



CHURCH  
HEALTH  
ENCYCLOPEDIA

A Church Health Survey™  
Supplemental Tool

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# INTRODUCTION

**Many churches** of various denominations and different sizes have used the Church Health Survey™. After receiving the results, however, they all face a similar dilemma: “What do we do next?” This encyclopedia will serve as a companion guide to the Church Health Survey™ to answer this question for both churches and consultants. It is designed to provide practical suggestions and tools for increasing the health of the local church.

Like the survey, the Church Health Encyclopedia is organized according to the six purposes of the church: Worship, Discipleship, Prayer, Evangelism, Fellowship and Ministry. Within each section you will find an article devoted to each of the statements found on the Church Health Survey™ that correspond to the particular purpose of the church. For example, statement #65 on the survey, “Our church is unified,” is found in the fellowship section of the manual. Within each individual section, articles are in numerical order. There is also an index at the end of the manual to help you locate individual questions easily.

Thousands of hours of thought, experience and prayer have gone into this manual’s composition and it is our desire that it will be helpful in bringing about healthy change in the church.

Dr. Thom S. Rainer

“Ascribe to the Lord  
the glory due his name;  
worship the Lord  
in the splendor of his holiness.”  
--Psalm 29:2 *NIV*

**Worship is...** attributing the honor and giving the devotion to God that he alone deserves. True worship has nothing to do with a particular style of worship or liturgy. It is, instead, a matter of the heart. The questions related to worship in the Church Health Survey seek to ask one question of the church:

**Are members inspired to worship in your church's worship service?**

To determine a church's health in the area of worship, the survey asks questions related to the preaching, to the music and to the auxiliary services which support what is happening during the worship service. Is the preaching relevant? Does the preacher connect with the congregation? Are the songs which are sung worshipful or are they mere routine? Is the order of worship conducive to the service and setting, or is it distracting? All of these questions require thoughtful reflection by the church seeking to improve its health in worship.

# WORSHIP



The following questions about worship are addressed in the Church Health Survey:

1. When I come to my church, I truly sense that I worship God.
7. I learn a lot about the Bible from the pastor's/minister's/clergy's sermons.
13. The music in our worship services leads me to worship.
19. Disagreement exists among the members at our church about the type of music and worship style.
25. The pastor's/minister's/clergy's sermons are relevant to my needs and real life situations.
31. We have a good way of greeting guests in our worship services.
37. I like the blend of music and worship styles in our worship services.
43. The worship service time and length is just right.
49. The length of the sermons is just right.
55. Our sanctuary/worship center is a good facility in which to worship.
61. I have trouble finding a parking place when I come to church.
67. I like the order in which we go through worship.
73. Our worship services are prayerful experiences.
79. We have good participation in singing in our worship services.
85. A non-Christian would be comfortable in our worship services.
91. I like all the elements of our worship services.
97. There are too many distractions in our worship services.
103. I have been to other churches, and I think our worship services are among the best.
109. The Holy Spirit uses our worship services to lead people to make decisions for God.
115. There is the right emphasis on money and stewardship in our worship services.
121. We have plenty of room for growth in our worship facility/auditorium.
127. We regularly have guests (visitors) in our worship services.
133. Even as a church grows, it is best to keep everyone together in one morning worship service.
139. My faith in God is strengthened by our worship services.
145. I would excitedly invite an unchurched friend to a worship service at our church.

## **1. When I come to my church, I truly sense that I have worshiped God.**

When it comes to worship, the key word for success is preparation. If your church members, your lay leaders and your staff are prepared for worship, then worship will take place. If they are not, your worship time will never even get off the ground. Consider some of the following suggestions to strengthen your worship time.

### **Prepare the Congregation**

Here is the greatest battle. For most church members, the worship service is the Sunday morning thing to do. It is the calendar event for the day. In their eyes, the worship experience is compartmentalized between the hours of 10 and 12 each Sunday. Consequently, instead of understanding worship as an ongoing experience, they view it as another weekly event. Ultimately, grasping the concept of worship is something that God alone can reveal to the individual, but there are some practical steps your church can take to facilitate better worship.

Step #1: Preach about worship - The Sunday morning worship time is an invaluable time for equipping and teaching the saints about what the Bible says about worshiping God. Plan a series of sermons on "What It Means to Worship God." Interject a sermon on "The ABC's of Worshiping God" or "Is My Worship Worthy?" between two sermon series. If you want your congregation to understand and practice worship, you must teach them both what it means and how to do it.

Step #2: Talk about worship. Most churches produce weekly publications that go out to the congregation and to the extended church family. Use this resource to focus special attention on worship. Praise certain aspects of the past week's worship service. Insert quotes by notable authors about worship. Interview members of the congregation at random and insert their "positive" thoughts on worship (children's words can be both humorous and insightful). Finally, make sure to use Scriptures about worship throughout your publication.

Step #3: Educate about worship. If you can afford it, send members of your congregation to places where they can learn more about what it means to worship. Send some to events where they see worship in a different light or conducted in a way that may inspire them. Send others to conferences where they spend concentrated learning about worship. If only one of your members gets excited about living a life of worship, he or she has the potential to ignite a hunger for worship within the entire church.

### **Prepare the Lay Leadership**

No matter where your leaders are in their walk with Christ, they can be assets in developing better worship. As leaders, they already have the initiative. All they need is an invitation.

Step #1: Invite them to lead. God blesses your church with leaders to lead! Why not allow this blessing to affect your worship service? Supplement your staff leadership by asking lay leaders to take on important responsibilities in the worship service. Ask a deacon to lead a congregational prayer time. Ask a couple in your church (maybe their entire family) to do the welcome one Sunday morning. Consider including trusted leaders in the decision time at the end of the service.

Step #2: Invite them to pray. We cannot emphasize this enough! If you want your worship service to be genuine, if you want you people to encounter God, bring your leadership together to pray. Start with small steps first. Establish a location where your laity can meet each week to pray before service. After they pray, ask them to come into the service as a group and let them know that you will be waiting for them to begin.

Step #3: Invite them to critique. Bring your leadership together to discuss your worship services. Ask them what helps and hinders their own personal worship in your services. Give them an opportunity to suggest changes the church could make to improve the worship experience for the entire congregation. Some of the comments may lack substance, but others may be important. A meeting like this has three benefits. First, it sends a message to your leaders that worship is very important to the church. Second, it causes your leaders to be more aware of what takes place in worship. Third, their ideas may strengthen the worship experience of your church.

### **Prepare the Staff**

Before you do anything else, you need to answer this question: "Does your staff worship in your services?" If the answer is no, you need to correct this problem. Make every effort possible to allow for your staff and their families to worship. Here are two easy steps, which will prove to be extremely effective.

Step #1: Protect the morning. Encourage your staff and their families to begin worship Saturday night before they go to bed. An earlier bedtime brings rest before the important day to follow. If they are able to wake up earlier, they can spend time mentally and physically preparing for church. Encourage them to avoid the television and newspaper and replace them instead with worship music and extended devotion time. If the ministering families of the church arrive ready to worship, they present an excellent model for the congregation to follow.

Step #2: Protect the minister. Sunday mornings are a demanding time for every minister. As paid professionals, it is their duty to supervise their ministries. However, when it comes to worship, protect their worship experience as much as possible. Beautification needs, payments for church trips, lunch plans, the toilet paper supply and last-minute announcements, are all matters that should be taken care of outside the worship service. Make sure your people know that worship is for the staff too.

## 7. I learn a lot about the Bible from the pastor's or minister's or clergy's sermons.

For many Christians the greatest portion of their biblical knowledge comes through the sermons they hear. In order to raise the level of biblical knowledge in your congregation consider the following suggestions:

- **Preach a sermon series.** Preaching in a series allows the congregation to study a particular topic or book of the Bible as a unit. If your series is organized topically, the congregation will be able to hear all of what God has said about a specific topic at one time. Examples of topical sermon series are current ethical issues (abortion, euthanasia, divorce, etc.), family life, spiritual gifts, etc. You may also design your preaching series around a particular book of the Bible. Preaching through entire books of the Bible allows the congregation to understand the context of the passages being highlighted. Preaching a sermon series will also allow other ministries to match their teachings to what is being taught during the worship hour in order to enhance learning. For example, the minister of worship will be able to choose songs, drama, etc. that will support each particular sermon and the overall theme of the book.
- **Increase your personal Bible study.** Congregations have an uncanny ability to assess when a pastor's sermon comes out of his own Bible study or devotional life and when it is a canned message. If you desire to increase your church's biblical knowledge, begin by increasing your own. First, establish a daily time of Bible reading if you do not already have one. Second, *after* you have studied the text of your sermon passage, increase the usage of biblical commentaries, dictionaries, etc. Third, spend time in prayer before, after and during your sermon preparation.
- **Teach by involving all the senses.** Educational research has found that people learn better when more than one of their five senses is involved. In order to help your congregation retain the information presented in your sermon, consider using multi-media. For example, if you are using a quotation from a famous author or theologian, have a picture of the author or theologian or the cover of his or her book projected on the video screen. If you are quoting a famous speaker, have a sound clip of his or her voice. Another idea is to have the congregation sing a verse of a hymn or watch a clip of a film that illustrates the point you want to make. In addition, provide an outline of your sermon in the bulletin and on the screen. It will take more planning on your part to include these elements in your sermon, but hopefully you will find that the congregation is able to remember your sermon long after Sunday has passed.

The sermon is an integral part of the worship of the church. Taking a little bit of time to implement the suggestions mentioned above can make the sermon more effective and allow your congregation to increase its biblical knowledge.

### **13. The music in our worship services leads me to worship.**

If you have ever sailed a boat, you know sailing is both an art and a science. It is not something you just rush into. It takes time, planning and preparation. Leading a congregation into worship on a weekly basis is much like sailing. It is not something that happens spontaneously or that can be approached frivolously. If you want your people to worship through the music service, you need to do everything possible to make your worship service ready for God's Spirit. Just as the wind fills the sails and powers the ship, so the Holy Spirit fills the hearts of the people and powers their worship. The goal of worship is simple. A worship leader must do whatever possible to align the congregational vessel with the Spirit of God. If you can accomplish this feat, your people will worship.

For a church congregation to enter into worship, three elements must function well together. These elements are: the music, the environment and the worshipers. Let's look at these in more detail.

**The Music** – The music is the sailing vessel of worship. Like a seaworthy ship, it is mandatory to see that the music itself is worship worthy. Here are a few features of worship-worthy music.

- Feature #1: *It is beneficial for worship.* If songs do not incite people to think about God or if they fail to connect with the worshipers, do not use them. Every music piece you use should be selected with the goal of congregational worship.
- Feature #2: *It should fit the context of your congregation.*
- Feature #3: *It should be a mixture of familiar and unfamiliar music.*
- Feature #4: *It should be a blend of contemporary and traditional music styles.*

Ultimately, you want to see every member of your congregation float from the musical worship experience into the preaching worship experience.

**The Environment** – Like choppy seas or gusting winds that threaten to overturn a sailboat, distractions in the sanctuary can sink even the strongest worship service. Do whatever you can to make the site and situation conducive to worship. Consider the following lifesaving measures:

- Measure #1: *Batten the thermostat.* Check the sanctuary temperature each week and make sure it is set at a reasonable temperature (70 to 71 degrees).
- Measure #2: *Stabilize the lighting.* If the sanctuary is too bright, it may shut the eyes of your members. If it is too dark, your people may not be able to see.
- Measure #3: *Equalize the sound.* Do your best to make sure everyone in the sanctuary can hear the music properly. Be meticulous about checking all speakers, microphones, instruments and monitors before each worship service. Additionally, keep hearing devices on hand and charged for members of the congregation with hearing difficulties.
- Measure #4: *Unforeseen distractions.* Distractions in the worship service cannot always be anticipated or planned for. When distractions occur, have a “go to” staff person and lay leader who are prepared to resolve any matters of disturbance during the service.

**The Worshipers** – If any worship service is going to lead people into a state of worship, every participant in the service must understand and execute his or her role.

*The worship leader* - Every sailing ship has a captain and a crew. Similarly, in a worship service there must be an able worship leader and worshipers to follow him. It is the worship leader's duty to plan the worship, lead the worship and most importantly to model worship. If a worship leader is not able to lead the worship service by leading out in personal worship, the entire service will seem synthetic and artificial. If the leader is worshiping, there will be noticeable focus and concentration from everyone.



*The choir* – Few people realize the impact a choir has on the tenor of a worship service. Whether overt or subconscious, the excitement level and perceived enthusiasm of a church choir radically affects the success of the worship service. If a choir is joyous and excited, it can have an igniting effect on the service. If the choir is sour and apathetic, it can take the fire out of even the most committed congregational worshippers. If your choir is inhibiting the worship service, try the following:

- First, consistently set before the choir their purpose in the worship service. Make sure every choir member realizes that they individually share responsibility for the success of the corporate worship experience.
- Second, spend time praying for worship services every time your choir meets (especially prior to beginning a worship time).
- Third, recognize the choir. A word of encouragement from the pastor before a service or after a special choir number creates a sense of appreciation and value in the hearts of the choir members.

These three suggestions may not seem important, but remember this thought: If a choir is not taking an active and positive role in the worship service, it is comparable to mutiny on the high seas.

## **19. There is a disagreement among the members of our church about the type of music and worship style.**

If your church is presently facing a war over worship, take heart! Evidence suggests that conflicts over worship styles are slowly becoming a thing of the past. For those of you who are war torn presently or are on the verge of a worship attack, we have some steps for dealing with the worship war enigma.

*Step 1: Diffuse the bomb.* To ignite a bomb you must have a spark. Wherever or whatever that spark is, put it out! If the war hinges on the introduction of a new drum set or an electric guitar, get rid of it. If a choir member has donned a tambourine or the music minister has scrapped the hymnals, rectify the situation. Your first step is to neutralize your problem. Adjustments can always be made given time and wisdom, but when the spark is near the fuel of a worship explosion, begin by extinguishing the flame.

*Step 2: Affirm the positive.* While putting out sparks can save an explosion, smothering a spark can burn you. As you deal with the person or issue causing the war, do not try to stifle their cause. Instead, work with them through the issue and use it as a teaching experience. As you model Christ, teach people about the importance of worship and that the true focus of worship is upon God and not man.

*Step 3: Determine the compromise.* Without an igniter most bombs are safe. With the spark extinguished and positive teaching and encouragement about worship submitted, seek to bring a compromise to the parties involved in disagreements. Sometimes the compromise may be active: a discussion with the congregations, between factions, or between individuals. Other times the compromise may be passive in nature: allowing a drum set or guitar on occasion, adding a few choruses between hymns, or using the overhead projection system in the evening time. However you need to make it happen, try to reach a compromise in the worship disagreement.

*Step 4: Blend the music.* Worship is ever changing. Just as the church culture continually undergoes change, so does the church worship experience. What remains a difficulty is the delay of change between the church culture and their acts of worship. Too many churches get stuck in the rut of doing things the way they've always been done. When it comes to worship, the resulting tension is obvious. To relieve the perpetual pressure build-up between advocates of various worship styles the best medicine is a blended worship service. Blended services allow complete integration of both old and new styles. They decrease the conflict associated with worship wars and they help congregations maintain a current and healthy balance in worship.

Some churches have chosen to adapt their worship services to add more freedom and variety to their worship program. Perhaps some of the following options may be beneficial to your church.

- *Adding a second Sunday morning service with a different worship style.*
- *Adding a contemporary Saturday evening service.*
- *Reformatting the Sunday evening service.*

In his book "Putting an End to Worship Wars," Elmer Towns submits "Nineteen Observations and Five Suggestions to Help Prevent a Worship War in Church." Of these 19 observations, seven are particularly significant to our discussion. Before working through the four steps above, take a few moments to consider Towns' findings.

