while also serving as Worship Leader at Mill City Church of Cayce, a reSTART merger in Cayce, South Carolina.

# Developing Leaders by James Nugent



## **Overview**

John Maxwell once said, “Everything rises and falls on leadership.” In the realm of church revitalization, we can easily see the impact poor leadership has had on a congregation’s Gospel witness, vitality, and unity. As you seek to redeem the mission and reclaim lost ground, developing leaders will be essential to implementation. Through this lesson you will have the opportunity to develop specific strategies for key areas of ministry so that the collective leadership potential rises and members are equipped for Kingdom impact in your context.

## **Learning Path**

Objective 1: Gain a deeper Biblical understanding of developing leaders in a church revitalization process

Objective 2: Reflect on wisdom for developing leaders in a specific area in preparation for creating a strategic process for strengthening leadership

Objective 3: Develop a small group of men in the church for greater leadership in their home, church, and community

Objective 4: Identify and design a pathway for leadership development for key leaders essential to the revitalization process

## **Revitalization Outcomes**

1. Pastor will identify which key leadership principles are currently needed for developing leadership at all levels in the local church.
2. Pastor will enlist three men to disciple and develop and a means for strengthening their leadership capacity in preparation for future leadership roles.
3. Pastor will develop a strategy for developing key leadership in the congregation.

**Note:** The primary resource will be chosen from one of the recommend resources below. (See Objective 2)

## **Resources related to objectives:**

- [\*Prepare Them to Shepherd: Test, Train, Affirm, and Send the Next Generation of Pastors\*](#) by Brian Croft
- [\*On Being a Leader for God\*](#) by Warren W. Wiersbe



- [Building Leaders: Blueprints for Developing Leadership at Every Level of Your Church](#) by Aubrey Malphurs and Will Mancini
- [On Being a Deacon: The Marks, Duties, and Joy of Servant-Leadership](#) by Mark Hallock, Jim Noble, Scott Thistlethwaite, and Phil von Kaenel
- [Leaders Who Last](#) by Dave Kraft
- *Lead: 12 Gospel Principles for Leadership in the Church* by Paul Tripp

**Objective 1: Gain a deeper Biblical understanding of developing leaders in a church revitalization process**

With the diversity stories of Biblical leaders preserved for our benefit and application, we could spend substantial time learning principles to develop leaders to serve God’s Kingdom. Consider the wealth of truth in the Gospels as you read how Jesus intentionally invested his life into a few men who would be entrusted to advance the mission of God in multiple contexts and cultures. For the sake of our study, we have only selected a few passages for you to consider as you seek to gain a deeper understanding of how you can develop leaders to advance God’s mission starting in your context.

**Read: Exodus 18:10-27; Acts 14:19-28; Ephesians 4:1-16; 2 Timothy 2:1-7**

Questions for reflection:

- What principles did you learn from your study of these passages?
- Based on your readings, why do you need to develop leaders to serve others and advance God’s mission?
- As you read how Moses, Paul, or Timothy sought to develop leaders, what did it require of them? What will it require of you?
- What were some of the challenges these Biblical leaders faced in seeking to develop other leaders?
- How is God leading you to respond to these passages so that other leaders will be developed to advance God’s Kingdom?

## **Objective 2: Reflect on wisdom for developing leaders in a specific area in preparation for creating a strategic process for strengthening leadership**

While there are many principles and strategies for developing leaders in the local church, the steps you take will probably vary based on the position and expectations of leaders. For example, a process for developing deacons would look much different than the way a pastor would develop volunteer ministry leadership. So, in this section we want to give you an opportunity to focus on a specific group of leaders by selecting one of the recommended resources and utilizing the questions in this section to help you make the most of the content.

**Which leaders in your church will be the focus group for your assignment (deacons, volunteer ministry leaders, discipleship leaders, ministerial staff, etc.):**

**Which of the recommended resources did you choose to review?**

### Questions for reflection:

- What key principles or truths were the most helpful in your pursuit to develop the leaders you selected?
- What was your greatest takeaway?
- What were one or two specific teachings that challenged you the most?
- What questions were you left with that you still need answered? Who are potential sources of additional wisdom to help you find answers?
- How will you utilize what you learned from this resource to develop your leadership focus group? What is your plan?

*Objective 3: Develop a small group in the church for greater leadership in their home, church, and community.*

So much of leadership development in our churches is built on a foundation of making disciples of those who may become potential leaders. Similar to a minor league team's farm system, your intentional efforts to disciple others will not only grow them to love and proclaim Jesus, but also to lead others well. A husband leading his wife and family, a small group facilitator leading other church members, or a business leader reflecting Christ in a company's conference room – all are the result of others investing in their lives.

Most churches in need of revitalization are left with a deficit of healthy leadership, especially godly men with a Kingdom perspective. Mark Clifton in *Reclaiming Glory, Revitalizing Dying Churches* suggests a focus on reaching young men as one of the “Six Replanting Imperatives.” But it's not just men that need to be developed as leaders. Imagine what impact godly women could have on a church revitalization process! So, let's consider your options.

Questions for Reflection:

- What vision do you have for developing men into leaders?
- What are the names of 10 men (under the age of 40) you currently know or have a relationship with that you could potentially disciple and develop?
- If some of the above listed men were willing to meet with you as a small group, how would you seek to invest in their lives and disciple them to lead their family and others well?
- What options do you have for developing women as disciple-makers, mentors, and leaders?
- What would be five potential benefits of launching a co-ed small group aimed at developing leaders essential for ministry and mission? Who could you invite? How would you invest your time?

**Objective 4: Identify and design a pathway for leadership development for key leaders essential to the revitalization process.**

You have reflected on Biblical truths for developing leaders, considered wisdom from a selected resource, and started to create a potential pipeline for future leaders by discipling younger men. Let's end our time with a big picture pipeline that results in continual deployment of future leaders.

Your goal is to create a pathway for discovery, development, and deployment of any future leader in your congregation.

Here is the scenario to work through:

*Sarah and John are newlyweds in their 20's with no kids (unless you count the designer breed dog). They have recently started attending worship after one of your deacons met them at a community event and invited them to worship with them. They both seem interested in sticking around and have some religious background, though they would admit that church has never been a priority in their lives.*

- What is the potential pathway for moving this couple from crowd to key leadership positions in your congregation? What steps do they need to take? Who else would be involved in their lives?
- Let's say God calls John to pastoral ministry at some point in the above process, how will you develop and deploy him? What investment will be made in Sarah's life in preparation for ministry? How will this change the above pathway to developing leaders?

**Be prepared to share your pathway with your cohort and mentor.**

### Overview

Church revitalization cannot occur without qualified pastors leading God's people to accomplish God's mission in a local context. This requires the leadership of the Holy Spirit to guide God-installed leaders to learn the best ways to lead the church through what often begins as a maze of complexity handcuffing leaders and members from accomplishing God's mission. Under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, the decisions you are led to make will be based on information you gather, a lot of prayer and the faith to actually make the decision.