*Observation #2: Worship is legitimate when God is the focus.*

*Observation #5: No single worship expression has a corner on the market to the exclusion of another worship expression.*

*Observation #10: No one type of worship service meets all the needs of all its members.*

*Observation #14: When God puts believers in a worship experience that has different expectations than their giftedness, it's better for them to recognize what they can do (rather) than complain about what they cannot do.*

*Observation #15: Since different methods of Christian worship present problems to some people, we should not emphasize our differences but the unity we have in Jesus Christ.*

*Observation #18: We should be wary of the elitist who rejects worship that is different from his or her own expression.*

*Observation #19: Most worship wars break out because leaders have not taught people how to worship, when to worship and why to worship.*

## **25. The pastor's sermons are relevant to my needs and real life situations.**

The office of pastor is difficult and demanding. The title of John Stott's book on preaching, "Between Two Worlds," clearly captures the dilemma that all ministers face. It is and will always remain, a continual battle for ministers to follow after God relentlessly and relate to the common man regularly. Despite the labor involved in this conundrum, it is essential that every message a church leader proclaims before his people is relevant to where people are in their lives. While some sermons and messages will relate to some people better than others, every time of instruction and exhortation should demonstrate to your people that you know where they are in life. They must believe that you know them and that you are interested in their lives. If your people feel like you are out of touch with them (caught up in a different world), your messages will seem irrelevant and your leadership will be inert.

The following five suggestions should help you better relate to your congregation through your preaching. As you consider each suggestion, evaluate how well you are doing in each area at present and then determine the areas where you need improvement.

*Suggestion #1: Preach the Bible.* God's Word is the ultimate asset in relating your sermons to the needs of your congregation. Preaching the Bible demands a commitment to continually setting the message of God before your congregation. A personal evaluation and commentary of the Scriptures is not Biblical preaching. If people hear you preach your words more than God's Word, no matter how good and pleasing your sermons may sound, they will always lack the relevance and power they could have had. Remember the words of 2 Timothy 3:16-17: "All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work."

*Suggestion #2: Read, read and read.* Every pastor and staff member should recognize and live by the following quote: "Readers are leaders and leaders are readers." As a church leader, you are expected to be an expert not only on church matters, but also on secular matters. Reading a variety of sources will give you a depth and breadth of knowledge that will help you answer the questions set before you. Some pastors make the mistake of only reading spiritual material to help them grow in their faith and knowledge. Unfortunately, in doing this pastors lose touch with the world around them. They become spiritual hermits unable to understand and grapple with worldly issues their congregants deal with every day. As a pastor you should read your Bible as well as secular magazines, Christian magazines, movie reviews, book reviews, newspapers, best-selling books, literature classics, self-help guides and anything else you can lay your eyes on. Not only will these sources provide ample material for sermon illustrations, but they will also make you aware of what your people see and experience every day.

*Suggestion #3: Get to know individuals.* Many pastors know the people in their congregation, but they do not have a relationship with them. As a pastor, set aside a block of time in your weekly schedule to spend with individuals in your congregation. Time can be spent eating a meal, watching a ball game, golfing, hunting, fishing, or even going to special events. These times will be invaluable to your ministry. Be careful never to spend time with a member of the opposite sex without your spouse or others being present.

*Suggestion #4: Get to know your congregation.* Getting to know your congregation comes by studying them. Just as you would consult sources in writing a research paper, exhaust every resource possible to learn about your church. Conduct spiritual gift inventories and church surveys to assess the spiritual state of your present congregation. Research the history of your

church, including: when it began, who the pastors were, what they did during their tenure, why staff members left, what conflicts took place within the church and anything else that may seem important. You might also consider studying growth patterns, giving patterns and physical plant issues of your church. This research will be time consuming and it will be a long-term process, however, it will benefit you in at least two ways. First, it will make you the resident expert on your church, giving you the ability to make wise and grounded decisions as the head of the church. Second, as an expert on your church, people will see your dedication to their church and they will come to appreciate it.

*Suggestion #5: Get to know your community.* Whenever a company wants to build a new store or better market a product within a given area, they begin by conducting a location analysis to discover trends within the community. In much the same way, church leadership should analyze the community around their church. By knowing about the community, a pastor and staff can better address the needs of the people around them.

### **31. We have a good way of greeting guests in our worship services.**

One way of being a friendly church is helping guests to feel welcome when they arrive at your church. A few suggestions for accomplishing this pleasant task are:

**Greeting Teams.** Greeting teams composed of members of various ages can be used to greet newcomers in the parking lot and at the door. These teams can also be placed strategically throughout the building to help guests find their way to the nursery, to other classrooms and to the sanctuary. These teams should be trained to assist new people without being overbearing—especially those greeters in the parking lot. Guests might feel overwhelmed if they are approached immediately after exiting their car, but they will appreciate a warm smile and a word of direction about which door to enter. Cultural mores of your area will determine whether people are greeted at the door with a kind word, a handshake, or other greetings. Caution your greeters, however, about hugging people of the opposite sex.

**Welcome Booth.** A welcome booth or visitor's center can be an important place for first-time visitors to your church. Make sure that you staff the booth with members trained in being kind, helpful and informative. In addition, stock the booth with well-designed, high-quality pamphlets about your church, the ministers and individual ministries. Also, have a list of Sunday school classes with room numbers from which people can choose.

**Guest Parking.** Have designated parking for guests. Since most newcomers arrive at the published service times, they would be late if they had to park far away and walk a long distance to the church building. Another advantage of guest parking is that it allows your greeters to recognize guests immediately in order to assist them.

**Good Signs.** Lastly, make sure that you have placed signs outside indicating guest parking and inside designating pathways to the sanctuary, the nursery, other classrooms and bathrooms. While most members know where everything is, the guest to your church will need direction. When placing the signs, ask someone who has never been to your church to assist you.

### **37. I like the blend of music and worship styles in our worship services.**

Worship is one of the foundational purposes of the church. If members are not led to worship by the music used in the worship services, consider making some changes in order to help the congregation worship better.

- **Choice of music style does not equal worship.** Before making any change in your worship style, begin by realizing (and teaching your congregation) that no particular music style equals “true” worship. Teach your congregation about the true and biblical meaning of worship. Traditional hymns may or may not prompt the members of your church to worship. Contemporary praise music may or may not lead the members of your church to worship. In reality, worship does not depend on any one particular style of music; it depends on the heart of the person and that person’s relationship to God.
- **Talk to the congregation.** In order to determine what styles of music would work best in your church, talk to the members. Ask them their opinion about adding new songs to the church repertoire. Consider surveying the congregation by asking them questions such as:
  - What type of Christian music do you listen to in your car?
  - What type of Christian music do your children (if applicable) like?
  - What are your favorite Christian songs?

You can provide multiple choice answers to these questions to make the surveys easier to decipher.

- **Prepare the congregation.** After studying and praying over the issue, the staff may decide that the church needs to make some changes in its worship style in order to reach more people. When the decision has been made, begin the transition process by carefully and intentionally preparing the congregation. Speak directly to the congregation instead of making changes and hoping that no one will notice. Allow a period of time for the congregation to pray and reflect upon the changes. Give them opportunities to express their concerns. At the same time, continually put before them the vision of the church and the true meaning of worship.
- **Add songs.** In order to make the transition period more palatable for all involved, begin by adding songs instead of making an immediate switch to a different music style. This method has many advantages. First, it will allow the less enthusiastic members to learn some of the new songs while still being able to sing some of their favorites. Second, it will help the music team adjust to the new elements they will be incorporating in the service. Finally, it promotes a healthier outlook on the process since you are *adding* rather than *deleting*.

### 43. The worship service time and length is just right.

If your church is struggling with the length of its worship time, the problem probably lies in time discipline. If you want to correct timing problems and make your worship services run more efficiently, consider implementing the following rules of time boundaries:

*Rule #1: Begin your worship on time.* Churches that struggle with beginning their worship in a timely fashion either rush or delay their starting time. Both of these errors are equally disruptive to the service. Starting a service too early finds ministers and worshipers out of place and unprepared for the coming worship time. Late starts can also lead to frustration. Forcing people to wait after they have made the effort to be on time causes tension and confusion, leading to a poor atmosphere for worship.

*Rule # 2: Be consistent in your ending time.* Perhaps more important than the discipline you display at the beginning is the discipline you use in ending the service. Many churches (under their pastor's direction) view the designated ending time as an arbitrary marker, intended to give a *general idea* of when the service *might* end—but there is no consistency in ending times. Though “ending on time” may seem compulsive, it will keep your nursery workers, children's church workers, parents, senior adults, the congregation as a whole and visitors, appreciative of your respect for their time.

#### Four helpful time saving ideas:

- **Make sure your schedule of service is clearly indicated in the church bulletin.** If participants understand how the worship should flow and when events are supposed to take place, your service is more likely to run efficiently.
- **Make sure your people know their task beforehand.** If a deacon is supposed to pray or read Scripture during the service, check with him ahead of time to see if he has any questions about his role in the service. Extend that same courtesy to other participants and your staff as well. The more people know about what you want them to do, the better they will be able to accomplish their task.
- **Make sure worship leaders adhere to boundaries.** A well-timed and well-executed worship service depends on cooperation and teamwork. Like a sports team, everyone has a specific role in the worship service. If people are out of position or fail to observe time boundaries, it can negatively affect the whole team. Avoid the timing conflicts by being clear about how long all the team members have to do their jobs. The music minister should utilize his time well, as should the pastor. If everyone knows their time boundaries and adheres to them, the staff will be able to maximize the time involved in their aspect of worship.
- **Make sure to prevent dead time.** If you want to add more minutes to your worship time, perhaps the easiest way to do so is by cutting out dead time. If you analyzed your services, you would probably find a number of minutes that go to waste each week. They appear frequently in moments of transition and are usually barely noticeable. They may seem insignificant at the time, but they rob precious minutes you could be using elsewhere in the service. If you see any dead time in your service, do what you can to correct it.



#### **49. The length of the sermon is just right.**

If responses to this question are negative, either your sermons are running too long or there is something causing your people to feel your sermons are too lengthy. Numerous resources are available to the preacher to aid in time-use efficiency. However, while we encourage you to consult these for a more thorough treatment of this subject, the following are some helpful hints that may significantly alleviate “lengthy” sermons.

*Hint #1: Watch the time.* Though it may be tempting to forget about the clock when you preach, resist that temptation at all cost. Use the clock to help you. Pacing your preaching will keep you accountable to preaching what God has set before you to preach. Over time, watching the clock will make you more efficient and economical in your sermon delivery.

*Hint #2: Conclude when you say you are concluding.* Like animals on the hunt, the congregation jumps on the word *conclusion* like wounded prey. They are keenly aware of this word and they know exactly what it means. When you use it or any other similar phrase, you signal to your people that your sermon is drawing to a close. As a general rule, save your conclusive language for the end of the sermon. If you "conclude" several times, you will only frustrate your congregation.

*Hint#3: End when it is time to end.* When you have made your point, conclude the sermon. Repetition to reinforce a point is good, but repetition simply to lengthen the sermon is seldom positive.

*Hint #4: Variety is good.* Do your best to prevent monotony in your preaching. Be creative about the preaching task. Add additional points to your sermon outline. Preach a sermon from the perspective of a biblical character. Use audio or visual effects to spice up your message from time to time. As you prepare, think about what you could do to add power and excitement to your preaching. Preach the Bible and preach it well, but make sure to give your people variety in your preaching.

## 55. Our sanctuary or worship center is a good facility in which to worship.

Worship can take place in any type of building, but some facilities are more conducive to worship than others. To ensure that your worship center is a good facility in which to worship:

- **Repair old facilities and paraphernalia.** Take a good look at your facility. Is the carpet worn or torn? Is the paint peeling or cracked? Do the windows have broken panes? Are the pew cushions torn or stained? Are the pew Bibles and hymnals in good shape? Are the pulpit and other platform furniture in good shape? Are they ostentatious?

Then, take a look at the various accessories necessary for the worship service. Are any microphone cords in need of repair or replacement? How are the speakers sounding? Are they placed properly to allow everyone to hear? Does the soundboard do what you would like for it to do? Do instruments need to be tuned? Do you need to buy any new instruments? Do you have a video projector? If not, do you need one?

- **Is your facility large enough?** If your facility is 80 percent full during the worship service, you need a larger facility. After the facility reaches 80 percent capacity, attendees (especially guests) will assume that it is full and will not feel welcome. If a new facility is necessary, do not build it at the same location unless there is also enough space to expand the parking.

Another option to a full facility is to begin another service at a different time. Make sure that there is enough time between services for members to enter and exit. In addition, both services should be equal in quality.

- **Does your facility have sufficient lighting?** Although many churches never think about the lighting of the sanctuary, it can have a profound effect on worship. If there is not enough lighting, people are likely to feel sleepy and will not be as alert as they might be. On the other hand, if the lighting is too bright, people will feel as if they are under a spotlight. Consider installing lighting that can be adjusted depending on what is happening in the service. For example, if you want to have a quiet, intimate prayer time, dim the lights during that portion of the service. Conversely, if you desire for people to greet new guests or read a Scripture passage in their Bible, increase the lighting. Use lighting to create the worship atmosphere that you desire instead of allowing it to create an environment by default.

## **61. I have trouble finding a parking place when I come to church.**

It cannot be emphasized enough. Parking is of utmost importance to the growing church. When a parking lot is 80 percent full, the growth of a church will be hindered. Not being able to find a parking place is a hindrance to church growth that neither the members nor the visitors to your church should have to overcome.

This hindrance can be addressed by taking five steps. The **first** step will not solve the parking problem, but it may provide additional spaces for guests: adding signs designating guest spaces. Guests should be provided the best spaces closest to the building. Mark those spaces clearly. Encourage members to leave those spaces open so that guests feel wanted and respected as soon as they arrive.

**Second**, make sure that the parking lot spaces are adequately and properly striped. Unmarked or improperly marked spaces promote ineffective usage of the parking lot.

**Third**, the church staff and leaders should be encouraged to set the example by parking in the spaces located farthest from the building. Hopefully, this act will prompt similar actions by concerned church members. In addition, when appropriate, choir members and other groups who participate in multiple services should be asked to park in the farthest spaces instead of occupying the closest parking spaces during the entire day.

**Fourth**, the church might consider off-site parking. This option is typically not the best one, but it does open spaces for guests and late arrivers. Unused parking lots (e.g., business lots not used during the weekend) provide the best locations. Shuttles will be needed to provide transportation from off-site parking.

**Last**, a final step for easing the parking overload in the church is more of a long-term solution. Your church's designated group (maintenance, trustees, outdoor greeters, etc.) should regularly count the number of spaces left unused in the parking lot. When less than 30 percent of the parking is left, the church should be prepared to provide more parking.

- If possible, increase parking on the church's current property.
- Purchase more property to increase parking.

One caution—some churches add additional worship services to provide more worship space, but they fail to consider the parking issue. Remember, even additional facility space will not solve space problems if there is no room in the parking lot. Guests or attendees who find no place to park will likely go elsewhere.

## **67. I like the order we go through worship.**

Some people thrive on tradition while others want to see change. People's opinions of worship services are no different: some want tradition while others want to have variation. A good option for appealing to both tastes is to use the traditional elements of your worship service, but vary the order of these from time to time.

For example, Church A's worship service normally uses the following order:

- Prayer
- Song
- Song
- Announcements
- Song
- Offering
- Special Music
- Sermon
- Invitation
- Song

To add some variation to their service, Church A decided to use the following order of worship periodically:

- Announcements
- Prayer of Adoration
- Song
- Prayer for Missions
- Song
- Special Music at the same time as Offering
- Song
- Sermon
- Invitation
- Song

The interesting part of this order of worship is that it uses all of the same traditional elements as the previous service with only the addition of one prayer. While the addition of new elements must be handled with care, subtle changes like these can bring new life to your worship service.

### 73. Our worship services are prayerful experiences.

Normally, most churches relegate extended periods of prayer to the weekly prayer meeting, but prayer should play a role in all services. The Sunday morning service should be a worshipful *and* prayerful time.

Prayer can be incorporated into your church's worship service in a variety of manners and it may take on different forms. For example, confession, adoration, praise, supplication, intercession and thanksgiving are all motives for prayer. A **confessional prayer time** can be included in a worship service by having a time of silence at the beginning of the service. This time can help prepare the congregant's heart for worship. This prayer time may be totally silent, instrumental music may be playing in the background and media can be used by projecting different verses or images which inspire repentance.

**Prayers of adoration and praise** may also be included in the worship service. These prayers, which recognize who God is and what he has done, can be prompted by specific readings from the Psalms. These prayers can be different from the usual manner of one person standing and praying aloud while the rest of the congregation prays silently. For example, three people can be asked to pray by completing the phrase, "God, I praise (or worship) you for your \_\_\_\_\_." In addition, an open time for prayers of worship and praise can be given to allow for people to pray throughout the sanctuary individually or in small groups.

The **time of supplication or intercession** during a worship service usually should not be as long as it is during the prayer meeting and it should be specific. This time may be used to pray for a particular need in the church. Also, it may be used to pray for each of the different ministries or ministers individually. Missions education can also be incorporated into this time by praying for a specific people group or country that your church has adopted.

Lastly, **prayers of thanksgiving** can and should be included in the worship service often. This time can be inspired by members sharing testimonies of what the Lord has done recently in their lives. Those sharing their testimonies should be given specific directions on how to share their testimony and on the amount of time that has been allotted to them. A good time of giving thanks to the Lord through testimonies during the worship service can be inspirational to all.

Consider these other practical ways to pray in a worship service as well:

- **"Focus on the family" prayer**—pray for a particular family in the church each week
- **"Community" prayer**—pray for a group of officials in your community (teachers, political leaders, firemen, etc.)
- **"Lord's Prayer" praying**—pray the Lord's Prayer together, or use the Lord's Prayer to lead to other prayer (e.g., praising God for his greatness after praying "Hallowed be thy name")
- **"Missionary" praying**—pray by name for missionaries around the world
- **"Silent" praying**—lead the congregation to meditate on God and listen silently for him to guide them

## **79. We have good participation in singing in our worship services.**

Worship is always best if the greatest percentages of attenders are actually participating in worship. If church members are not participating in the singing at your church, the problem may lie more with the worship ministry than with the members themselves.

The first step in correcting this problem is to teach church members what true worship is. Worship is not about musical style, but it is instead about Christians pouring out their love to God. Study the Psalms. Show the many different words and phrases that David and the other psalmists used to worship God. Teach about other worship experiences in the Bible, such as Isaiah's encounter with God in Isaiah 6.

The design of the worship order should also inspire people to worship through singing. If your church ineffectively uses the same order of worship every Sunday, try varying it a bit. For example, if your worship time is divided with the announcements in the middle, try mentioning only the most necessary announcements at the beginning or at the end of the service. Add a time of prayer in which you encourage the congregation to pray silently to God, expressing their worship and praise to him. Another idea is to string songs together without breaks in the middle so that there is continuous worship.

Third, organize your worship service so that everything, from the music to the prayers to the sermon, focuses on one theme. For example, if the sermon will be on God's faithfulness, the service should incorporate songs that praise and worship God for his faithfulness. The special music should emphasize God's faithfulness. Even the offering time can focus on how God has been faithful by providing jobs, health, etc.

If your church's participation in singing is weak, consider using songs with which most worshippers are familiar. Though they may or may not be the basic style your church typically uses, be willing to use familiar songs to increase participation.

Finally, take the time needed to teach new songs when introducing them into a worship service. Nothing is more uncomfortable in a worship service than when the worship leader assumes that the congregation will learn the song automatically. One simple strategy for introducing a new song is:

- First, have a soloist or vocal group present the song as special music
- Then, sing slowly the first verse of the song as a congregation
- Third, bring the second verse up to tempo and sing through the rest of the song as a congregation
- Repeat the song (or a portion of it) later in the service
- Use the song often within the first month of introducing it so that members will recognize it.

Following this strategy will allow the members of your congregation to become familiar with the song and they will become more and more comfortable singing it. Introducing new songs takes time, but it can add renewed vitality to the worship service.

One caution to mention about introducing new songs, though, is that sometimes a new song simply will not work in your particular church setting. There are multiple reasons why this may happen, but sometimes there is simply no reason. When this problem occurs, avoid catastrophe and lackadaisical worship by simply retiring the song from the church repertoire.

## **85. A non-Christian would be comfortable in our worship services.**

While the worship service is directed to God, it should not alienate the non-Christian. To make sure that this does not happen, we make the following suggestions:

**Make use of greeters and the welcome center.** Sometimes it is intimidating for a person to go to an establishment that he or she has never visited. Visiting a church for the first time can also be challenging. Make it easier for the first-time guest by stationing greeters in your parking lot and at the doors to guide newcomers. Train these greeters to be helpful and attentive without being aggressive and overbearing. A welcome center can also help visitors by providing them information about your church's different ministries. It should be in a highly visible area just inside the main door of the church and it should have a sign designating it as the welcome center. Train your friendliest members to serve in the greeter and welcome center ministries. Since many visitors decide whether or not to return to your church within minutes of their arrival, these two ministries can help make their arrival at your church non-stressful.

**Do not call attention to guests.** It is often the custom of churches to have guests stand, to have them remain seated while the members stand, or any number of other methods to recognize the new person. Most people, however, prefer to remain anonymous when first visiting the church and to direct this amount of attention to them makes them incredibly uncomfortable. Try having a time of greeting in the course of the service where everyone present says hello to everyone else. This time will allow guests to be welcomed without singling them out. If you would like to have a record of guests, ask everyone (members included) to fill out a bulletin tear-off and to place it in the offering plate during the service or leave it in another designated area at the end of the service. Besides providing a record of your guests' visit, the tear-off can be designed to allow members to give new address information or any other communication that the church office needs.

**Music.** Do not ever assume that everyone will know a particular song. Churches will sometimes have a song that they sing every week during the welcome time or a song that they sing after taking Communion. While regular attenders will automatically know these songs, the non-Christian will have no idea what the words are and will feel uncomfortable since everyone else is singing. Make sure the words to all songs are included in the bulletin, are projected visually, or are otherwise made available.

**Scripture.** Imagine that you have never held a Bible in your hands. You may have seen one somewhere, but you have never actually opened one. You have no idea that the Old Testament comes before the New Testament. You do not know what the word "prophet" means. You have never seen a book where separate entries were not listed alphabetically. And you definitely do not know that when the person on the stage says that he is reading John 3:16 that the first number indicates a chapter number and the second number indicates a verse number. Can you imagine how helpless you would feel in a worship service when everyone else is turning to the passage and you are sitting there with a Bible that you have no idea how to use? This is how a non-Christian might feel in a typical worship service. To help non-Christians through this struggle, try announcing the page number where the passage is found in the pew Bible. A second option is to have the Scripture passage projected onto a screen. The members of the church should still be encouraged to bring their Bibles so they can take notes, but the non-Christian in your service will appreciate having the passage projected by a video projector with a professional PowerPoint presentation. If a video projector is cost prohibitive for your church, you can use an overhead projector with quality transparencies. The idea is to provide the Scriptures in a way that the non-Christian will be able to read them along with the rest of the congregation.

## 91. I like all the elements of our worship service.

In a perfect world church members are content with the different elements in the worship service. Unfortunately, this scenario is not true of all churches in the United States today. To encourage more active participation in the worship service, try slowly introducing some new elements into the service. Here are a few suggestions:

- **Interviews.** Interviews can be used to help someone share a testimony or they can be used to highlight a particular ministry or need in the church. Hearing about a need for more nursery workers sounds more appealing when it comes directly from a teacher who can share some of the joys of that ministry.
- **Videos.** Try highlighting a sermon point by inserting a video clip at the appropriate time. In addition, music videos can be used instead of special music if they fit the theme of the service. Also, video projection of biblical images may add to the worship time.
- **Drama.** Short skits are gradually becoming more acceptable in churches and they can be used effectively to portray a real-life situation that highlights the biblical focus of the service. Besides skits, dramatic monologues and readings can also be used.
- **Ambience.** Take a moment to consider issues such as the lighting and decorating scheme of the worship center. Can these be improved so as to enhance the worship experience? Can lighting be dimmed during a reflective time of silence in the service? Is the carpet worn? Is peeling paint an eyesore? What about that color scheme that comes straight from the 70s?
- **Visit other churches.** See what other churches are doing—especially if they are reaching a demographic segment that is lacking in your church.

Do not be afraid to try something new. If it works, great; if it does not, evaluate what went wrong. The worst thing that can happen is that your worship will be vitalized as members expectantly wait to see what will take place next!



## **97. There are too many distractions in our worship service.**

Distractions in a worship service are not only an annoyance; they can also be a stumbling block to non-Christians. While there are many different types of possible distractions, a few are mentioned below with some practical tips for their elimination.

- **Popping Sound Systems**

This distraction ranks at the top of the list for being the most annoying. If your church has this problem, first check all of the cables to make sure they are in working condition. Then, analyze your other equipment. Is it too old to be functional? Can it be repaired? If you are not able to make these determinations, hire a sound engineer to come in as a consultant for a day. The consultant can also train church members who work with the sound equipment. Usually, most sound problems are the result of human error or lack of experience. The money used to correct this annoyance will be well spent.

- **Announcements**

Announcement: It is no longer necessary to read church announcements aloud! If too much service time is being devoted to reading the announcements, use print and audio-visual media to correct this problem. Print announcements in the church bulletin or newsletter. Run slide presentations prior to and after the service with the current week's activities. Use service time only for the most urgent or important announcements and put them at the end of the service.

- **Rowdy Children**

This distraction is the most difficult to handle for fear of embarrassing or alienating the parents. Perhaps the best option for handling this situation is a note in the bulletin suggesting that children would be more comfortable in the quality children's classes that your church provides. Another option to consider is to have caring greeters in the area outside the sanctuary to suggest and to direct newcomers to the childcare area. A third option is to position several kind and caring women throughout the sanctuary. When a disturbance occurs, one of these ladies can carefully and quietly approach the parents and offer to accompany them to a children's class. If the parents refuse, however, they should not be compelled to leave. Most likely, they will understand the situation and will appreciate the help.

### **103. I have been to other churches and I think our worship services are among the best.**

Our desire in our worship services should be to honor and glorify God and to lead members to worship him. These desires can be fulfilled by designing services that lift up the name of Jesus and that are carried out with excellence.

#### **Lifting Up the Name**

Many times worship services seek to please man. While it is advisable to create experiences that guide Christians to worship, our first goal is to lift up the name of Jesus. Make sure that all songs and all other elements of the service point worshipers to Christ and not to man. Analyze the lyrics of the songs to be used. Are they God-focused? Do they express the worshipers' praise for God? Examine the pastor's message. Is it more pop psychology than Bible? Will people leave the service knowing something more about God than they knew prior to the service?

#### **The Issue of Excellence**

The church, as it lifts up the name of Christ, should set an example in quality. Worship services should not be organized five minutes before the service (nor during the service as the minister of music and pastor confer to see who speaks next). These services should be planned with the guidance of the Holy Spirit and in deep prayer. After designing the program, everyone involved in the service, from the ushers to the pastor, should be informed of everything that will take place in the service and when they are to participate. Occasionally, everyone should participate in a rehearsal of the service so that they understand their role. This type of rehearsal will especially be important when introducing new elements to the service. Additional music rehearsals should be held separately. The goal of these rehearsals should not be to have everything "perfect" in the service. The goal is to present worship that is pleasing to God by giving him our best.

## **109. The Holy Spirit uses our worship services to lead people to make decisions for God.**

Our worship services should be a time when the Holy Spirit may convict sinners and inspire saints. To analyze your worship service, ask these questions:

- **Is the Holy Spirit recognized?**  
Sometimes, in an effort to avoid ultra-charismatic tendencies, we fail to recognize the third person of the Trinity. Consider preaching a series on the Holy Spirit. What is his role in our lives? Why do we need the Holy Spirit?
- **Are your services adaptable?**  
While we should effectively plan and organize worship services, we should also be sensitive to the prompting of the Holy Spirit. Perhaps the Spirit will prompt the minister of music to insert an unannounced song into the program during the service. Maybe the pastor will feel inspired to change sermon topics after looking out over those gathered that morning. These types of occurrences will not be the norm if we ask the Holy Spirit to guide us in our planning, but they may happen. When they do, we should not feel bound by what has been planned.
- **Are times provided for response?**  
Sometimes the Holy Spirit moves upon people during the worship service, but they do not have an opportunity to respond. Provide various opportunities for people to respond to a call to salvation, a call of rededication, or a call to the ministry.

## **115. There is the right emphasis on money and stewardship in our worship services.**

As most pastors know, people who don't attend church sometimes complain about an overemphasis on money, to explain why they do not participate in a church. This complaint has led many churches to discourage preaching on tithing, but avoidance is not the correct answer. The Bible clearly teaches that Christians should be stewards of the possessions God has given them and that Christians should tithe a percentage of their income. To help your church gain a right emphasis on money and stewardship:

**Preach a regular series on stewardship.** Some churches may find it helpful to add a preaching series on stewardship to their church calendar. If the members of your church become accustomed to hearing sermons about stewardship, they will not find it out of the ordinary. They also will know that they will hear messages on money on a regular basis (yearly) but that the pastor will not be preaching on money every week. In addition, with a regular series on the subject, the members will come to recognize that stewardship is as much a part of the daily life of the Christian as prayer, Bible study, etc.

Remember, however, that stewardship is not only about money. The series should also include sermons related to proper priorities, the use of time, the use of spiritual gifts, etc.

**Advise guests.** If your church collects an offering during the worship service, let the visitors know that they are not expected to contribute. You can let them know verbally and by placing a statement in the bulletin saying that the collection is a time for *members* to give their tithes and offerings to God. Guests should not feel compelled to participate.

**Do not be embarrassed.** Many times pastors do not preach on stewardship issues because they feel that they are begging for money. Stewardship is another spiritual discipline to be developed in a Christian's life. The minister teaching on the issue should view the subject in this manner as he or she seeks to help the church's members grow in their walk with the Lord.

## **121. We have plenty of room for growth in our worship facility or auditorium.**

Physical facilities represent one of the most talked-about topics in church growth. It can also represent the largest financial burden of the church. Making the wrong choice could lead to financial disaster.

Generally, it has been said that when 80 percent of a facility is in use, it is time to make necessary changes to allow for expansion and growth. Physical facilities alone cannot predict the growth or decline of a church. They can, however, when coupled with complementing or conflicting elements, serve to set the course for the future of the church.

To ensure that your facility is of adequate size and capable of sustaining growth, four areas will need to be evaluated: parking, sanctuary, nursery and educational space. To begin, evaluate your parking. Once your parking lot is full, prospective members may drive past your building, assuming that there is no room inside if there is no room in the parking lot. It is vital to plan wisely and have plenty of space for people to park so that there is ample room for growth.

A good rule-of-thumb measurement is 80 percent. If your capacity level in any one area is already at 80 percent, it could be time to grow. Take your sanctuary for example; if it is at 80 percent capacity, visitors will not take pleasure in climbing over five regular attendees to get to the one seat in the middle of a row. Sanctuary size is crucial in determining whether or not to build.

Many churches have opted to solve their parking dilemma by offering multiple services on the same day and possibly on Saturdays. This alternative not only alleviates the parking problem but provides additional space in the sanctuary as well. When combined with additional Sunday school times, members and guests have a plethora of options as to when they actually attend the service.