### Learning Path

*Objective 1: Deepen your biblical understanding a leader's call to make decisions in challenging circumstances*

*Objective 2: Strengthen a pastor's ability to lead changes often associated with church revitalization in ways that honor God and reflect Biblical truth*

*Objective 3: Assess the effectiveness of the congregation's process for making decisions*

*Objective 4: How does a leader develop a team that he can trust to be objective in revealing the best decision for the church?*

### Revitalization Outcomes:

1. The Pastor (leader) will learn how he can navigate (with God's guidance) the local church: its structure, decision making process, community surrounding the church, next steps to move the church forward.
2. The Pastor will develop a strategy to increase his understanding of the church and his skills to notice necessary situations to aid in his decision making.

### Resources Related to Objectives

1. [Five Voices: How to Communicate Effectively with Everyone You Lead](#) by Jeremie Kubicek and Steve Cockram
2. [Can These Bones Live](#) by Bill Henard
3. [Rubicons of Revitalization](#) by Mark Clifton and Kenneth Priest
4. [Leading Turnaround Churches](#) by Gene Wood
5. [Leading Change with the Word](#) by Mark Hallock (blog series)

### Primary Resource

[Leading Change with the Word](#) by Mark Hallock (blog series also provided at end of lesson)

## **Objective 1: Deepen your biblical understanding of a leader's call to make decisions in challenging circumstances.**

### **Learning from Abraham:**

Abraham was called by God to leave his country, family, and his father to a land that God would show. This was a decision that would be based on faith, his faith in the God of the Bible. This is a risky decision not knowing the country to which he was being led. What dangers would be before them and how would they be received in a foreign land? These were all factors that would weigh in his decision to follow God's command. A leader's decision will have powerful consequences on himself and those he is to lead.

- Read Genesis Chapters 12-22
- Questions for reflection:
  - What internal & external challenges did Abraham face when he needed to make important decisions?
  - What key truths are revealed for leaders and Christ-followers in the passages?
  - What were the truths that enabled Abraham to make difficult decisions?
  - In Genesis 15, God makes a covenant promise to Abraham, but Abraham again demonstrated a lack of faith and trust. How have you responded similarly when faced with having to make key decisions in ministry?

### **Lessons from Paul:**

Paul, who was a staunch advocate of Judaism and against "The Way" (Christianity) made a radical decision to follow Christ. Paul's decision would affect his life, the early church, and Christianity forever. He would be despised by Jews who were formerly his allies, weathered suspicions, and allegations by followers of Christ. He would become the most prolific New Testament writer, penning letters to tribes near and far about his love for Christ and Christ's love for the world. Paul persisted in teaching others about his faith.

- Read Acts Chapters 9, 25, 26.
- Questions for reflection:
  - Based upon your reading and your knowledge of the Apostle Paul, describe what he had to consider with every decision he made?
  - Upon your reading and reflection what was the personal cost of his decisions?
  - What truths and motivations compelled Paul to make difficult decisions?

Reflecting on your study concerning the decision making from the life of Abraham and Paul, how would you relate these to your decision-making process?

- What similarities exist between these leaders and your call to lead in your context today?

- What would you list from your reading that has challenged and encouraged you in your personal decision-making process?
- What are the next steps you need to take to improve your capacity to lead and make decisions regardless of the cost?

**Objective 2: Strengthen a pastor’s ability to lead changes often associated with church revitalization in ways that honor God and reflect Biblical truth**

Read: [Leading Change with the Word](#) by Mark Hallock (blog series)

Answer the following questions for reflection and application:

- In what ways did Mark’s wisdom encourage you in your pursuit to lead a church in need of revitalization?
- What wisdom did you gain from Mark’s perspective and experience?
- How did this resource help equip you to improve your polity and processes?
- How could this series better equip you to lead change as you continue your revitalization journey?
- What questions did this resource create that you still need answers for?

**Objective 3: Assess the effectiveness of the congregation’s process for making decisions**

Every congregation has a built-in process for making decisions (polity). Some churches operate like a family and decide how to spend money or plan events with very little structure. Others, well let’s just say the way they make decisions is often more important than the decisions themselves. Understanding the difference and how to navigate polity will be instrumental to any revitalization process (and your tenure as pastor).

Take some time and answer the following questions to better understand your church’s process for making key decisions.

- Read the By-laws and make note of key leadership positions and processes involved in making decisions. If your church has a policy manual, read it as well.
- Imagine you need to replace the 20-year-old sound system. You have significant funds in a designated building renovation account that hasn’t been touched in 10 years. What process would the church have to utilize to replace the sound system at an estimated cost over \$10K?

- You have a vision to start an after-school ministry to make better use of the church's gym and fellowship hall. What process will you have to take to implement your vision with church affirmation and support?
- The church has a history of selecting willing men to serve as deacons to meet the 12-man roster required by the bylaws. Your church barely has 12 men, much less 12 qualified men to serve as deacons. What process will you have to take to implement a transition to a Biblical model of deacon ministry and change the bylaws to support it?

#### Assessment questions:

- Who are the key influencers in your church that need to be informed in any major decisions?
- What decision-making barriers or frustrations have you encountered during your tenure?
- Are committees and ministry teams empowered or micromanaged or somewhere in between?
- What else is not working when it comes to making or implementing decisions?
- Choose one barrier or frustration listed above. What options do you have to remove it in a way that is healthy and God?

#### **Objective 4: How does a leader develop a plan for making good, right, and Biblical decisions?**

This is the place where you begin to understand the church. Every church has those people who influence the decisions the church makes or has made, good or bad. Your knowledge of who these people are, and their influence will help you as you lead them and the church family into the revitalization process. Also, an understanding of how decisions are being made and have been made will help you develop a road map to navigate as you move ahead under the leadership of the Holy Spirit.

#### **Points You Need to Consider**

- Get to know your people.
- Listen to them and discern their hurts, concerns, hopes, and dreams.
- Let them know that you genuinely care, and you are truly blessed and honored that God has led you to them during this time of revitalization.



- As you get to know the people, those who are the influencers will become known. Do not ignore these influencers, they are probably there because there has been a vacuum of leadership in decision making.
- Remember God has placed you there to shape and direct not drive and dictate. You will have a God given opportunity, as you follow and shape the future decision process of the church. God has direction, God has a process, and you are the instrument He will use.

### **Developing a plan for making good and right Biblical decisions**

Based on your assessment of the congregation's current polity, let's help you move toward healthier models for making decisions that still celebrate our Baptist heritage and values.

- Based on your assessment and identified barriers, what needs to change to enable the congregation to be more effective as it seeks to make decisions in the future?
- What are your options for moving toward a healthier process?
- What steps will you need to take to create a better polity to support your vision and values as a congregation on mission?
- Who else can assist you as you work through any future transitions in polity and processes?

## Extra Credit

I am going to give you references that have helped in my decision-making plan. Always remember with these plans you are allowing the Holy Spirit to guide you personally. Who knows the church and what it needs better than Holy God?