Next, evaluate the space you currently have for children and educational learning. Parents today are hesitant to leave their children in a facility that is over-crowded. An assessment will need to be made of room size (per class) and the average attendance. Is the room capacity at 80 percent? If so, it could be time to expand. Children and adults are more comfortable when there is adequate space provided for learning.

Naturally, growth does not always include increasing your facility size. Often, if building does occur and it is not God's calling or timing, members will suddenly find themselves in a predicament with a financial burden. It is important to remember that all church expansion plans need to be saturated with abundant prayer. Proverbs 16:9 says, "The mind of man plans this way, but the Lord directs his steps."

## **127. We regularly have guests (visitors) in our worship services.**

One goal of the church should be to act as a lighthouse to the local community. If your church teaches solely from the Bible, disciples its members, evangelizes and serves the community, then it could be on the right track to attracting new worshipers. If a non-believer is going to “open up” and take a step toward a local church, then the worship service will generally be his first step. It is much easier to get lost in a crowd during worship than be on display in a small group in Sunday school.

So, what do you do if you see that fewer guests are darkening your door? Before you even being to discuss possible changes for worship understand that you could enter into what some consider serious conflict. For many, the style of worship brings memories of receiving Christ or of family. Removing these elements can often cause grief for some. However, if you keep your congregation open to options, keep them involved and keep it all scriptural, God will work through the process.

There are several areas you should consider when looking to “update” your worship service:

**Quality.** The average American is accustomed to the “quality” of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. We like the technological advances in media production and the style and convenience of products offered to us. If we drive a \$30,000 car, live in a \$150,000 home and work in a \$2.5 million dollar office facility, why should we not give our best to our church? Unkempt facilities, neglected repairs, outdated equipment and uncomfortable seating are a few of the distractions to our guests. Remember that we owe our best to God. Following through, however, does not require millions of dollars. A positive and caring attitude along with a “church workday” could make all the difference.

**Atmosphere.** There are several elements involving atmosphere that must be considered: celebrative, friendly and relaxed. We come to church to worship the one true and living God and because of that our services should be one of the most joyous and exciting times of the week! Our attitudes, including those produced during a service, can be contagious. Make sure the attitude you pass along is worthy.

A church should be full of friendly people. After all, Jesus said that loving our neighbor was one of the most important responses you could have, next to loving God. Your worship leaders can set the tone for this during the service. Create a time of “welcome” where everyone greets everyone. Encourage attendees to get out of their seats to meet others. Engage members to sit with new guests they may meet during this time. If we create an exuberant, friendly atmosphere, people will respond and reach out to others.

A relaxed atmosphere can be a great tool as well. Most churches’ original structure required that each service be a formal event. Formality, however, can discourage some non-believers for a variety of reasons. Growing churches today have “relaxed” their structures and have opted for an informal style during the service. This relaxed style involves a change in dress. Instead of a coat and tie, many opt for business casual in order to make the guest feel comfortable, or offer coffee and doughnuts before and after the service. Today’s lifestyle is generally not as formal as it used to be. In order to reach the lost, we must meet them where they are in life.

**Music.** The trends in music have continued to change drastically over the last 200 years. Music has always been a topic of debate in the church. From the decision to worship with all hymns to

singing new praise choruses, many people have a clear opinion about which music style they prefer. While some churches have remedied this problem by offering multiple services, each with its own musical style, others may not be able to comply with this method. Generally, you should consider the congregation you currently have as well as those you hope to reach. Whatever your choice, make sure that your songs honor God.

While the idea to change or update a service should involve serious thought and contemplation, one area to avoid is theological compromise. To reach the lost, we must never water down the Word of God. We can change the music, update the facilities and sit by guests, but we must teach that sin is sin and without Jesus Christ, there is no hope.

### **133. Even as a church grows, it is best to keep everyone together in one morning worship service.**

If you are part of a growing church and your facilities are beginning to be crowded, it may be time to consider some alternatives. If your capacity is past 80 percent, then it will likely prohibit you from seeing new faces in your congregation anytime soon. Overcrowding is an immediate turnoff to the new guest visiting for the first time.

When congregations grow to a point that someone mentions multiple services, the immediate thought is a split church. Not so. As a church grows larger, members may already complain that they do not know half the people they sit with every Sunday. So would it not be healthier to offer multiple services so that a group can actually get to know one another? This method allows individuals to get the “small church” feeling with “big church” resources.

Some benefits of multiple services are:

- **They free workers and resources.** When more people and resources are spread out, you are able to touch more people with your ministry. If your church has seen growth, it is an opportunity to allow God to call more people into a ministry because there are more areas that need help.
- **Removal of inconvenience.** In today’s society, people often say that there is no time for church on Sundays with all of their other responsibilities. The option of multiple services will allow some who may have to work on Sundays to worship at a different time, possibly on Saturday evenings.
- **They offer a variety of types of services.** While the same biblical teaching can occur in all services, multiple services will allow for the possibility of formal and informal services. They are also a way to provide different styles of music.
- **They allow for additional growth.** Once you have spread your people out, you will have opened up a few seats. What an opportunity to see God work and fill those seats with hungry souls who need the gospel.



### **139. My faith in God is strengthened by our worship services.**

It can be an elating moment to walk away from a service and realize that your faith has grown because of what you just experienced in the service. God's joy abounds when we grow deeper in our faith to him. What about everyone else? Are they experiencing this same growth?

There is no set plan to ensure that your worship services are leading people to worship God. We can make sure that the instruments are finely tuned, singers are prepared and Scripture is ready to be imparted with the songs. During the service, we can shed tears, lift our hands and close our eyes, but these may not indicate true worship. It is only when we allow the Spirit of God to reach in and touch our hearts that true worship begins to happen. It is only when we believe that the words we are singing are purposefully true and allow those words to transform our very existence that true worship begins to happen.

It is difficult for some people to actively focus their hearts and minds on worship. With our hectic schedules, a few will use this time to grab "a moment" for themselves or as a time when they can prepare their thoughts on the upcoming week's to-do list. But God has assured us that if we give him our commitment, he will be there and strengthen us through that faith. We will only draw closer to God when we come to him by faith.

While it is crucial that your worship service be planned with prayer, thought and Scripture, remember that God does not materialize through the music itself. Instead, it is through the confidence we have in his being. Continue to tune the instruments and choose the songs, but come before the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords with faith that is ready to grow. Teach others how to grow closer to God through faith.

### **145. I would excitedly invite an unchurched friend to a worship service.**

Only 2 percent of church-going Christians invite unchurched people to church. Yet 96 percent of the unchurched said they would come if invited to church.

Successful evangelistic churches encourage their members to invite the unchurched. We have seen several ways in which churches create an atmosphere for inviting the unchurched.

1. *Intentionality* – Successful evangelistic churches are always intentional about reminding the members to invite the unchurched. Through announcements, in the sermon, in the church newsletter and through casual conversation, church leaders must be persistent in reminding the congregation to invite the unchurched.
2. *Accountability* – Evangelism and invitation to church do not typically happen by accident. Church leaders should seek to devise some type of accountability process which encourages members to invite the unchurched. One outstanding possibility is to have small groups or Sunday school classes request prayers for unchurched people each week. This process will remind the church members that lost and unchurched people matter to God and encourage them to invite their friends, relatives, neighbors and acquaintances.
3. *Friend Day* – A Friend Day is an outstanding way to show members how to invite others. The best Friend Day source is published by Church Growth Institute and written by Elmer Towns. The instructions in this resource packet are explicit and detailed.

For further ideas, see Question 146.

“ . . . so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.”

--Ephesians 4:12b-13 NIV

**Discipleship is...** loving obedience. Jesus calls his disciples to follow his teachings through self-denial. This attitude of self-denial is not particularly popular today, but it was not popular during Jesus' time either. Being a disciple of Christ, however, demands it.

The articles found in this section address the issue of promoting discipleship within the local church. While discipleship is not a program, it can be encouraged through special mentoring relationships and training classes. New Christians should have the opportunity to learn how to study the Bible and how to develop a personal devotional life. Older Christians should continue to mature while lending guidance. In this manner, the entire body of Christ will be edified.

# DISCIPLESHIP



# Discipleship

The following questions about discipleship are addressed in the Church Health Survey:

2. I am involved in regular Bible study in my church.
8. I am growing in maturity as a Christian in my church.
14. Most attending our church are in regular Bible study.
20. New Christians are disciplined immediately after conversion in our church.
26. Children in our church have opportunities to grow in maturity as Christians.
32. I would rate the level of knowledge of the Bible as high in our church.
38. Our Sunday school/small groups are very strong in Bible study.
44. We tend to lose members within a few months after they have joined.
50. Our church seems to lose more people than we gain.
56. I would describe the commitment level of the majority of our members as low.
62. The people in our church understand the church's doctrine, what we believe.
68. New members receive good training and information when they join our church.
74. Our church does a very good job at discipling members.
80. We have many people involved in one-on-one discipling or mentoring.
86. I have grown as a Christian since being at this church.
92. People in our church are given good training on how to develop a prayer life and quiet time.
98. People in our church are given many opportunities to learn how to share and defend their faith.
104. The lifestyles of the members at our church are significantly different than the world's lifestyle.
110. I know what I believe as a Christian, and why I believe it.
116. The more mature Christians in our church have a strong desire to help the less mature Christians in our church.
123. Someone personally disciplined me, teaching me how to follow Christ and grow as a Christian.
129. I feel adequately prepared to disciple a new believer.
135. Our church does a good job of training believers to give financially to the church.
141. I have been trained how to read and interpret the Bible correctly.
147. Discipleship classes in our church are usually boring or irrelevant.

## 2. I am involved in regular Bible study in my church.

If you find that your congregation is not participating in church-based Bible study, consider implementing some of the following ideas.

- **Bible study classes.** Introduce some new Bible study classes. You could do these during the Sunday school hour or within a Sunday evening discipleship format. Promote these studies to the best of your ability and invite some of your best teachers to lead them.  
*Option #1: Begin a Sunday school program or strengthen your existing one:* A well-planned and well-organized Sunday school program can be a powerful ministry tool. If one is not already in place, make plans to institute one as soon as possible. If your program is lackluster, investigate ways to make it more effective.<sup>1</sup>  
*Option #2: Small group book studies:* Choose a single book of the Bible for the study group to focus on. Encourage the group to spend time working through the book at the pace they feel most comfortable. Do whatever you can to make the atmosphere of the study as conducive to learning and growth as possible.  
*Option #3: Small group studies:* Implement small group studies focused on teaching individuals how to study the Bible more effectively. Materials from Kay Arthur (“Inductive Bible Study”), the Navigators, or Howard Hendricks (“Effective Bible Study”), not only teach your congregation how to study the Bible, but they also help members study the Bible in a group setting.
- **Adopt a church-wide standard translation.** One indirect way you can help your congregation become more involved in Bible study is by adopting a standard text for church use. Encourage everyone to use the same translation in Sunday school, Bible studies and the worship service.
- **Promote the use of Bible software.** Encourage your people to put Bible software on their computers or perhaps even on PDAs. At home, it can help with Bible study and at work it can help in witnessing. Even something as simple as a scriptural screensaver can help people focus on the Word of God.
- **Select a congregational reading plan.** Many people do not know where to start reading the Bible so they randomly flip through the Scriptures with no direction. If they were given a systematic reading plan, they would have the needed structure to help them get the most out of the Bible. Consider publishing a reading plan for the church that takes them through the entire Bible in one year.
- **Create a Bible reading challenge.** Select a month out of the year and a book out of the Bible and challenge your congregation to read through that book (one chapter a day) for one month. Give them a definite starting and ending date for the challenge and keep it well publicized. Once the challenge is over, set aside time in a worship service for people to give testimonies about what God has taught them through the challenge. You could also use this idea in a yearlong program with something similar to “The One-Year Bible” by Tyndale Publishers.
- **Develop a one-to-one enlistment program to get members involved in Bible study.** Invite your members to sign up to be Bible reading accountability partners. Give them a

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<sup>1</sup> See Ken Hemphill’s book *Revitalizing the Sunday Morning Dinosaur* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1996).

set study guide and encourage them to meet on a weekly basis to discuss what they have learned.

## **8. I am growing in maturity as a Christian in my church.**

If your church members feel that they are not experiencing spiritual growth, consider implementing a mentorship program. A mentorship program will give new and young believers the opportunity to be discipled by older and more experienced church members. Not only will a mentorship program help new believers grow in spiritual maturity, it will also help to sharpen the discipling skills of established church members as they encourage and exhort other believers in their faith. As you begin a mentorship program, consider the following:

*The necessity of education* – When your church begins a mentorship program, there must be adequate training and encouragement for the mentors. While some may argue that every Christian should be prepared to disciple another, more often than not, established Christians do not feel prepared or equipped to help others grow in their faith. With this reality in mind, allow ample quality time to train your mentors. During their training, equip them with plenty of materials for mentoring and teach them (by example) how to mentor another Christian. Even after the initial mentorship training is complete, bring mentors together for additional training and accountability. Make sure all your mentors know they have a support base in their staff whenever they need guidance.

*The likeness rule* – Choose your mentors wisely. Your goal is to raise up godly and committed believers. If your mentors do not meet these two criteria, it is not probable that their students will either. Key things to look for in quality mentors: commitment to daily quiet time, quality prayer life, commitment to the church, regularity in tithing, commitment to evangelism, good family relationships, and a good reputation among believers and non-believers.

*The commonality key* – When you begin matching mentors with students, be sure to pair individuals who will be compatible with one another. Favorable mentoring relationships can usually be created by administering a simple personality evaluation with basic questions about personal preferences in a variety of areas. From time to time poor mentorship matches will occur for one reason or another. It will be important to handle these situations with care. Explain the situation to the student and mentor and repair them with a more favorable match.

*The gender boundary* – As elementary as it may sound, make sure that no mentoring relationship ever takes place between members of the opposite sex. Even if the situation seems exceptional, never allow cross-gender mentoring under any circumstances.

*The multiplication expectation* – With every mentoring relationship that develops there should be the expectation that within time all students will themselves become mentors. Not only will the expectation motivate current participants, it will also set into place a matrix of mentors for new generations of students. If a mentorship program takes root and matures, the spiritual depth and commitment of your church will dramatically increase.

#### **14. Most of those who attend our church are involved in regular Bible study.**

Most Christians who have grown up in the church know they should spend time reading and studying their Bibles every day. Unfortunately, Bible study is frequently one of the first disciplines believers set aside when they become caught up in the daily trappings of life. Bringing believers back to the Bible is not always easy, but it is needed. If your congregation is going to grow in knowledge, wisdom and spirit, then your members must be in God's Word. The following suggestions are practical ways to develop better Bible study habits.

**Bible study tracks.** While many of your people may read the Bible from time to time, studying the Scriptures is an altogether different matter. If your members are struggling with understanding how to study God's Word, it may be beneficial to begin a Bible study program. Within a stepped program (3 to 4 tracks) church members can be taught a systematic approach to Bible study.

**Bible study time variety.** Most churches conduct worship services on Sunday mornings. Some churches also have services on Sunday evenings and others do an additional study on Wednesday nights. If you have a congregation made up of factory workers, college students, business people, or special groups, adding to (or even changing) your worship schedule may be advantageous to your church body. If you have workers in your church who work third shift, try creating a special Bible study time for them. You could hold a Bible study on Thursday nights at 9 p.m. for college students. Maybe you could plan a Friday lunch Bible study for the business people of your congregation.

**Bible study emphasis from the pulpit.** Encouraging and exhorting the congregation to study the Bible must come from pastoral leadership. The church body must realize that listening to preaching alone is not enough to experience a relationship with God. Here are a few ideas to help convey the importance of Bible study to your congregation.

- 1) *Congregation Bible study commitment.* After preaching a series concerning the importance of Bible study, select a book of the Bible for your entire church body to study for a particular time period. Once you have made the selection, set aside a special commitment time focusing on Bible study during your next worship service. Invite members to pledge to read a chapter of the selected book each day for the designated time period. When you complete the book, plan a special time during the service where members are free to share about what God has revealed to them.
- 2) *Scripture-reliant sermons.* If you are not already doing so, try preaching through a book systematically (verse by verse) for several months. Using this format will give churchgoers incentive to bring their Bibles and follow along as you preach.
- 3) *"Bring your Bible drive."* If you do announcements at the end of your service, have a church member who is good with public speaking invite members to bring their Bibles to church.
- 4) *Testimonies about Bible study* – Watch for people in your congregation who are growing in their faith by Scripture study. If appropriate, ask them to share a testimony during a worship service.

For further ideas about Bible study see the response to Question 2.



## **20. New believers are discipled immediately after conversion in our church.**

When people make the decision to become a Christian, it is essential for your church to have a plan in place to disciple them. Our goal is to see people come to know Christ, but it is also to see people grow in Christ. The following tips will give your church a starting point for developing a discipleship program. Some of the ideas will be easy to implement, while the others may take more time to establish.

*Tip #1: Develop a "faith mentoring" program.* A faith mentoring program can be created by finding believers in your church who are willing to disciple new believers. Prepare them ahead of time by taking them through a class on learning how to disciple. After they have completed the program they are ready to be assigned an individual to disciple. The next time someone makes a profession of faith in your church, immediately assign a faith mentor. It will be the mentor's duty over the next six months to help the person learn what it means to be a Christian and how to live the Christian life. Be sure to match people with members of the same sex to avoid possible problems.

*Tip #2: Develop a new believers' class.* Either during the Sunday school hour or during an evening class format, invite all new members to take part in a new believers class. During the course of the class (perhaps 10-12 weeks), lead individuals through foundational teachings of Christianity including Scripture reading, prayer, baptism, tithing, fasting, worship, Bible memorization, evangelism, discipleship and fellowship. This class will both instruct and equip individuals on how to live and operate within the church body. If a faith mentorship program is in place, new believers can discuss material presented in the class with their mentor.

*Tip #3: Transition into a Sunday school or small group program.* After new members complete the new believers class, integrate them into a Sunday school or small group class. Here the new believer will transition into the church body. By using this approach, you will help newcomers feel more at ease as they move into a small group setting.

*Tip #4: Develop a church-wide discipleship program.* While many people within your church may be lifelong Christians, it is possible that many of them are immature in their faith. The implementation of a discipleship program may sound difficult, but in the long term it will yield great fruit within your congregation. As you begin, put together a two- year discipleship plan. Select teachers and lead them through a discipleship program first. The "Masterlife" program and "Experiencing God" are excellent resources to begin these studies.

## **26. Children in our church have opportunities to grow in maturity as Christians.**

Children's Sunday school classes should not be merely an hour of free babysitting. Instead, they should be a time when children are given a foundation for their faith. Studies show that most people become Christians during their childhood or adolescence, so children's workers must offer opportunities for these new Christians to mature.

**Teach children to pray.** Children can and should be taught to pray. Younger children may begin by simply thanking God for the trees, the water, family, etc. Older children, however, can develop a deeper prayer life. Encourage them to pray for missionaries. Encourage them to pray that God will give them Christian friends. Encourage them to begin praying about what God might want them to be when they grow up. Children in your church should learn from an early age that prayer works and is an integral part of a Christian's life.

**Teach children to memorize Scripture.** Children can usually memorize Scripture more easily than adults. Provide them small note cards with Scripture passages that will increase their faith. Also, allow them to choose verses to memorize. For example, you might ask a class of 10-year-olds what types of problems they are having. Answers might include fights with a brother or sister, their parents' divorce, problems in school, lack of friends, etc. Then, using a concordance, help the child find a verse or verses that address the issue. Hold the children accountable by asking them each week to repeat the assigned verse(s).

**Teach children to develop a quiet time.** Children, like all other Christians, need to spend time alone with God. Even if children spend only five minutes a day reading their Bible and praying, they will increase their spiritual maturity. First, to encourage them to develop a quiet time, make sure the children have a Bible that is appropriate for their reading level. Then, help them decide at what time they will have their devotional: when they wake up, before breakfast, after school, before dinner, etc. Discuss with them that five minutes might seem like a long time at the beginning so they should start with three minutes and build their time to five and even 10 minutes (depending on the age of the child) during the next month. Last, help the children in your church develop a plan for their quiet time. You may consider providing weekly assignments that will complement the following week's lesson.

### **32. I would rate the level of knowledge of the Bible as high in our church.**

Several ways exist to improve the level of biblical knowledge in your church.

First, consider designating **a standard translation** of the Bible to be used in services and in Bible studies. A church should not label one translation as the “best” version, but it may encourage all members to use one translation in order to increase understanding and to be able to read passages aloud during services and classes. No Christian version of the Bible, however, should be rejected for use by members.

Second, encourage all members to enroll in **Bible studies and Sunday school classes**. Sunday school or other organized Bible studies are important for many reasons. While they provide a small group atmosphere for fellowship, prayer and ministry, they also provide an opportunity for studying the Bible in a small group where questions can be asked in a comfortable setting. Classes should be available for all ages and teachers should be well trained. In addition, make sure that the materials your teachers are using are theologically sound.

Third, make sure that **the minister’s preaching** is biblical and instructive. (See Question 7)

### **38. Our Sunday school or small groups are very strong in Bible study.**

Every week thousands of small groups and Sunday school classes meet for their ritual Bible study hour. Oddly, as many sit through these weekly gatherings they find that while the hour may be many things (a time of fellowship, a gossip session, a lecture, or an interpretation debate) it is by no means a Bible study. If small groups show a deficiency in the area Bible study, you will need to develop a renewed commitment to studying the Bible within them. The following B.I.B.L.E. acronym is a helpful tool for encouraging Bible study growth within these groups.

**B = Bring your Bible:** For a group of people to get the most out of any Bible study, they should use their own Bibles during the study. Sharing another person's Bible or looking at a church copy robs individuals of the opportunity to familiarize themselves with their own Bibles. As anyone who consistently studies his or her Bible would agree, the more time you spend studying your own Bible, the more familiar it will become to you. If you want a stronger Bible study emphasis in your small groups, go to great lengths to encourage your people to bring their own Bibles.

**I = Interact with Scripture:** In many churches, bringing Bibles to Bible study is commonplace. Everyone brings his or her personal copy and everyone is ready and willing to use the good book when challenged to do so. The problem comes when Bibles are not utilized during Bible study. Sometimes well-meaning group leaders fail to encourage interaction with the biblical text. In order to see a stronger Bible study program in your church, you must teach your group leaders to help people interact with God's Word during their study hour.

**B = Biblically reliant curriculum:** Without question the Bible study curriculum your church chooses must be reliant upon the Bible. It should not just be focused on biblical topics or ideas that come from the Bible. It is essential that the Bible study products you use lead your people to study the Bible each week.

**L = Leadership expansion:** In a group Bible study where the Bible is examined, taught and applied, people within the group should begin to grow in their understanding of and faith in the Scriptures. As this growth begins to take place, it is important to prepare group members for leadership. This preparation is best done by allowing members to lead the Bible study time and also by encouraging them throughout the process. Ultimately, it should be the goal of every class to see all group members become equipped and prepared to lead a group at some time.

**E = Expand Bible studies:** Once a group reaches the point where all members of a group are prepared to lead a class, it is time for expansion. The group should be dissolved and two new classes should be created in its place. It is at this point that the B.I.B.L.E. model should begin again.

#### **44. We tend to lose members within a few months after they have joined.**

The most important tool you can use to fight the back door flight problem is relationships. If you want to see people join your church and stay, you must find a way to help them develop relationships with your church family as quickly as possible. Do not assume that people will just naturally fit into your congregation or that your congregation will naturally reach out to new members. Your church must have a plan in place to intentionally make new members feel welcome. You must also make them feel they have a place within your church community. Here are a few things you can do to make new members want to stay at your church:

**Idea #1: Assign prayer partners.** The moment you accept someone into your congregation, assign them a prayer partner. This partner would commit to call new members once a week to see how they're doing and to find out what prayer requests they might have. Do your best to match these new people with people in your church who are at the same point in their lives. It will be important to have a list of trusted individuals and families who have agreed ahead of time to take part in the program. If your church recognizes commitments at the end of the service, ask the prayer partners to come forward and join the family in front of the congregation.

**Idea #2: Develop a new member questionnaire.** In order to learn as much as possible about your new members, develop a questionnaire that asks about their family life, jobs, recreational interests, special gifts and talents, church history, ages, etc. Use that information to match new members with longer-term members.

**Idea #3: Implement a welcome lunch plan.** Following services where people join, have a family within your congregation ready to invite the new member(s) to lunch. In providing a meal for another family, there is an instant connection between the new members and your church family. It may be necessary for the church to finance the cost of the meals.

**Idea #4: Use a new members class.** The following Sunday after someone joins the church, place him or her in a new members class. The goal of this class is to help new members understand their role and duties within the church as well as to familiarize them with your church's basic doctrines.

**Idea #5: Sponsor a new members luncheon.** On a biannual basis hold a church-wide lunch where you celebrate new members. Introduce new members and explain how they became a part of the church. Focus the entire meal around them and send them home with a gift showing the date they became members of your church.

**Idea #6: Schedule a staff lunch checkup.** Six months from the date new members join, plan a date when a staff member eats with the new member family. During that meal have the staff member discuss questions about the church and talk about the family's experiences since they have become members. Learn from the members.

## **50. Our church seems to lose more people than we gain.**

Churches struggling with poor membership retention are those who do not assimilate new members into their congregation well. Churches that make it a priority to develop a good game plan for assimilation usually see a marked increase in the number of members who stay at their church and a marked decrease in the numbers of new members who exit the church through the proverbial “back door.” In his book, “The Purpose Driven Church,” Rick Warren dedicates a chapter (entitled “Turning Attenders Into Members”) to developing a good assimilation program. Within the chapter, Warren gives eight attributes of such a program. As you read over the list of attributes, consider how you might apply Warren’s method of assimilation to your congregation.

1. Develop a plan to assimilate new members.
2. Communicate the value of membership.
3. Establish a required membership class.
4. Develop a membership covenant.
5. Make your members feel special.
6. Create opportunities to build relationships.
7. Encourage every member to join a small group.
8. Keep communication lines open.

While a church may not incorporate all of the points on this list, all churches will benefit from adapting these to their particular situation in order to become more intentional about assimilation.

## 56. I would describe the commitment level of the majority of our members as low.

Low commitment levels within a church are indicative of an overall spiritual deficiency within the church. Dealing with this problem is difficult and will usually be best remedied through prayer and through the labors of committed and long-term pastoral leadership. In the short-term, there are four ministerial principles any church leader can implement that should bring about higher levels of commitment within the congregation. As you consider these principles, contemplate how you might be able to use them within your ministry.

- **The principle of ownership.** If you want to see more of your church members involved, increase the amount of ownership they have in the life of the church. In giving people a stake in the happenings of the church, most will feel more involved. Subsequently they are likely to be more active. But be cautious with this principle as you apply it. While you want to give people ownership, you want to be very careful of who you give control. If you actively or passively allow those who do not have God's will and Word as their guide to gain control, you will have been better off with an uncommitted congregation.
- **The principle of responsibility.** If you want to increase church-wide commitment, try distributing (sharing) the wealth of responsibilities at church. Everyone knows that there is a multiplicity of tasks to do around every church that must be tended to on a daily, weekly and monthly basis. Instead of running yourself and the core leadership of the church ragged, invite trusted fringe members to take on a few responsibilities. Invite members to help greet visitors, staff the nursery, change the church marquee, mow the grass, count the offering, or help with attendance records. Use discretion in who you ask to do what jobs, but try to give everyone a niche to fill within the church. Every person has an essential role in making sure the church is running smoothly.
- **The principle of requirements.** In many churches across the nation, church membership is growing more and more meaningless. It has become valueless and it has become easy. When people join a church, they should be presented with a list of requirements for membership—even before they join. Merely requiring good church standing and a salvation experience is a dangerous proposition, considering the requirements we place on people in all other aspects of life. Require all members to sign a church covenant and ensure that they understand the document that they sign is binding. By making church membership more difficult, you are indicating to prospects that your church takes commitment to the church seriously. Not only will this bring about a higher level of commitment from your congregation, it will also protect you from individuals who join churches and do little else.
- **The principle of redress.** While many 21st century churchgoers view the practice of church discipline as outdated and archaic, its relevance and potential value to the modern church is extraordinary. Just as joining a congregation has become too easy, so too has the ability to remain in good standing within a church. If you want people in your church to be more committed to the church and the Christian faith, begin to implement church discipline with your congregation. If a person is a member of your church and they will not be actively involved in the church, church discipline will give the church a way to redress their lack of commitment. Redress may come by way of creating a committee to handle discipline of a member, purging of church roles, or corporate reconciliation of disagreements between members. If you adopt redress as a practice within your church, make sure to balance a redress committee with people who are gifted in the area of mercy and also in prophecy. This mixture will help to bring both compassion and equity to the discipline a church will have to do.

## **62. The people in our church understand the church's doctrine, what we believe.**

In speaking with unchurched people, one of their biggest complaints against church members is that they do not know what they believe. This statement is a horrible indictment against the church. It may or may not be true of all churches, but we all could probably be better in helping church members articulate doctrine. The use of multiple and varied means of communicating basic beliefs is the key to overcoming this challenge.

**The first means of communicating doctrine is from the pulpit.** The senior pastor should make a point to reiterate throughout the year basic points of doctrine. The minister should also purposefully declare that what is being stated is doctrine and is central to the beliefs of your church. Another option for teaching on doctrine from the pulpit is to preach a "what we believe" series. This option provides an opportunity for new people to hear the senior pastor clearly state the beliefs of the church and for church members to have their memories refreshed. It has been mentioned several times now that the senior pastor should be the key person. For some reason, it always has more force if it comes from the senior pastor.

The senior pastor should be involved in communicating the doctrine of the church in another area as well. **All churches should have a class that teaches the basics of the faith** and the senior pastor must play a key role in the class. It is not necessary that the senior pastor do all the teaching and planning for the course, but the presence and participation of the senior pastor in this class is recommended. In some churches this class is the new members' class; in other churches it is a class for seekers. Some churches teach the course all day one Saturday each quarter, others teach a Sunday evening class, while still others make it a 4-, 6-, or 10-week class. The options are many. The most important thing is to provide a concise representation of the basic doctrines of the church. Subjects that may be included in the class are the church's view on the authority of the Bible, God, Jesus (birth, death, resurrection, second coming), the Holy Spirit and spiritual gifts, daily Bible study, prayer, witnessing, baptism and the Lord's Supper, etc. Obviously, each of these topics could be a class by itself so care should be taken in designing the class to give a broad teaching over what your church considers to be central to its mission.

A last option for communicating the doctrine of the church is to have several **designated Sundays throughout the year that deal with specific doctrines.** On each particular Sunday, every activity, from Sunday school to the anthem sung by the choir and the sermon, should focus on communicating that one basic truth.

Communicating church doctrine can sometimes be challenging, but it is not impossible. The church that makes the effort to learn and to remember its basic beliefs will be a stronger church overall.