I know you are very busy, and the challenge will be to stay focused and disciplined in staying on task. Here are three articles and one book to use as helpful resources:

1. [“Four questions to ask when you want to make the right decision”](#)
2. [“Five principles for biblical decision making”](#) by David Jeremiah
3. [“Principals for decision making and the will of God”](#) by Rory Tyer
4. [Better decisions, fewer regrets: 5 Questions to Help You Determine Your Next Move by Andy Stanley](#) (Zondervan)

### **About the Author**

Rob H. White is a retired after over 40+ years of ministry, who has done numerous Transitional Interims. He is the founder and president of Rob White Ministries, Inc. and the Ambassador to South Carolina for the North American Missions Board.

## Primary Resource for Lesson 11: Polity & Processes

### Leading Church Change with the Word (part 1)

This blog series originally appeared on Mark Hallock's blog, [Preach Lead Love](#), and was compiled into one document for the purposes of RE Cohort.

Leadership. In virtually every area of life, people want to grow in their leadership. In fact, today there are more books, blogs, podcasts, conferences, and other resources focused on leadership than any other time in history.

Typically, these resources focus on such areas as how to communicate a clear and compelling vision, how to put together and develop a well-thought-out strategy, and how to identify and develop those who will follow the vision and strategy we create.



There are helpful nuggets here, no doubt. But when it comes to leadership in the church, rarely do these various resources offer much pertaining to the unique challenges faced by pastors called to lead change in the context of a plateaued or declining church — a church often filled with folks who have no real desire to make the changes necessary to turn their church around.

What is a pastor to do? How do we lead change in an effective, yet healthy and God-honoring manner in these congregations?

#### **First Things First: Who Has the Power?**

As with any struggling organization, in order to lead change effectively, we must first determine who or what holds the power, authority and greatest influence in a congregation. Remember this: whoever or whatever has the most authority and greatest influence in a church is the “force” that actually makes change a reality. We can have the greatest vision, the clearest strategy, the finest programs and the best communication and still not be effective in leading change in a healthy way, if power and authority lie in the wrong place or in the wrong hands.

#### **Here are a few examples of where power and authority is often found in dying churches:**

- In a difficult group of disgruntled church members
- In a broken committee that is no longer effective but still has power and authority
- In a tradition of some kind (whatever that tradition is)
- In the programs the church was committed to during their “glory days” as a congregation
- In a former beloved pastor and “the way he did things”
- In outdated by-laws

I could go on and on. The point is this: If the ultimate power and authority in a church lies in any of these, change will be very difficult to lead. Difficult enough that long-haul, sustainable healthy change will most likely not happen. The truth is, the large majority of declining churches fall into this category. The power and authority is in the wrong place, which is one of the contributing factors for why they find themselves in the spot they are in. Is there any hope to turn this around?

Let me just say, I do believe there is hope. However, something significant must happen. While it may sound obvious on the surface, I believe the only way to lead long-haul, sustainable, healthy change in a context like this is to establish or reestablish the Bible as the sole and final authority in every area of a church's life, ministry and mission. Someone might ask, "But don't these churches already believe in the power and authority of the Bible?" Yes and no. While many dying churches say they believe in the power and authority of the Bible, functionally the Scripture has very little influence in the life and decision making of the congregation.

A dying congregation that no longer holds to the Bible as the inspired Word of God, sufficient and authoritative in all matters of faith and practice, will be very difficult, if not impossible, to revitalize. Why? Because the Lord speaks through His Word. His Word has power, not only to transform the lives of individuals, but to transform congregations. Whether it be through preaching the Word each and every week, or seeking to align the ministry strategies and church leadership structures with biblical truth, if the congregation is not committed to the Bible as the authority, you have a big problem.

## Part 2

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In this series of posts, we are considering how to effectively lead change in a church that struggles with change, even positive change. Specifically, we are considering how to lead healthy change with the Word of God in a plateaued or declining congregation.

In this post we are considering the absolute importance of a congregation sharing particular doctrinal and practical (ministry practice) convictions regarding the Bible itself. Ultimately, how a church and its leaders approach God's Word will either fuel or hinder its ability to experience new life and growth.

Here's what I mean:

While a declining church and its remaining leaders may affirm the authority of Scripture in its official doctrinal statement, this doesn't mean that functionally the Scriptures are the "true" authority in matters of ministry and decision making in the congregation. Again, this is why a top priority for any pastor must be to help the congregation understand and establish, or re-establish, a right, historically orthodox doctrine of Scripture. Until this happens, until the congregation knows that moving forward all ministry and leadership decisions will be rooted in and directed by the Word of God, the Bible will never be the sole authority the Lord intends it to be for this congregation.

There are three essential aspects to the doctrine of Scripture, which must be understood and embraced by any and every declining congregation. It is the responsibility of the pastor to help lead the way in making this a reality. These include the inspiration of Scripture, the inerrancy of Scripture and the authority of Scripture. Let's look at each of these briefly.

### 1. Inspiration of Scripture

The inspiration of Scripture refers to the supernatural influence of the Holy Spirit on the writers of Scripture to render through their writings an accurate representation or account of God's revelation (thus allowing their writings to be considered "God's Word"). Though the words of Scripture were written by humans, the source of their inspired writing was a result of the Holy Spirit's empowerment and leading. As the Apostle Peter attests,

*And we have the prophetic word more fully confirmed, to which you will do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts, knowing this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture comes from someone's own interpretation. For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit (2 Pet. 1:20-21).*

In a similar manner, the apostle Paul describes how the Bible alone contains the "God-breathed" words of the Lord: "All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work" (2 Tim. 3:16-17).

Because of the God ordained, Spirit-inspired nature of Scripture, inerrancy and complete reliability of the Bible is the natural and logical result.

## 2. Inerrancy of Scripture

The inerrancy of Scripture means that God's Word, in its original manuscripts, does not contain or propose anything that is contrary to fact. The Bible is without error in all that it affirms. The Bible itself testifies to this truth:

*The words of the Lord are pure words, like silver refined in a furnace on the ground, purified seven times (Psalm 12:6).*

*So, when God desired to show more convincingly to the heirs of the promise the unchangeable character of His purpose, He guaranteed it with an oath, so that by two unchangeable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie, we who have fled for refuge might have strong encouragement to hold fast to the hope set before us (Heb. 6:17-18).*

*Every word of God proves true; He is a shield to those who take refuge in Him (Prov. 30:5).*

B.B. Warfield, in his classic defense of the Bible's inerrancy, rightly states that "God has caused his grace to abound to us in that he not only published redemption through Christ to the world, but gave this preachment authoritative expression through the apostles, and fixed it with infallible trustworthiness in His inspired Word."<sup>1</sup> As a result, "in every age God speaks directly to every Christian heart, and gives us abounding safety to our feet and divine security to our souls."<sup>2</sup> The wonderful news is that "instead of a mere record of a revelation given in the past, we have the ever-living Word of God; instead of a mere tradition however guarded, we have what we have all learned to call in a unique sense 'the Scriptures.'"<sup>3</sup>

The inspiration and inerrancy of holy Scripture demand its authority, in our individual lives and in the church. But what exactly are we talking about here? What does this authority look like?

## 3. Authority of Scripture

Simply put, the authority of Scripture refers to God's Word as possessing the right to ultimately define what followers of Christ believe, as well as the manner in which believers should live their lives. As churches then, the Bible alone must have authority over all that we do and all that we don't do in regard to the ministry God has called us to carry out. The Westminster Confession states clearly, "The authority of the Holy Scripture, for which it ought to be believed, and obeyed, dependeth not upon the testimony of any man, or church; but wholly upon God (who is truth itself) the author thereof: and therefore it is to be received, because it is the Word of God."<sup>4</sup>

'Believed' and 'obeyed' — two key words we must note. Because the Scripture is God's inspired, inerrant Word, it holds supreme authority over what we believe and how we behave as Christians and as churches. It is that simple. The Word of God is always the right authority in a church needing revitalization because it makes God Himself the authority over that church. God revitalizes churches by his Spirit and through the Word. For real, lasting change to happen in any congregation, the Bible must have ultimate authority in matters of doctrine and ministry methodology. Not a pastor, not a deacon, not a committee, not the by-laws. The Bible must be the boss. The Bible must rule the church that God Himself might reign over the church.

This is why we as pastors must intentionally and consistently lead with and by the Word.

## Part 3

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*As we continue this series on leading church change with the Word, this third post will focus on the absolutely essential importance of Scripture shaping, guiding and directing the hearts of the leaders of a church desiring to be revitalized.*

Once we establish the Bible as the authority in our lives and in our churches, we must consider how this ought to practically affect the hearts of the leaders in the congregation. Here's what I mean. It is one thing to believe in the authority of Scripture, but quite another to eagerly and joyfully submit to it in one's life, along with the life and leadership of the congregation. This must be modeled. It must be lived out before and alongside those in the congregation.

The truth is, for effective, Word-driven change to take place in any struggling church, the leaders of that particular church must first let the Word change them. They must seek to live and lead with a posture of loving and glad submission to the Bible. Of course, this begins with the pastor himself, but it must also include the other key leaders in that congregation, whoever they may be — deacons, elders, board members, committee or team leaders, those on staff, etc.

You see, one pastor, one leader alone cannot lead the change needed to bring a dying church back to a place of health and vibrancy. It takes a team of humble, godly loving leaders submitted to Scripture to lead this kind of change well. For this reason, it is absolutely vital for all of those in leadership to first allow the Word of God to shape their hearts so that it might shape the way they lead God's people.

This should be one of the top priorities of anyone called to church revitalization: helping other leaders in the church experience the joy and freedom of yielding to the Word of God in both their personal lives and in their leadership. To allow the Scripture, through the Spirit, to lead the leaders so that together they might guide the congregation in a God-honoring manner. Let me share five specific ways I believe the Word, through the Spirit, must lead and shape the hearts of the leaders in a declining church.

### **1. The Word must establish humility in the hearts of leaders.**

James 4:6 says, "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble." As leaders, we each must ask the Lord to humble us that we might see the Word alone as our authority. It all begins here. If we're ever going to lead congregations that embrace the Bible as *their* authority, we as leaders must first see it as *our* authority. Humility undergirds this kind of teachable attitude and mindset.

### **2. The Word must shape the way leaders display Christ's love for the flock.**

1 John 3:16 says, "By this we know love that He laid down His life for us and we ought to lay down our life for the brothers." As Christ has loved us and transformed us through His love, so must we, by His Spirit, seek to love those we lead as Jesus would. We must daily pray, "Oh God, may your Word penetrate my heart in such a way that it would cause me to grow in

loving people the way Jesus loves people. Make me a loving leader as Your Spirit transforms me through Your Word.”

### **3. The Word must instruct leaders in the way of gentleness.**

Gentleness is absolutely critical in the life of a godly leader, especially those called to lead in a dying church. 2 Timothy 2:24-25 says, “And the Lord’s servant must not be quarrelsome but kind to everyone, able to teach, patiently enduring evil, correcting his opponents with gentleness. God may perhaps grant them repentance leading to a knowledge of the truth.” Paul understood the importance of gentleness in leadership. He knew well that those who lead with harshness and forcefulness will never win the hearts of those they lead. Gentleness is essential. We must let the Word instruct us and equip us in Christ-like gentleness, what it is and what it looks like in practice. A biblical leader is a gentle leader.

### **4. The Word must grow a leader’s patience.**

Ephesians 4:1-3 says, “I therefore a prisoner for the Lord urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.” Isn’t it amazing how patient the Lord has been with us? How can we not then show patience with others — especially with those we lead. Revitalization takes a lot of patience. It’s slow work. Genuine, sustained patience can only come from the Holy Spirit who applies the truth of the Word to our hearts and minds. When people criticize our leadership, when they attack our decision making, when they come after us for whatever reason, we need to return their angst with love and patience, putting into practice Paul’s words in 1 Thessalonians 5:14, “And we urge you brothers, admonish the idle, encourage the faint-hearted, help the weak, be patient with them all.”

### **5. The Word must encourage leaders to persevere and not give up.**

Leadership of any kind in the church is hard. And at times, it will be tempting to throw in the towel. This is especially true for leaders volunteering hours of time and loads of energy to help the church thrive. Where do we go in these times of discouragement, when we want to give up? We go to the Word of God. This is where we find hope in the tough times of leadership. Consider a few encouraging passages written by church leaders in the face of their own challenges:

- *James 1:2-4: “Count it all joy my brothers when you face trials of various kinds, for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness (perseverance), and let steadfastness have its full effect that you may be perfect and complete lacking in nothing.”*
- *Galatians 6:9: “And let us not grow weary of doing good for in due season we will reap if we do not give up.”*
- *2 Thessalonians 3:13: “As for you brothers, do not grow weary in doing good.”*
- *Romans 8:31: “If God is for us, who can be against us?”*

As leaders in the church, we must always remember that the Lord is with us! He is with us in the joys, and He is with us in the trials. And he’s not just with us, but He is for us! We can forget that sometimes. This is why we need to rest in the truth of the Word of God, which tells us God’s grace and mercy, His presence and power, through the Holy Spirit, will give us all we need to love and lead God’s people well for the long haul.



## Part 4

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In this fourth post, we are asking and answering the question: what exactly does it look like on a day-to-day, week-to-week basis, to lead a declining church — specifically leading change in a declining church, with the Word?

Let's consider three important components to doing this well.