## **68. New members receive good training and information when they join our church.**

This statement is the key to the assimilation of new members. Giving new members good training and information will help your church close the back door and will give the new members the information they need to make informed decisions regarding their participation in the life of the church. This information and training can be provided in a variety of manners:

- **First, a staff member should meet with prospective new members before they join the church.** Even if someone comes to join the church during the invitation time, he or she should be informed that the first step in becoming a member is to meet individually (or as a couple or family, if appropriate) with a member of the church staff. This meeting provides a time when the prospective new members can ask questions and have them answered in a one-on-one situation. Thus, prospects will not join the church with false expectations or ideas related to what the church believes, what the church will expect of them as members and what they can expect of the church.
- **Second, the most effective way of providing information for new members is to have them attend a new members' class.** As explained previously (See Question 62), the new members' class can take many different forms, but it is the only time when a church class will contain only new members. This time will allow the church to provide the training and information that new members need to become fully integrated into the church.

## 74. Our church does a very good job at discipling members.

The first idea to clarify about this statement is that discipleship, biblically speaking, is not a program; it is a way of life. Thus, a church that does a good job in discipling its members does not assume that discipleship is accomplished through a few books and programs. The disciple-making church believes in an on-going system of accountability. Discipleship is the process by which one becomes a devoted follower of Christ and it goes hand-in-hand with the process of sanctification.

Discipleship requires a specific strategy to move a new believer from being a babe in Christ to being a mature believer. Work with the church leadership to develop action plans leading members toward what writer Michael Foss has called the “Six Marks of Discipleship.”<sup>2</sup>

- **Pray** daily
- **Worship** weekly
- **Read** the Bible
- **Serve** at and beyond our church
- Be in **relationship** to encourage spiritual growth in others
- **Give** of your time, talents and resources

In the church setting a special emphasis can be placed on each of these actions during a specific time period. For example, the church could promote a Month of Prayer. During this month the pastor could preach on prayer, a prayer retreat could be held, records of accountability could be kept within small groups in which members report their daily prayer activity, etc. Care should be taken, though, so that members understand that prayer is not something to be done during a specific month, but instead as a daily practice.

A series of classes addressing each of these actions will also undergird the corporate teachings. *Teach* members how to read the Bible and pray. *Equip* them to serve through the church. *Challenge* them to give to the church’s work.

A mentoring program is one method for providing discipleship. Train mentors who will work immediately with new members. If your church has a new members’ class, expect the mentor to attend with the new member. Provide study resources. Expect mentors and new members to hold each other accountable for spiritual growth.

Other ways to encourage discipleship among church members is through the practice of the spiritual disciplines. Donald Whitney in “Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life” expands on the six marks mentioned above.<sup>3</sup> He names Bible intake, prayer, worship, evangelism, serving, stewardship, fasting, silence and solitude, journaling and learning as spiritual disciplines. He devotes one or more chapters to each subject. At the end of each chapter, Whitney provides specific applications for each discipline. Practicing these spiritual disciplines will help all Christians to grow in their walk with the Lord.

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<sup>2</sup>Michael Foss, “Guiding the Self-Serve Church,” *Leadership* (Fall 2000), 30.

<sup>3</sup>Donald S. Whitney, *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life* (Colorado Springs: NAVPRESS, 1991).

## **80. We have many people involved in one-on-one discipling or mentors.**

Discipling is an often overlooked part of the Great Commission. In Matthew 28:19-20, Jesus tells us to, “Go therefore and make *disciples* of all the nations” (NASB). Having an effective and productive discipleship ministry in your church will give your church spiritual depth and the one-on-one discipling method is an important facet of that ministry.

The best way to incorporate one-on-one discipling or mentoring into the ministry of your church is to begin it in the **new members’ class**. When a new member is ready to exit this introductory class, he or she should be paired with a spiritually mature church member. The mentor will help the new member to become assimilated into the church, to become involved in the ministry of the church and to become a maturing Christian.

If you would like to begin one-on-one discipling with your **current members**, ask them to sign up, either as a mentor or as someone who wishes to be mentored. Many younger adults, especially when they have moved away from family, would love to know an older, more-experienced Christian who could advise them on spiritual matters.

**Disciplers and new members should be placed in the mentoring relationship carefully.** As much as possible they should have similar interests and similar personalities. Both persons must be interviewed carefully in order to gain the information necessary for making a good match. In regards to the age of the pair, usually an older mentor with a younger new member is the best situation. The older mentor will have wisdom and perspective that the new member will find helpful and encouraging. In addition, the mentor and the new member should be of the same sex.

**Mentors should be trained in how to be effective disciplers.** Training may be as simple as a two-hour meeting in which the mentors are given specific guidelines for their new ministry. This training should include:

- The mentor will encourage the new member to become involved in the ministry of the church
- The mentor will encourage the new member to grow spiritually through Bible study and prayer
- The mentor will encourage the new member to develop a Christ-like lifestyle in his or her home, work and other areas
- The mentor will not become a Christian counselor to the new member and will immediately notify the discipleship ministry if the new member needs additional attention that the mentor is unable to provide

Once the mentor or new member pair has been formed, they should meet weekly for the first month. This time will allow them to come to know each other. After the first month, the pair should decide how often they will meet, but they should plan to meet at least once a month. If the pair realizes that they are not a good match, they should be allowed to find a new mentor or mentee. A clear process should be in place from the beginning of the ministry for the mentor or mentee to make this change.

## **86. I have grown as a Christian since I have been at this church.**

Biological maturation is a process. Spiritual growth is also a process that church life should encourage.

To cause Christians in your church to grow, first encourage them to have a **personal devotional time**. We all must discipline ourselves to study the Bible and to communicate with God through prayer in a distraction-free environment every day. If members at your church have not developed this habit, suggest they begin with just five minutes a day of study and prayer. At some point they should add additional minutes until they have carved out a time in their schedule that is specifically devoted to the Lord. You can also encourage your church as a whole to grow through a personal devotional time by suggesting specific materials that will be beneficial. For example, church members could study the book of Ephesians in their quiet time in preparation for a sermon series on spiritual warfare. Informing church members about devotional classics such as Oswald Chambers' "My Utmost for his Highest" or some of the Puritan writers can also help them get started with their daily devotional time.

Individual **mentors** can also be an effective way to bolster the spiritual vitality of your church. If you would like to begin one-on-one mentoring with your current members, ask them to sign up, either as a mentor or as someone who wishes to be mentored. Many younger adults, especially when they have moved away from family, would love to know an older, more-experienced Christian who could advise them on spiritual matters. Mentors should be trained so that they will know what their responsibilities are. A mentor relationship will provide some one-on-one accountability that is helpful for members at all levels of spiritual growth.

Spiritual growth can also be augmented in your church with an effective **small group ministry**. This ministry may be a regular Sunday school time, or it may be Bible study groups formed in church members' homes. Everyone, though, should be encouraged to engage in discussion of spiritual topics within a small group setting. The function of small groups is to provide a smaller arena where everyone knows each other and can ask questions regarding spiritual issues or misunderstandings that they have. The effectiveness of a small groups ministry depends, though, upon the training provided for the leaders.

## **92. People in our church are given good training on how to develop a prayer life and quiet time.**

Many people think that the spiritual disciplines of prayer and Bible study will automatically appear once a person accepts Christ. Realistically, though, the acquisition of these habits takes time and instruction. A healthy church will not only encourage its members in these skills, but it will also help them acquire them.

### **Prayer**

To help members develop a prayer life, the ministers of a church should first examine themselves. If the leaders do not exhibit a life of prayer, it is unlikely that church members will either. The next step should be to build a prayer ministry in your church. This prayer ministry will include:

- **specific times of prayer** in church life (such as a weekly prayer meeting)
- a **specific place to pray** at the church (such as a prayer room or a prayer chapel)
- **specific ministries of prayer** (such as prayer chains, prayer cards for other ministries of the church, etc.)

This ministry should also be responsible for organizing special prayer emphases in the life of the church. Examples of these emphases may include prayer for families, missions and students as they return to school in the fall. The prayer ministry will also organize special events surrounding these prayer emphases.

Last, the prayer minister can be charged with teaching on prayer. Seminars can be organized to teach the importance of prayer and to give practical tips on developing a prayer life. These tips can be as simple as pointing out the different types of prayer: confession, adoration and praise, petition and supplication, and thanksgiving. Christians can be encouraged to include each type of prayer when they pray. Another simple idea is to have Christians assign the different prayer motives to different days of the week. For example:

**Monday:** Pray for church and its leader

**Tuesday:** Pray for family

**Wednesday:** Pray for missions and individual missionaries

**Thursday:** Pray for the lost

**Friday:** Pray for personal needs

**Saturday:** Prayer and reflection in preparation for the Lord's Day

**Sunday:** Silence in prayer waiting upon the Lord

### **Quiet Times**

To train members in having a quiet time, begin by showing them the number of times that Scripture records Jesus escaping pressures and people by retiring to a quiet spot. Then, point out that if he needed to be alone with the Father, then we do too. Have members analyze their schedules to see when they can set aside 10, 15, 20 or 30 minutes per day to be with the Lord. If someone has never had a quiet time, suggest that he or she begin with just 10 minutes and then increase the time incrementally. Point out that the desire to have a quiet time might necessitate getting up earlier. Members who work may want to use half of their lunch hour. Stay-at-home mothers often have the most difficult time in locating a time when they can be away from children. If they cannot get up any earlier, encourage these hard-working women to develop a signal that they can use even with young children. This signal will mean that mom is going to be in her room for five minutes and should not be disturbed unless it is an emergency.

Besides helping members schedule their quiet time, encourage them to be systematic during this time. They should devote a certain amount of time to prayer and a certain amount of time to

studying the Bible. Encourage them to follow a guide to reading the Bible through in a year or three years. Ministers can also develop church-specific guides that will follow the pastors' sermon series. Encourage members to use devotional books, but emphasize that these should supplement (not replace) Bible study. Many denominations have daily prayer guides, but your members can also be encouraged to read some of the devotional classics, such as Oswald Chambers' "My Utmost for his Highest" and guides to the spiritual disciplines. These books and others can be acquired in any local Christian bookstore.

One last note: Introduce church members to Bible dictionaries, concordances and commentaries. As they seek to understand God's Word more fully, they will appreciate these tools.

**98. People in our church are given many opportunities to learn how to share and defend their faith.**

Training in how to defend the faith is a useful tool in fighting the spiritual battle in today's postmodern society. Churches should provide their members with training in personal evangelism and apologetics.

- **Personal Evangelism**

Many church members do not share their faith because they are paralyzed with fear that they will somehow “mess up” or not be able to answer the person's questions. Training in specific skills will help alleviate this fear and will deploy a whole new battalion of soul winners. Many good personal evangelism courses exist, but we encourage ministers to create their own personal evangelism course that will focus on the specific context of your church. When possible, study published personal evangelism materials to glean information and ideas. Then, adapt and add to these materials in a way that will be relevant to the members of your church.

- **Apologetics**

Apologetics is a study of how to defend the faith by anticipating the world's questions and challenges to Christianity. In an increasingly secular world, many Christian tenets such as the Bible's authority and God's sovereignty are not taken for granted anymore. The Christian of today must know how to explain these issues to the non-Christian in a sensible and comprehensive manner, yet without becoming defensive or lashing out. Apologetics must form a part of any evangelism training that takes place.

#### **104. The lifestyles of the members at our church are significantly different than the world's lifestyle.**

The Bible calls Christians to be a people set apart. Our lives should give testimony of the changes God has brought about within us. We are to be submissive to the government; we are to live as free men but not let our freedom corrupt us; and we are to honor all people and fear God (1 Peter 2:9-20). To encourage a set-apart lifestyle in the church, encourage daily Bible study and prayer, the creation of accountability partnerships and the practice of church discipline.

##### **Daily Bible Study and Prayer**

Nothing can transform people like time spent alone with God. Church members should be taught how to study the Bible on their own and how to pray. Ministers should publicly teach on the development of these disciplines and they should demonstrate them as well in their own devotional lives.

##### **Accountability Partnerships**

Since we are such a mobile society today, most people do not have the strong familial structures that Christians in the past had; thus, we live without any sense of accountability. Christians should form partnerships with other Christians to whom and with whom they can be brutally honest about spiritual struggles. These partners will hold each other accountable to make sure their lifestyle matches that of a true Christian. Strict confidentiality guidelines and complete trust are necessary for successful accountability partnerships. In addition, partnerships should only be formed with someone of the same sex to avoid improprieties or the appearance of impropriety.

##### **Practice Church Discipline**

Unfortunately, there are times when a church must discipline members for immoral conduct. Guidelines for this practice should be included or added to the church's constitution. These guidelines should be designed according to biblical precepts. It is of utmost importance to remember that the goal of all discipline is the restoration of a fallen brother or sister.



## **110. I know what I believe as a Christian and why I believe it.**

As the world becomes increasingly non-Christian, Christians must be able to explain and defend their faith. Members of your church should be adept in theology and evangelistic apologetics.

### **Theology**

To assist church members in knowing what they believe, teach them basic theology. Of course, you do not have to call it “theology,” but they should have a conscious awareness of the basic tenets of Christianity. You should deal with these basic issues in the new members’ class, but you should also repeat this information in a systematic manner yearly for the entire congregation. One simple way to accomplish this task is by preaching a “what we believe” series. In that series you can teach about:

- God (theology proper)
  - his role in the Trinity
  - Creation
- Jesus Christ
  - his role in the Trinity
  - Why he had to die on the cross (atonement)
- Holy Spirit
  - his role in the Trinity
  - Spiritual gifts
- The Bible as God’s Word
- Baptism and the Lord’s Supper
- Church polity
- Eschatology
- Angelology
  - Angels and demons
  - Spiritual warfare

### **Evangelistic Apologetics**

Christians should also be able to defend the faith by answering the questions of non-Christian friends and family members. This defense is called evangelistic apologetics. Questions may include:

- Is the Bible God’s Word?
- Does science contradict the Bible?
- Do miracles really exist?
- How can Christians claim that salvation is found only in Christ? What about other religions?
- Why does God allow bad things to happen?

Being able to respond to these questions will make church members bolder in evangelism because they will be able to explain it. To help church members, teach courses or seminars on how to respond to these common questions. One resource for this study is “Know Why You Believe” by Paul Little (InterVarsity Press).

**116. The more mature Christians in our church have a strong desire to help the less mature Christians in our church.**

See Questions 80 and 86.

### **123. Someone personally discipled me, teaching me how to follow Christ and grow as a Christian.**

Mentoring is about creating relationships. The Bible repeatedly shows us many mentoring relationships such as Jethro with Moses; Moses with Joshua; David and Jonathan; Barnabas with Paul; Priscilla and Aquila with Apollos; and Paul with Timothy. Jesus with his disciples is, of course, our primary model. All of these individuals were in a relationship with one another. They became part of one another's lives and grew spiritually along the way. Jesus taught his disciples everything it would take to continue their walk and then one day pass it on. He called them to be "salt of the earth". What dish can be salted and affect only half? The thinking behind mentoring is similar. It allows the power of God to spread through the lives of believers.

Consider these steps in becoming the "salt of the earth":

- **S** - Submit to God's calling in your life to be a discipler.  
What does Jesus want you to do? Though he may supernaturally reveal some guidance, God usually gives us the privilege and responsibility to choose for ourselves, using the principles and instructions found in the Bible. Pray and read the Bible regularly, listening closely for God to direct you to a new disciple. Begin to prepare for how you will direct this new relationship. You will be helping to shape a life, so be sure your own spiritual life is in order.
- **A** - Align yourself with new Christians.  
No matter how inexperienced you may feel, remember that God is in control and as long as we keep our focus on him, he will direct our paths. Talk with your pastor or minister about where God is leading you. Your minister may know of those seeking a mentor.
- **L** - Live it out daily.  
Take one or two meetings to get to know one another. Ask lots of questions. Where are they in their walk? What are their spiritual goals? Be sure, above all, to begin each time with prayer. Plan a scheduled meeting time and begin to pour your life into that person. Develop reading lists and Bible study tools while you continue to guide the person into expanding his or her spiritual walk with the Lord. Encourage participation in your local church activities as well as in your own life, if appropriate.
- **T** - Teach and Target.  
As your mentee grows in faith, consider teaching leadership skills and what it means to reach out and help others grow. At the same time, continue to be in prayer for God to lead you once again to that next person. God wants us to work continually to target the lost and those new in Christ and raise them up to be the strong and faithful. Exponentially, it is the best way to increase the Kingdom.

## **129. I feel adequately prepared to disciple a new believer.**

Having confidence in your abilities as a Christian means putting your faith in what God has done and is doing in your life. For some, this mode of thought can be difficult to achieve. However, we must remember that Christ called all who believe in him to “go and disciple.”

If you are not sure that you are ready to disciple others, review the following thoughts and pray about how God would lead you to be a witness for him:

- **D** – Do not worry about your feelings of inadequacy. Instead, pray about them. Offer your worries to God and he will show you the right direction to take. Take this time to read some books on discipleship and how to lead a Bible study. In addition, make sure your own life represents the fact that you are a disciple of Christ.
- **I** – Invite others into your life and church. If you are not sure who God may be leading you to disciple, begin making friends with new Christians in your church or neighborhood. God will lead the right person to you if you remain available to him.
- **S** – Submit your life to God’s will. Once you realize the direction God is taking you, begin to prepare. Remember, it is his plan and his timing.
- **C** – Continue to remain in the Word. Once we realize where God is taking us, we will sometimes “sit back and enjoy the ride” thinking we can relax since he is handling it. We should never let down our guard because he calls us to be ready. We should continue to prepare ourselves spiritually through our personal Bible study.
- **I** – Instruct the new believer with Scripture. Your teachings and example should follow Scripture. You must be sure to teach according to the Bible so that you will serve as a reliable witness.
- **P** – Pray that God will continue to work in this person’s life. Also pray against evil since a new believer may find the walk too difficult and be tempted to revert back to old habits.
- **L** – Lead the new believer to develop a strong prayer life. By your example, they will see the importance of spending time alone with God in prayer. Challenge them to read their Bible daily and to share what they are learning with a friend or family member who may not know Christ.
- **E** – Expect God to show both of you great things. When we fully submit to God, he will bless our lives.

### **135. Our church does a good job of training believers to give financially to the church.**

Good stewardship of money is a qualification in being used by God for his service. If we believe that God owns everything, then it is our responsibility to give and to manage it according to his doctrine. As leaders of the church, it is our responsibility to encourage doctrinal living in others.

What can a dedicated pastor do to support and encourage faithful stewardship?

- *Be a believer.* Personal belief that giving is what God requires of his people is crucial in “selling” it to anyone else. If your staff is not giving as God commands, consider a biblical stewardship program.
- *Be an example.* Through personal giving, set an example for others to follow. When others see that we care, it shows that we are serious about our beliefs.
- *Be an equipper.* The use of money and possessions is a theme found throughout Scripture, so it would not be difficult to plan several sermons around stewardship. Show how God has planned for us to give and how he plans for us to be good managers of all that he has given us. Christians who are not challenged from the pulpit are missing out on a great message.
- *Be a listener.* Some will have a hard time deciding what and how to give. Take the time to listen to them and offer suggestions that will aid in their new resolution.
- *Be affirming.* While some may have never been convicted to give of their finances, continue to affirm that following God means following him all the way.
- *Be prayerful.* Continue to pray that God will work in his mighty ways in the hearts of your members.

## **141. I have been trained how to read and interpret the Bible correctly**

Training the people of God to read and interpret the bible correctly is one of the most profitable tasks in all of the church. It is in the personal devotional life of the Christian that growth is produced at the most rapid pace. In this on-on-one time with God, Christians can hear from God and make more specific application to their personal life. However, if Christians have not been trained and equipped in the disciplines of reading the Word of God and properly interpreting the Word of God, they may never experience the blessings of such growth. Training people to understand the Bible properly will also help the church to avoid poor doctrine.

One of the best ways to train the people of God to read and interpret the Bible correctly is to lead them through the study of a book that speaks to this very issue. One of the better resources on the market today is “A Basic Guide to Interpreting the Bible” by Dr. Robert Stein. Resources such as this one and others will help readers think through the important issues of Bible interpretation so that they may be better equipped to properly understand the Word of God and its significance for their life.

Consider teaching these basic rules for reading and understanding the Bible:

- Using the appropriate study tools, study the cultural and historical background of the passage.
- Understand the type of writing studied (e.g., gospel, letter, prophecy, etc.)
- Look for the author’s intended meaning.
- Read the passage in its context in the specific biblical book and in the Bible as a whole.
- Recognize the differences between contextual issues and general principles.
- Allow more clearly and more frequently stated teachings to inform obscure passages.

Another way to help the people of God read and interpret the Bible correctly is to supply them with commentaries that are both reliable and practical. Placing such commentaries in the church library or encouraging them to purchase their own copy can further equip the people of god in understanding the Scriptures.

Finally, use the church’s small groups to hold each other accountable to proper Bible interpretation. Develop a Bible reading plan, read together as a group and then discuss possible interpretations. Use a trusted and trained leader to guide the group toward proper biblical understandings.

## 147. Discipleship classes in our church are usually boring or irrelevant.

It has been said that an unexamined life is not worth living. The same holds true for unexamined teaching. Teaching, especially in a church, should be evaluated on a regular basis. We expect the teachers at our child's school to be top notch, and we should expect the same for our churches.

Naturally, not every teacher will be a super dynamic individual, but this personality trait in no way limits them from speaking in boldness and truth. God has called many to follow as workers. If they accept the call, it is their responsibility to carry out that task with joy. It is all about the attitude exhibited toward the task at hand.

If your discipleship classes lack zeal, take some time to find out why. Begin to discover how you can make it better. A teacher who is dependent upon God and who articulates the gospel to others can disseminate mountains of knowledge!

Some techniques every teacher should exercise:

- **Passion.** To instruct others in Scripture should be a joy to anyone. Teachers should take up this job with great passion! Enlist teachers with excitement for the Word of God.
- **Practicality.** We are to use the Scriptures for teaching, instructing and rebuking. Scripture can easily be paralleled to today's thinking. Teachers should look for ways to relate life in the Bible to life today. Whether in the Old or New Testament, we can see that man has not changed. He is sinful and God has provided a solution for the problem. We can influence people to grow in their walk by showing them how to live scriptural lives.
- **Personal.** God is personal and our walk with him should be personal. Teachers should make each lesson personal to their students. Engage them in seeing how we can see ourselves through Scripture. People are interested in people; show them how to be interested in the day-to-day lives of others through Scripture.
- **Preparation.** A reasonable amount of time should be put into lesson preparations. An unplanned lesson is very evident and is not fair to the student. Be sure that you or your teachers are spending time in God's Word as they prepare for their class. Provide them with adequate resources to do their research.

Continue to evaluate where you are on discipleship teaching. It is one of the most important resources a church can offer its members.

“Do not be anxious about anything,  
but in everything,  
by prayer and petition,  
with thanksgiving,  
present your requests to God.”  
--Philippians 4:6 NIV

**Prayer is...** drawing near to God through faith in quiet contemplation and with bold requests. Prayer is one of the most underused weapons in our spiritual arsenal. Paul encouraged the Ephesians to put on the armor of God to fight the spiritual battle, but he emphasized above all that prayer be made on all occasions (Ephesians 6:18). Jesus also reminded his followers to pray through his example of often withdrawing to a quiet place to pray (e.g. Matthew 14:23).

In many churches prayer has been relegated to a particular meeting or to a particular group of members. Prayer, however, is one of the six primary purposes of the church and as such, should be fundamental to everything that happens in the church. The articles in this section provide suggestions that will aid churches in building a wide-reaching prayer ministry and in increasing the intentionality of prayer within the local body.

# PRAYER





The following questions about prayer are addressed in the Church Health Survey:

3. Our church has an intercessory prayer ministry where many people participate.
9. The leadership in my church regularly emphasizes the importance of prayer.
15. In today's busy world, Christians setting aside thirty to sixty minutes a day for prayer is nearly impossible.
21. Before we attempt any major effort in our church, we bathe it in prayer.
27. Our church prays for non-Christians by name.
33. Prayer is a central facet of our worship services.
39. We have special prayer emphases in our church.
45. Our church makes available to everyone a list of prayer needs.
51. Prayer is an integral part of our Sunday school classes or small groups.
57. We pray regularly for world missions in our church.
63. Our church regularly prays for the ministries of the church.
69. I believe that it is vitally important to have people praying during the worship services.
75. I pray for my pastor/minister/clergy, their family(ies), and the staff of our church regularly.
81. Prayer meetings in our church are boring.
87. Prayer meetings in church tend to be gossip times.
93. When we pray in our church nothing happens.
99. We have a place in our church where many people pray each week.
105. I believe the Bible teaches that prayer should be a daily part of every Christian's life.
111. I pray regularly during the day.
117. Our church communicates prayers that are answered to the people of the church.
125. I believe that prayer works.
131. I feel adequately trained in prayer.
137. I pray regularly for missionaries.
143. I pray regularly for lost people.
149. Sometimes our church is so busy "doing church" that we pray too little.

### **3. Our church has an intercessory prayer ministry where many people are involved.**

While most churches understand the importance of an intercessory prayer ministry, few churches know what an intercessory prayer ministry looks like and fewer still know how to implement this kind of ministry. The following are a list programs other churches are using as a part of their prayer ministry. Think through these ideas and consider whether or not they may be advantageous to your church situation. If you do not have an intercessory prayer ministry currently in place, we urge you to begin one as soon as possible. Start small with some of these ideas and aim for success with your congregation.

*Pastoral prayer partners* – Enlist a group of church members who will commit to continuously praying for your pastor. This group should be on call for the pastor day or night to pray for any need or situation that arises.

*Congregational prayer partners* – Begin a prayer program where you connect individuals in your church to become prayer partners with other church members. Participants should be paired with individuals who are the same age and gender. Each group should be asked to spend 10 minutes a week together in prayer as well as be available around the clock for prayer support.

*Congregational prayer chain* – Ask all members of your congregation who would be willing to be a part of a prayer chain to submit their name and telephone number to make a prayer chain phone list. Whenever a prayer need arises, participants can then use their list to make contact with other prayer chain members.

*Lay minister of intercession* – By church vote or staff approval, appoint a lay member in your church to be the church's minister of intercession. This individual will be responsible for leading and coordinating the prayer efforts of your church body. When you do select a leader, choose wisely. Seek a spiritually mature person with a vibrant prayer life who will lead your church to be more committed to prayer.

*Intercessory Prayer Team* – In place of or in conjunction with the lay minister of intercession, appoint a group of people to be the intercessory prayer team of your church. This group will be responsible for the legwork and leadership of church-wide prayer efforts.

*Intercessory Prayer Room* – Create a room within your church specifically set aside for intercessory prayer. If possible, allow the room to be available around the clock for prayer. Within the room keep a list of prayer concerns as well as a prayer log documenting answers to prayers requests.

*Intercessory Prayer Retreats* – On a biannual basis, plan prayer retreats for your church. During the retreat spend time teaching people how to pray more effectively and then spend time in prayer. Use these times to pray for major issues concerning your church.

*Church Prayer Walks* – Plan these special prayer events to pray for and over special areas or locations. If your church is considering purchasing property, if it is involved in a campus ministry program, or if it is concentrating on ministry to a certain area of your community, invite church members to go on a prayer walk around and through the area of focus. This prayer method is an excellent way for church members to connect with the area of concern and also to see exactly what they are praying for.

*Prayer Teams* – Organize individuals in your church who have special burdens for specific ministries such as evangelism, world Missions, or worship services, and have them meet on a regular basis to pray together.

## **9. The leadership in my church regularly emphasizes the importance of prayer.**

If your congregation feels that their church leadership is neglecting the importance of prayer, we have some ideas that may help you fix the problem. Before we give you a plan of correction, however, we need to give you a disclaimer. Our suggestions will be useless unless the staff of your church is willing to lead and be consistent in their own prayer. With this truth in mind, we recommend adopting a prayer triangle. The sides being: planning it, modeling it and living it.

**Planning It** – Prayer must be planned. Do not fall into the trap of just praying during your church services, before meals and around Bible studies. Make prayer a priority in everything your church does. Here are some practical ways to plan prayer:

1. *Plan a church-wide retreat focused on prayer.* During the retreat hold sessions on a variety of topics about prayer such as: *How to pray, Too busy not to pray, Spiritual warfare 101* and other topics your people would be excited about. If possible, bring guest speakers in to lead this workshop-type event.
2. *Develop a church prayer calendar.* For each month select a topic for prayer focus. You might pray for a missionary on the field in January. Then in February you may pray for an issue in your local community. In March you could pray for the unity of your church. Whatever you select as the focus for that month, make sure the church body is aware of the matter and devote time to praying for that specific concern.
3. *Plan a church fast.* Select a date or dates in your church year where the church conducts a fast to pray about specific issues facing your church.
4. *Plan a pre-worship prayer time.* Designate a specific time and a specific location each Sunday morning for church leaders to meet and pray for the church service.

**Model It** – Prayer must be modeled by the staff. Putting a prayer plan in place is valuable, but it is only one side of the prayer triangle. Church leaders must follow through with planned prayer activities in order to show church members the importance of prayer. Here are some ideas for modeling prayer.

1. *Pray before church meals.*
2. *Begin and end church meetings with a time of prayer.*
3. *Pray immediately before departing on church trips.*
4. *When facing a problem or difficult situation involving a church member, begin your time of discussion with a short prayer.*

**Live It** – Staff members must live a life of prayer. Without a prayer-filled life, the prayer triangle will be incomplete and ineffective. Consider using the following suggestions to improve the prayer life of your church leaders.

1. *Begin each morning with prayer before you leave home.*
2. *Block out a 30-minute time slot in your work day to pray for your church.* Guard the time and make it sacred. Allow no interruptions during this prayer time and be sure you choose a time when you are physically and mentally awake.

*Pray for your people individually.* Call one member of your congregation each day and ask how you can best pray for them during the day.

**15. In today's busy world, it is understandable that Christians cannot set aside 30-60 minutes a day for prayer.**

Not taking time to pray each day is the result of a weak and shallow faith. If you are like most churches in America today, most church members answer negatively to this question. Changing negative mindsets about prayer is a challenging task. However, the effects of prayer, even in small doses, are significant. Given this insight, we want to present an incremental approach to growing and strengthening the individual prayer lives of your church members. While this approach will not ensure that everyone in your church will faithfully block out a time each day for prayer, it will set in place the foundation for a healthy prayer life and hopefully inspire them to more consistency in prayer.

The approach we recommend is a 10-month prayer plan. It is based on the assumption that your congregation (as a whole) does not pray with regularity. The goal is to increase the time each person prays each day to between 30 and 60 minutes. The plan is not a book study or a program, but rather a series of monthly prayer challenges to set before the congregation. During the first month the congregation will be asked to commit to one method or act of prayer. As each month goes by a new prayer challenge will be added to the previous challenge(s). Hence, by small increments, in a short time, you develop the prayer life of your church.

**Month 1: Prayer before meals.** During this month ask your church members to pray before each meal with their families and friends. Encourage them to do more than just ask a quick blessing for the food.

**Month 2: Pray alone before you go to bed.** During this month ask people to spend time in prayer before they go to bed. Guide them to recap their day with God and ask God's blessing and direction for the day to come.

**Month 3: Pray with family before bed.** During this month ask parents and children of all ages to spend time each night praying with family members. Tests, projects, illnesses and worries can all be lifted up together during family prayer.

**Month 4: Mirror prayer list.** During this month ask people to put a list of their top 10 prayer needs on a piece of paper by their bathroom mirror. Challenge them to pray daily about the list. Challenge them to keep results of their prayers.

**Month 5: Prayer list in transportation.** During this month challenge people to put a prayer list in the car. Instead of turning on the radio, ask them to spend the morning commute to work or school each day in prayer.