### **1. The Word of God gives us our message to be proclaimed.**

We have one message in church revitalization: The gospel. The gospel is the good news of Jesus! And it is the central message of the Bible. Ray Ortlund summarizes the gospel in this way:

*God, through the perfect life, atoning death and bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ, rescues all his people from the wrath of God into peace with God, with a promise of the full restoration of his created order forever—all to the praise of the glory of his grace. Salvation from the judgment of God into fellowship with God is all of God. It is not of us.<sup>1</sup>*

This gospel, as taught throughout Scripture, must be the primary, overarching message we proclaim as pastors. We cannot improve on this message and so we ought not try. Hear the good news message of the gospel:

- *Mark 10:45: The Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.*
- *Romans 5:8: God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.*
- *Romans 6:23: The wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.*
- *Romans 8:1: There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.*
- *Romans 8:32: He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things?*
- *2 Corinthians 5:21: For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.*
- *2 Corinthians 8:9: You know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you by his poverty might become rich.*
- *1 Timothy 1:15: The saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am the foremost.*
- *1 John 4:10: In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.*

The gospel is good news. It is the best news! It is the power of God that brings salvation to all who believe it (Rom. 1:16). Moreover, the gospel is not simply the power to save, it is the power to mature and sanctify. As Tim Keller writes:

*We never “get beyond the gospel” in our Christian life to something more “advanced.” The gospel is not the first “step” in a “stairway” of truths, rather, it is more like the “hub” in a*

*“wheel” of truth. The gospel is not just the A-B-C’s but the A-Z of Christianity. The gospel is not just the minimum required doctrine necessary to enter the kingdom, but the way we make progress in the kingdom.*

*We are not justified by the gospel and then sanctified by obedience, but the gospel is the way we grow ([Gal. 3:1-3](#)) and are renewed ([Col. 1:6](#)). It is the solution to each problem, the key to each closed door, the power through every barrier ([Rom. 1:16-17](#)). It is very common in the church to think as follows. “The gospel is for non-Christians. One needs it to be saved. But once saved, you grow through hard work and obedience.” But [Colossians 1:6](#) shows that this is a mistake. Both confession and “hard work” that is not arising from and “in line” with the gospel will not sanctify you—it will strangle you. All our problems come from a failure to apply the gospel. Thus when Paul left the Ephesians he committed them “to the word of his grace, which can build you up” ([Acts 20:32](#)).*

*The main problem, then, in the Christian life is that we have not thought out the deep implications of the gospel, we have not “used” the gospel in and on all parts of our life. Richard Lovelace says that most people’s problems are just a failure to be oriented to the gospel—a failure to grasp and believe it through and through. Luther says, “The truth of the Gospel is the principal article of all Christian doctrine . . . . Most necessary is it that we know this article well, teach it to others, and beat it into their heads continually.” The gospel is not easily comprehended. Paul says that the gospel only does its renewing work in us as we understand it in all its truth. All of us, to some degree, live around the truth of the gospel but do not “get” it. So the key to continual and deeper spiritual renewal and revival is the continual re-discovery of the gospel. A stage of renewal is always the discovery of a new implication or application of the gospel – seeing more of its truth. This is true for either an individual or a church. <sup>1</sup>*

Keller is right. The gospel alone is what brings new life, new hope, new joy, and new power to God’s people. This is why the gospel must be central in our preaching, our teaching, our pastoral care and our leadership in the church. As individual lives are revitalized and transformed by Christ and His gospel, so congregations will be revitalized and transformed as well. The biblical Gospel alone brings the spiritually dead to life and this includes dying churches.

## **2. The Word of God prescribes our methods to be implemented.**

The Bible is clear on what the church is, what it’s supposed to do, and how it’s supposed to do it. As our sole authority in church revitalization, then, the Bible alone must determine and shape our methods and programming philosophies. We live in a strange day when many pastors and church leaders will affirm their belief in the Bible as the very Word of God, and yet the ministry methods and strategies they implement in their churches are adopted more often from the latest Fortune 500 company or church growth book than they are the Scripture. This is particularly true in declining churches trying to turn things around.

What is the issue here? Why would a dying church and its leaders seek to model themselves and be shaped and guided by anything other than God and His Word? How can you hold to the inspiration, inerrancy and authority of the Bible and yet not submit to the Bible’s instruction on church methodology — what we do and how we do it? The issue here pertains to one’s belief regarding the sufficiency of Scripture. Do we as pastors and leaders believe

that the Bible is sufficient, not only in giving us the gospel message we proclaim, but also the gospel methods we are to implement in our congregations? Do we believe that God's Word gives us everything we need to know about leading and growing churches most effectively God's way, for God's glory?

When we turn to the Scripture, we see that the Lord has clearly told us what He desires for His Church. We don't need to guess as to what He wants and what we are supposed to do. For example, some of the nonnegotiable marks of a God-honoring church, which the Bible clearly lays out include:

- Expository preaching
- Evangelism
- Disciple-making
- Missions
- Fellowship
- Service
- Church discipline
- The Lord's Supper
- Baptism
- Sacrificial giving
- Church membership
- Qualified pastor-elders and deacons

While not exhaustive, these are all marks of a biblical, God-honoring church. The Lord wants congregations that are marked by these things.

As church revitalizers, we desperately need God Himself to guide and direct us and He does this by His Spirit, through His Word. Again, if we want the Lord to move powerfully in and through our congregations, we must do things His way, for His glory. This means allowing the Bible to tell us what to do and how to do it. The Word of God must prescribe our methods.

### **3. The Word of God serves as the primary means (or tool) for leading change.**

The Word of God not only gives us our message and shapes our methods, but it also must serve as our primary means, or tool, for leading change in church revitalization.

As leaders, we must be very intentional to constantly put forth the Bible as the authority in every area of the church's life, letting God's people wrestle with the Word of God continually in all matters of faith and practice. This simply means it is imperative for us to lead in such a way that those in the congregation are wrestling first with the Bible before anything or anyone else. If we are truly going to be "Bible churches" that submit to the authority and sufficiency of Scripture, churches that believe that God has told us what to do and how to do it as congregations, then we as pastors must lead with the Word, even when it ruffles feathers. And the Bible will surely ruffle feathers! The Bible will confront every one of us in all kinds of uncomfortable but needed ways. This includes any sinful attitude or agenda anyone might have for the church, which lies in direct opposition to God's Word.

When talking with pastors serving in church revitalization contexts, I often refer to this as making the Bible the *bad guy* in our leadership. Here's what I mean by that: If we as revitalizers find ourselves in a position where we are constantly seen as the bad guy, as the enemy, particularly with those in the congregation that resist biblical change of any kind, then we are most likely operating from a place where we are leading as the authority, rather than

letting God, through His Word, lead as the authority. Again, we must lead in such a way that people are forced to deal with the clear, authoritative teaching of Scripture above all else. This alone makes God's voice the loudest and most powerful leadership voice in any church, which ought to be every shepherd's goal.

You see, what we are trying to do here as pastors is to bring together a stated doctrine of Scripture with the practice of that doctrine within the life of the church. Too many revitalization pastors only lead with the Bible reactively, when they have to bring out "the big gun" to make a point or initiate an important change of some kind. What I am proposing is that you lead with "the big gun" all of the time! Lead in such a way that every person in the congregation knows your agenda as a pastor and leader is always God's agenda, because you are constantly pointing everyone back to Scripture, back to what God says He wants to see happen in your church. You want to lead in such a way that when difficult people in the congregation desire their agenda above God's agenda, they get frustrated because we keep forcing them to go back to the Bible and wrestle with what God says. This is a good thing. Don't make the mistake of making some church fad or church growth guru the loudest voice of authority in your leadership. Again, many pastors make this major mistake. Here's what happens over time. As helpful as these churches, ministries and individuals might be, eventually people will see these as fleeting voices that shift like sand. Fads and gurus come and go, but the Word of God remains steady and sure forever. Healthy change can only happen as it's led by His Word. So, lead with it!

Whether we're talking about changing the name of our church, or getting rid of the old carpet in the sanctuary, or switching what kind of coffee we are serving on Sunday mornings or introducing a new order to the weekly worship service — whatever the change might be — lead that change with the Word. In other words, what does the Bible say about this kind of change? Why does it matter? How does this change help us to better proclaim and live out the gospel to those inside and outside the walls of our church?

As one example, if you are looking at changing the name of your church, you must be able to communicate clearly and persuasively from the Bible how this name change will enhance your congregation's ability to more effectively carry out Jesus' mission to make disciples in your community. Changes like this must be led from the Word of God, not from the latest church health book or article written by the pastor down the street whose congregation has exploded in worship attendees the past few years.

Other sources can be helpful, for sure, but we must emphasize with our people that these secondary, supporting sources, always submit to Scripture. As we lead this way over time, we will help our church become one that loves the Word of God and sees itself under the authority of the Scriptures, not just through lip service, but in practice. These are the types of churches that are healthy, vibrant, and growing in all the right ways. Why? Because as the Word of God rules, the God of the Word reigns.

## Part 5

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For the last blog post in this series on leading church change with the Word, let's approach this whole topic strategically. On a very practical level, what are the key avenues for leading with the message, methods, and means of the Word in your congregation? In other words, what are the most strategic contexts in which to communicate with your people continually and consistently that the Bible is the authority in all areas of doctrine, ministry philosophy, programming methodology, and decision making in your church?

I realize every church is different and so your congregation may have an avenue or two that is unique to your ministry context. However, I believe there are four avenues in every church from which pastors must lead strategically with the Word. This is particularly true when it comes to leading change in church revitalization.

Consider each of these briefly:

### 1. The Pulpit

Faithful, expositional preaching, week in and week out, is critical for a church to experience revitalization. I've heard it said that as the pulpit goes, so goes the health of a church. I believe this is true. God has always used the faithful, passionate preaching of His Word to transform hearts, as well as congregations. Establishing the Bible as the sole authority each and every week from the pulpit will help shape a congregation's understanding of who is ultimately in charge: God.

One of the reasons many churches are dying today is because they have knowingly or unknowingly allowed idols of various kinds to creep in and hijack authority, which belongs to God and His Word alone. These idols often take the form of traditions, programs, systems and mindsets that are out of sync with the Word, quenching the Spirit and His desires for the congregation. This is not a healthy place for a church to be.

For this reason, we must speak the truth in love to our people about the dangers of idolatry. As we love and shepherd the flock, our preaching must address the deep concerns and warnings God lays out in Scripture regarding idolatry. Idolatry exists in our hearts individually, as well as in our congregations as a whole. We do this humbly, but we also do so boldly. We must let the Bible speak for itself. We must let the Bible wound, that it might ultimately heal. That it would bring conviction and correction. That it might bring salvation and direction. The pulpit is key in this. Whether it's an ungodly attitude toward lost people, an unwillingness to make changes that are clearly in the best interest of the congregation as a whole, a fear of engaging the changing community or maybe even a prideful works-righteousness mentality, whatever it is, we must apply the authoritative Word of God to idolatry in our churches. This is what good leaders do. This is what faithful shepherd pastors do. This is what God has called us to.

### 2. Leadership Meetings

Leadership meetings are a primary place for pastors, deacons and others to lead from the Word. Often in churches, the only time the Bible is really used is in the corporate worship gathering and Sunday School or small groups. It's rarely included in meetings or gatherings beyond perhaps a brief devotion. It shouldn't be strange for the Bible to be discussed regularly during leadership meetings. In fact, if the Bible truly is our authority, we should have our Bibles open and ready to use at all times that God Himself might guide us.

So, in your leadership meetings, establish early on that the Bible will play a central role in your discussion and decision making together. For example, as you talk about a new outreach event, use the Scriptures to explain why this idea is biblical and why having an outward, missional focus is what God desires of your church. When we lead like this, we are handing over authority to the Word of God, where it belongs. We are demonstrating what it looks like when a church truly is led and governed by God, through the Scriptures.

### **3. Congregation-wide meetings and gatherings.**

Most of the churches we lead are going to have regularly scheduled congregational meetings (or gatherings) with our members. In these meetings, we want to allow the Word to guide the agenda and the discussions, especially early on in the revitalization process.

For example, during a congregational meeting, whenever we are presenting a new ministry idea or strategy, we should always connect it with key Scriptures that back it up. We want our people to see that God is the leader to whom we all submit in this church. He directs us. He tells us what to do and where to go. And He does this through His Word, by the Spirit. The Word of God leads to life, and we want God's people, His church, to come alive as they submit to the Word.

### **4. One on one.**

The best way to love and lead a congregation is to first love and lead the individuals that comprise that congregation. This is especially true when it comes to leading change. We must seek to get individuals on board, one at a time, with particular changes. This happens best as we pursue folks one on one, leading them with and from the Word.

What does this look like? As we are meeting with individuals about key issues and potential changes that are coming up in the church, we reason with them from the Bible. We seek to show them that we as a church care most about doing what God says to do, in God's way. And as we do this, we are sensitive to each individual's questions and concerns. We take the time to listen well and then help them to understand from Scripture why we believe God is leading in this new direction. In leading this way, we are demonstrating again what it looks like for God, through His Word, to be the authoritative leader of your church. It isn't your agenda you are after, but God's.

### **Leading from the Word, with the Word**

The bottom line is that we are called to lead and pastor dying churches God's way, for God's glory. For this to happen, we must help our churches recapture a passion for the Word of God. This includes helping them understand and live out a joyful submission to the Bible as the inspired, inerrant, authoritative and sufficient Word that it is. In doing this, God's Word will rule in your church, which assures God will reign over your church. May we be humble pastors who seek to lead from the Word, with the Word, for the glory of God and the good of His church.

*This post originally appeared on Mark Hallock's blog, [Preach Lead Love](https://www.preachleadlove.com/single-post/leading-church-change-with-the-word-part-1).<sup>4</sup>*

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<sup>4</sup> <https://www.preachleadlove.com/single-post/leading-church-change-with-the-word-part-1>

# Adversity, Perseverance, and Partnership in Ministry by Sonny Holmes

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## Overview

It's old, perhaps worn, maybe cliché. Yet, still true. Spiritual leaders must have the mind of a scholar, the heart of a child, and the hide of a rhinoceros. Being so on point this humor provides a momentary flash of comic relief when considering adversity, perseverance, and partnership in ministry. Pastoral leadership is a bold-print subtext of church revitalization. One of the line items in a thorough study of pastoral leadership should address the rigors of church ministry and the weight of leading church members where they often don't want to go. Navigating the journey of revitalization, often alone, requires a deep sense of calling, vision, personal strengths, spiritual gifting, and that hide of a rhino. Adversity in ministry is real, verified by the number of pastors and spiritual leaders leaving ministry. The spiritual disciplines of perseverance and partnership are God's provision to guide us through the maze of hardship in Christian service. This lesson will examine biblical instruction and the voice of experience to strengthen the pastoral cohort in these disciplines.

## The Learning Path

*Objective 1: To understand the reality of adversity in ministry*

*Objective 2: To learn systematic ways to persevere in ministry and keep advancing the mission*

*Objective 3: To develop strong accountability and counsel in ministry partnership*

## Revitalization Outcomes

1. Pastors will learn systematic biblical guidance and professional advice in perseverance as they lead their churches through a revitalization process.
2. Pastors will understand the resistance that typically accompanies forward movement and change in local churches.
3. Pastors will seek opportunities for accountability and partnership for mission.

## Resources related to objectives

1. [Finish Period: Going the Distance in Ministry](#) by Sonny Holmes
2. [Spiritual Leadership: Moving People on to God's Agenda](#) by Henry and Richard Blackaby
3. [Pastors Share Top Reasons They've Considered Quitting Ministry in the Past Year \(Blog\)](#)

## Primary resource used in this lesson:

[Finish Period: Going the Distance in Ministry](#) by Sonny Holmes

## ***Objective 1: To understand the reality of adversity in ministry***

### Lessons from the Apostle Paul

Few believers will argue the Apostle Paul's familiarity with personal adversity. His experience of ministry hardship two thousand years ago is vividly expressed in the Acts accounts of his missionary journeys and the thirteen Epistles the Holy Spirit inspired him to author. He saw suffering and mistreatment among his ministry colleagues, those he mentored and trained. Even more, he was the object of much personal adversity himself. The letters he wrote provide shocking details of those torments, as he wrote the Philippians from prison, "...for the defense of the Gospel" (Philippians 1; 16, ESV).

- Read 2 Corinthians 11:21-29
- Reflect on the following questions:
  - Most pastors in America may not face physical adversity akin to Paul's but suffering still exists. What elements of genuine suffering have you experienced in ministry or in life since you have sought to be faithful to your calling?
  - Notice verse 28. In your mind what did he mean by "...the daily pressure on me of my anxiety for all the churches?" What creates ministerial pressure and stress for you? What patterns of recurrence can you identify?
  - When have you experienced the greatest anxiety as a pastor? What does it do to you? How do you alleviate it?

### Lessons from Jesus

The Gospel accounts of Christ's life often depict the opposition, ridicule, and suffering he faced from his Jewish and Roman critics. Our comprehension and identification of them is often hindered by our knowledge of Jesus as Lord, fully Divine. Yet, there is the truth that He was fully human as well, knowing also the physical, emotional, and spiritual pain inflicted upon Him by those who opposed Him.

- Read Philippians 2: 5-11.
- Reflect on the following questions:
  - Notice the word "form" in these verses. Though Jesus was in the form of God, he took the form of a servant and was found in human form. As a spiritual leader seeking to follow Christ, in what ways are you representing Christ's humility and sacrifice among others?



- How does your role as a servant and the limitations of your humanity affect your ministry service and open you to times of adversity and hardship?
- How does obedience to the Father who called you, position you for the downsides of spiritual leadership?
- The spiritual landscape of America is changing. How does your calling to spiritual leadership prepare you to be obedient to the point of death?
- How much adversity should spiritual leaders expect in the growing secularism of our culture? Are we prepared for it? Are you?

Spiritual leadership is rigorous and demanding and always has been. Leading change is a challenging element of leadership because people are often resistant to change. This may be especially true in church experience.

***Objective 2: To learn systematic ways to persevere in ministry and keep advancing the mission***

Adversity and difficulty are often braking mechanisms. They hinder movement because they usually cause us pain and discomfort. Scripture teaches us the spiritual disciplines of endurance, perseverance, and the spiritual fruit of patience. God’s provision in times of difficulty enables us to pursue mission and purpose even when under trial or facing obstacles. Far too often our response to prolonged adversity is to walk away, quit our assignment, or seek another place of service. Spiritual leadership is always a challenging, difficult calling.

Lessons from King David:

King David knew opposition and adversity in many areas of his personal mission---the faith of God’s people, personal family experiences, and the leadership of the nation. His reliance on God’s character and provision enabled him to move past those difficult moments of waiting and seeking guidance to enable his leadership.

- Read these verses from the Psalms: 6:3; 13: 1-2; 35:17; 62:3; 74:10; 79:5; 80:4; 82:2; 89:46; 90:13; 94:3; 119:84.
- Read Psalm 40.
- Reflect on the following questions:

- What recent circumstances prompted you to ask, “How long, Lord?” How did God respond to your prayer?
- What would others say about your ability to endure, persevere, and demonstrate patience in your life and ministry?
- Can you pinpoint specific spiritual disciplines in Psalm 40 that gave David patience and endurance? Are those spiritual strengths visible in you? Why not?

### Lessons from Finish Period: Going the Distance in Ministry

Finishing was a distinct quality of Jesus. He told his disciples “My food is to do the will of him who sent me and to accomplish his work” (John 4:34). This reference work concentrates on several aspects of consistency in finishing the assignment.

- Read Chapter 3: Disciplines for Going the Distance.
- Read Chapter 5: Endurance for the Finish.
- Reflect on the following questions:
  - What does “going the distance” in ministry mean to you?
  - How can the five steps for going the distance (page 40-74) equip you for endurance and perseverance in ministry? Which ones are evident in your ministry right now? How can you implement the ones that are not?
  - How can the five realities of endurance (page 100) further equip you?

Endurance and perseverance are qualities that keep us focused on mission when adversity overshadows our mission. As pastoral leaders face adversity, they can trust in God’s sanctifying work to develop spiritual fruit like love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.

- In what ways are patience, gentleness and self-control evident in your ministry? When do you need to display these fruits more as a pastor leader?
- What elements of church revitalization require you to depend more on the Spirit for patience, gentleness or self-control?

- Staying long as a pastor leader is essential in any revitalization ministry. What steps do you need to take now to ensure a lengthy tenure as pastor and go the distance in church revitalization?

***Objective 3: To develop strong accountability and counsel in ministry partnership***

Most of the statistical data regarding pastoral and spiritual leadership reveals a consistent pattern of loneliness in those who serve. Being island people, most spiritual leaders receive minimal counsel and guidance, infrequent interaction with colleagues, and irregular formal accountability. On a larger scale, many congregations have limited resources and cannot pursue mission effectively. As the spiritual landscape in America continues a downward trend, the need for spiritual partnerships is even more critical. It is a strong Biblical theme and one that should be pursued with vigor in these perplexing times.

Lessons from the ministry of Jesus:

More than anyone, Jesus understood the dynamics of partnership. He called, trained and prepared The Twelve to continue the redemptive work assigned by the Father. His special attention to Peter and John were vivid portrayals to mentoring and preparing others for the difficult assignment of changing the world.

- Read Luke 10:1-24 and Mark 6:6-12
- Reflect on the following questions:
  - Jesus sent out the disciples with instruction, accountability, and partnership. Based on your current context and experience, what is the benefit to each of these when it comes to church revitalization?
  - In what ways can a healthy partnership influence our ministry experiences?
  - As pastor, to whom are you accountable and is it a healthy accountability? Explain.

Lessons from Solomon:

He is remembered as the wisest man who ever lived. His writings are theologically sound and punctuated with personal experience and practical application. His portrayals of wisdom and folly, often referred to as vanity, are timeless instructions in living this life under

the sun. Consider his warnings on isolation and how they apply to your life as pastor facing the challenges of church revitalization.

- Read Ecclesiastes 4:7-13
- Reflect on the following questions:
  - According to Solomon, what was the folly of the man who was “all alone”?
  - What are the dangers often associated with a pastor doing all the work in his effort to revitalize a church?
  - What temptations exist in your ministry that cause you to wrestle with contentment?
  - How can your partnership with others equip you for a fresh view of ministry? How can you bless and encourage others in similar ministry circumstances?
  - What are your options for creating a “cord of three stands” through partnerships?
  - What would be the ideal parameters of a ministry partnership that would better equip you to accomplish your mission in the community?

### **About the Author:**

Sonny Holmes is a retired South Carolina pastor, having served churches in our state for thirty nine years. For several years, he served as Director of Pastoral Ministries for the South Carolina Baptist Convention. In 2011 Sonny served as President of the South Carolina Baptist Convention, and was a trustee and adjunct faculty member at Charleston Southern University. Finish Period: Going the Distance in Ministry, encouragement for pastors and ministers, was published in 2015. Today Sonny serves as a ministry consultant and transitional pastor.



### Overview

Sending people out of a local church seems counterintuitive. On our own, we want to keep a hold on our people, especially our best people, as we seek to lead the churches God has called us to lead.

And yet, the Bible never calls us to hoard people. We are called to fulfill the Great Commission, taking the gospel to the ends of the earth and everywhere in-between, and that requires people.

In this lesson, we'll take a look at a biblical foundation of sending and read a few chapters in JD Greear's book, *Gaining by Losing*. As we do, you'll discover the biblical example, and the reality, that churches really can grow by releasing some of their best people.

### Learning Path

*Objective #1: Deepen their biblical understanding of sending and multiplication*

*Objective #2: Reflect on how God's Kingdom and the local church could be strengthened*

*Objective #3: Develop a strategy for multiplication and sending from your context*

### Revitalization Outcomes

- Prayerfully, at the end, they will gain an understanding of the importance of holding onto people loosely and sending them out as they are called to further God's Kingdom in areas of great need.
- The participant will produce a short (250-500 words) biblical strategy for multiplication and sending from their current context.

### Resources related to objectives:

1. [Gaining by Losing](#) by JD Greear
2. [Radical](#) by David Platt
3. [Don't Waste Your Life](#) by John Piper

### What is the primary resource that you will use in this lesson?

[Gaining by Losing](#) by JD Greear

## **Objective #1: Deepen your biblical understanding of sending and multiplication**

In *Gaining by Losing*, JD Greear discusses the differences between aircraft carriers, cruise liners, and battleships. Think about the differences in those three ships. He argues that churches should be like aircraft carriers: places from which men and women are launched into the mission field God has called them to - whether across the world or across the street. In this first part, we'll look at how Paul and Barnabas were "launched" from the church in Antioch and consider the implications of a Biblical model for sending.

- Read Acts 13:1-3.
- Review the details of Saul's conversion in Acts 9 and the progression of the early Church in chapters 11 & 12.
  - What events led up to this sending passage in Acts 13?
  - Imagine you are a leader in the church in Antioch and you hear of Saul's conversion and calling, what fears might you have?
  - What would be your natural tendencies as a leader in this young church?
  - Based on what you know about the rest of Paul's ministry, what impact did the church at Antioch have on the kingdom of God?
- Personal Application Questions
  - How would you describe the current culture of sending and multiplication in the local church you serve?
  - What 3 things has God taught you about sending people out as you reflected on these passages?
  - What concerns do you have about sending your "best and brightest" on mission?
  - What needs to change now in your life to be ready to respond in obedience to the Holy Spirit's work among your members and church?
  - What next steps have you identified during your reflection time?

## Objective #2: Reflect on how God’s Kingdom and the local church could be strengthened

- Read the following chapters of Gaining by Losing by JD Greear:
  - Chapter 1, “Aircraft Carriers, Cruise Liners, and Battleships”
  - Chapter 2, “Our (Painful) Journey Toward Sending”
  - Chapter 8, “Without This You Fail”

### Reflection Questions

- *What does a church gain by being willing to send out its best members?*
- Consider the quote and your response using the questions below:

“Are there mission fields in our backyards that could contribute to the global spread of the gospel that we have overlooked because they don’t enhance the bottom line of our church? Are we evaluating ministry opportunities only by how they benefit us, or are we looking at the benefit they can bring to Jesus’ kingdom even if there is nothing in them for ours?” (p. 46).
- What backyard mission fields could you be overlooking in your current context?
- What is the current primary motive for most ministries in the church you serve?
- What criteria do you currently use to evaluate potential ministry opportunities? If you currently don’t have any criteria, what criteria would be helpful for your leaders to consider before starting a new ministry or partnership?
- What might your church lose by refusing to let go of people?
- With the diversity of options for sending new laborers, would your passion tend toward church planting, church revitalization, sending missionaries, or something else? How would you describe it?
- If you were to create a 5-year goal for sending and multiplication, what would it be?

**Objective #3: Develop a strategy for multiplication and sending from your context**

Write a short (250-500 words) Biblical strategy for multiplication and sending for the current church and context based on Acts 13:1-3 and the readings from Greear's book.

Consider the following questions to guide your thoughts:

- *Why is this important?*
- *What dangers does a church face by refusing to send out those who feel called?*
- *What would a strategy of multiplication and sending look like in your particular context?*
- *Where will you begin?*
- *What resources are currently available or needed?*
- *What shifts need to occur in discipleship, ministries or anything else in order to create a culture of sending in your context?*

Be prepared to share your report with your mentor and cohort peers to gain their feedback and support.

**About the Author:**

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