**Month 6: Pray for one @ one.** During this month ask every member of your congregation to think of one lost person they know who they want to see become a Christian. Distribute small green adhesive dots to be placed on the face of watches at the one o'clock hour. Each day when they look at the watch during the hour of one, instruct them to pray for that one person for one minute.

**Month 7: Prayer for People.** During this month, challenge every member of your congregation to ask one person each day if they can pray for them. While they can pray for anyone, encourage them to seek out a non-believer they know to pray for when possible.

**Month 8: 10 minutes of prayer.** During this month, challenge members to set aside 10 minutes each morning before leaving their homes to pray for the day ahead and their church.

**Month 9: Pray for the Children.** Focus this month on parents. Challenge parents to pray over each child every day before the children leave for school. For those who do not have children, ask them to find a child they can pray for within the congregation.

**Month 10: Pray for Marriages.** Focus this month on building solid marriages through prayer. Ask spouses to pray each night before they go to bed. Ask children to pray for their parents and older parents for their married children.

## 21. Before we attempt any major effort in our church, we bathe it in prayer.

### Prayer Bathing Formula:

- **Establish a prayer calendar.** Start early and be wise about planning the timing for your prayer efforts. If your event date is established from the beginning, you can lock in preparation dates for prayer meetings and challenges accordingly.
- **Develop a prayer strategy.** You must have a prayer strategy from the start. Establish a leadership base. Put into place a prayer infrastructure for the event including: adequate hours of prayer time for the event, adequate levels of corporate church participation in prayer efforts and methods and activities of prayer to be used in the prayer effort.
- **Publicize.** One cannot assume that if a prayer event is on the calendar that everyone will see it and attend. You will need to publicize prayer efforts thoroughly and completely. Mass mailings, newsletter advertisements, bulletin announcements and encouragements from the pulpit are essential in making people aware of every prayer effort.
- **Involve the entire church.** The amount of congregational involvement in preparatory prayer is directly proportional to the success of church efforts. Set prayer goals for your church staff, lay leadership and congregation. If all three of these groups are not praying about important projects or efforts, you are guaranteed less than best results in whatever you do.

### Practical Ideas for Major Prayer Efforts:

- **A Prayer Countdown.** Before an event is going to take place in your church, set dates for major prayer initiatives 12 months, six months, three months and one month in advance.
- **24-Hour Pray-A-Thon.** One week before an event is to take place, sponsor a 24-hour prayer effort at your church. Designate a room for the prayer time and send in groups to pray for 30-minute time blocks.
- **Church-wide Fast.** Prior to the event, establish a date for church-wide prayer and fasting. After that date, invite all participants to come together for a fellowship meal to break the fast.
- **Prayer Dots.** During a church service challenge church members to pray daily for a church effort by distributing prayer dots following a church service. The dots are to be placed at a specific time on the face of a watch to remind church members to pray at that time each day for the special prayer focus.
- **Pastoral Prayer-gram.** When a major effort of the church is presented to the congregation, send out a special prayer-gram from the pastor inviting members to pray for the effort.
- **Prayer E-mail.** Send prayer directives out through e-mails to your church congregation. Ask members to submit their e-mail addresses if they would like to be contacted concerning these prayer concerns. When a concern arises, use the speed of the Internet to connect the members of your congregation with the needs of the church.

## **27. Our church prays for non-Christians by name.**

Many feel that requesting prayer for a non-Christian by name in a church service is disrespectful, but in fact just the opposite is true. First, most non-Christians will not be embarrassed to know that the church prayed for them. In fact, usually they are quite pleased. If they are going through a hard time, they will appreciate being remembered. Caution your church members, however, to avoid gossiping by mentioning only the person's name without a detailed description of problems he or she might be facing.

Second, praying for non-Christians by name allows other Christians to lift them up to Christ in a specific manner. It is true that God already knows the person's name, but knowing the names of non-Christians allows Christians to pray more specifically for them. It is also more probable that the Christians will remember to pray for the person at other times outside of the church service. Informed intercession is powerful.

Praying for non-Christians to accept Christ as Lord and Savior, or prayer evangelism, works. Encourage the members of your church to pray for non-Christians often and by name.



### **33. Prayer is a central facet of our worship services.**

If your worship services are anemic in the area of prayer, a few minor adjustments may renew their health. The following suggestions will show you how to better incorporate and utilize prayer in your worship times.

- 1) *Open with prayer* - At the beginning of your worship service, open the worship time with prayer. Be intentional about setting the tone of your service with this prayer. Most importantly, ask God's blessing on the worship service and the worshippers.
- 2) *Close with prayer* - While most churches conclude with prayer, too many waste away their words due to the anticipation of departure. Use this time to ask God's blessing on the week ahead. Pray for your congregation and the people with which they will come in contact.
- 3) *Perfect the offertory prayer* - Consider adding (or revitalizing) an offertory prayer time during your service. Instead of merely playing music while taking offering, publish or display a list of prayer requests for your congregants to pray for as they await the sermon.
- 4) *Add an altar prayer* - Set aside a few minutes in your service to invite people in your congregation to pray at the altar. Leave adequate time for prayer and after a few moments, have a church leader close the prayer time in a prayer.
- 5) *Include a pastoral-led prayer* - As the sermon begins the pastor could lead the people through a meditative prayer. In this prayer, the pastor should direct the people to seek God's word through the ensuing message.

#### **The Do's and Don'ts of Worship Service Prayer:**

- Do ask church members from different age groups to lead prayer during services.
- Don't ask someone to pray if you do not feel comfortable with what they may pray for or about.
- Do involve as many people as you can in congregational prayer.
- Don't allow prayer to become an act contingent on church staff.
- Do encourage and affirm those who pray in your services.
- Don't change the amount of prayer in your services too quickly.
- Do be careful to make all those who pray feel that they were successful at their task.

### 39. We have special prayer emphases in our church.

Special prayer emphases in the church serve two functions. First, they promote prayer, which is one of the purposes of the church. Second, they allow different ministries to be highlighted throughout the year and give those ministries the prayer support that they need. Types of special emphases include:

- **Prayer for international missions.** A church could link this emphasis with a missions conference, or the emphasis could be a special event by itself. During the prayer time, pray for:
  - **Your church's adopted missionaries**
  - **Your church's adopted people group**
  - **Persecuted Christians around the world**
  - **A particular country, region, continent**
  - **The calling out of youth and others for missions service**
  - **World peace**

This prayer emphasis can be connected to the entire ministry of the church by having Sunday school classes pray during their class time. Classes or specific ministries may also adopt a people group and decorate their area with artifacts that represent the chosen group. Then, members may prayer walk through the educational wing, stopping at each classroom to pray. Churches may also consider inviting international students and missionaries to talk about their country and its customs.

- **Prayer for your city.** Consider linking this prayer emphasis with a specific outreach to the city. For example, at the same time the church is praying for the city, give out free soft drinks at a local park or have a free car wash. Ask the people of the community if they have a specific prayer request and have members pray for them on-site and at the church.

Second, plan a prayer walk through the neighborhood around your church or in other specified areas of the city. Members should walk or drive through the area assigned praying for the salvation of those who live and work there, for racial tension to be eliminated, for homes and marriages to be strengthened, etc.

- **Prayer for your church.** Every church needs occasionally to have a season of prayer for its own ministries, members and ministers. Plan a time to pray for the spiritual renewal of the church. Have members sign up to pray around the clock for the church's ministries and staff. Designate a day for members to pray and fast. Organize a prayer vigil on church property. Encourage members to plan prayer meetings in their home and to find another member to be a partner in prayer.

#### **45. Our church makes available to everyone a list of prayer needs.**

With new technologies available in ministry today, making a list of prayer needs available to people within your congregation is becoming easier. If your church has a copy machine and a computer, a prayer list can be conveniently maintained and duplicated. There are two list options for you to consider. The first does not require the use of the Internet while the second is based on it.

*Option #1: Publish a printed list.* If you would like to make a list of prayer needs available to your congregation, you might consider creating a weekly prayer list publication. The prayer needs list would come from requests mentioned during your weekly corporate prayer time, Sunday school classes or through a prayer needs box placed strategically within your church. This list could be easily updated on a weekly basis following your prayer meeting time. Extra copies of the list could then be sent home with church members and also placed within a church prayer room.

*Option #2: Publish an electronic list.* If you have the capabilities to do so, make your prayer needs available through the Internet. A church Web site with a link to a church prayer page is an excellent way to put your church in touch with the prayer needs of others. This list will be accessible to your entire congregation all day, every day, at work, at home, on business trips or even vacation. If your church does not presently have a Web site, have church members submit their e-mail address if they would like to receive a weekly prayer update from the church. E-mail offers an incredibly efficient way to let your entire congregation know about prayer requests.

Both option #1 and option #2 can be used in conjunction with one another. The important thing is to make sure that you're getting people a list of prayer concerns to pray for each week. At the same time, be careful about what you publish on a prayer list. If you have any doubts concerning the sensitivity of a matter, be sure to check with the individuals involved before you make a matter public.

## **51. Prayer is an integral part of our Sunday school classes or small groups.**

As one of the primary purposes of the church, prayer should be incorporated into all aspects of church life. Sunday school classes or small groups provide a perfect opportunity for concentrated and specific prayer to take place. Ask your church's classes or small groups to consider incorporating the following:

**Designate a prayer coordinator.** It is likely that someone in each class possesses a unique gift or desire to pray. Help teachers recognize these persons by looking for people who have an active devotional and prayer life outside of the church, who volunteer regularly to pray and who request prayer for others frequently.

The prayer coordinator of each class should initiate times of prayer during the class and encourage members to pray for specific requests outside of class. In addition, he or she should maintain a list of the class' prayer requests and the answers to those prayers. The prayer coordinator should also provide a copy of this list to the leader of the church's prayer ministry.

**Adopt a minister.** In order to make prayer an integral part of Sunday school classes or small groups, encourage each class to adopt one minister for whom to pray. The class should alert the minister that they will be praying for him or her on a regular basis and ask the minister to contact the class' prayer coordinator with specific prayer requests for his or her ministry, family or spiritual life. Members can volunteer to pray for the minister on a specified day throughout the week and they can also send the minister a card or some other type of encouragement.

Classes may also consider contacting a missions agency in order to **adopt a missionary**. The class can pray for the missionary and his or her ministry on a regular basis. They can also send care packages of favorite foods or materials to the missionary.

**Adopt a ministry.** Classes or small groups can also adopt a church-sponsored ministry for which to pray. Usually it is a good idea if at least some of the class members have some type of connection to the adopted ministry in order to maintain a current prayer request list for the ministry. The class should also examine the possibility of participating in the ministry on a regular basis as a group. For example, if the class has chosen to adopt a church-sponsored ministry to the homeless, the class may choose to work in the ministry one Saturday per month. If the class has adopted the children's ministry at the church, they should contact the children's minister to see if they can redecorate a classroom or if they can assist in a children's class every fifth Sunday.

## **57. We pray regularly for world missions in our church.**

Beginning in the local area and expanding throughout the world, missions is what the church does in order to fulfill the Great Commission. Coupling prayer with world missions in the prayer ministry of your church will increase your church's involvement in missions.

- **Adopt a missionary.** Help your church locate and adopt a missionary supported by your denomination. Ask the missionary to send specific prayer requests to your church's prayer coordinator regarding his or her ministry. Regular prayer times for the missionary can also be incorporated into services.

- **Adopt a people group.** Consider adopting an unreached people group or the people group among whom your adopted missionary works. The prayer coordinator of your church should research the people group's culture, style of living, beliefs and worldview, etc. This information will help your church pray more specifically for the gospel to reach the adopted people. The information regarding the people group can be disseminated through flyers sent to Sunday school classes, through pre-worship service Power Point shows, etc.

- **Designate a room or area** of your church as a world missions center. Line the walls with maps of different portions of the world. Allow an interested member to compile a database on missions around the world. This person or someone else should also maintain a prayer file with current prayer requests from the mission field and world news services. The person in charge of the center may consider constructing prayer stations within the room where members may go to see vital statistics on a certain area of the world and then pray for the people groups living there. Of course, the church's adopted missionary and people group should be highly emphasized in the missions center.

### **63. Our church regularly prays for the ministries of the church.**

Prayer is one of the key factors to a growing church and corporate prayer unifies the growing church. Depending on the organization of your church's prayer ministry, opportunities abound to lead the church in praying for its ministries.

Needless to say, churches who want to pray for their ministries must know about those ministries. Publicize the ministries. Publicly talk about their purposes, their goals and their activities. Use the church bulletin and newsletter to publicize specific prayer concerns for each ministry.

Each individual ministry should also have a monthly time set aside for prayer. This suggestion does not mean that each meeting should simply begin with prayer, although that is good. It means that all members involved in a particular ministry should come together at least once a month to seek God's face in order to determine what he desires for the ministry.

Time should be taken periodically during the worship service to pray for the particular ministries of the church. This time of corporate prayer may be prompted by a testimony by one of the ministry's lay leaders or by someone who has benefited from the ministry. If possible, a video clip could be shown to highlight the ministry's different activities.

Consider enlisting a prayer team to pray specifically for each ministry of the church. For example, one prayer team may pray intentionally for the youth ministry, while another team will pray for the missions ministry. Involve as many members as possible in this prayer ministry so that prayer saturates the church.

Other specific prayer strategies include:

- Praying for church leadership as they enlist church workers
- Praying weekly for Bible study teachers
- Praying for choir members and leaders
- Praying for mission teams sent from the church
- Praying intentionally for special events sponsored by each ministry of the church

Finally, enlist a prayer coordinator who holds the church accountable for its prayer ministry. This person should work with church leaders to assure that ministries of the church receive sufficient prayer support.

**69. I believe that it is vitally important to have people praying during the worship services.**

Prayer is vitally important to the growing church, but when and where it takes place depends on the church. One option is to have a special group designated to pray during the worship services. The great evangelist Charles Finney had a group praying during his campaigns and The Brooklyn Tabernacle credits their Prayer Band (which prays during all six of their Sunday worship services) with contributing greatly to the growth of their church.

The prayer group at your church should be located within the church building but outside of the sanctuary. When possible, however, they should be able to hear what is going on during the service. The group may pray in unison, take turns praying, pray for specific areas at different times during the service or any combination of the above. The group may be comprised of any number of people, but usually a group of 10 or fewer is ideal.

The group's primary task is to pray that non-Christians' eyes and ears will be opened to hear the truth presented during the service. Other prayer topics for the group should include:

- Spiritual insight and sensitivity for the preacher
- Spiritual strength and protection for the preacher
- Each person involved in ministry during the service: the instrumentalists, other staff members, ushers, greeters, child-care workers, etc.
- Effective use of all equipment and instruments
- Any conflict which is disrupting the working of the Holy Spirit in the church

The only special requirement for the formation of this group is that only spiritually mature members should be allowed to join. The reason for this requirement is that the members of this group will often miss out on being spiritually fed during the service itself.

## **75. I pray for my pastor, the pastor's family and the staff of our church regularly.**

Prayer for the staff of the church and their families is necessary as they are on the frontlines of a spiritual battle. We should not assume, though, that members automatically pray for the staff — we should train them to do so. Consider leading a study of the number of times that the apostle Paul requested prayer from those to whom he wrote in the New Testament.

Pastors and all staff members should actively seek prayer partners both within and outside of their church. These partners will form a small group with whom the staff member can share his or her prayer requests. Daily requests can be communicated among this group by e-mail or by phone call. Because of the private nature of many of the requests from the staff member, he or she should know each partner well. Pastors and staff members should seek out spiritually mature people who have a special sensitivity to the leading of the Holy Spirit and a desire to pray for them in particular.

Besides the small, inner circle of prayer partners, the entire church should be encouraged to pray regularly for the pastor and staff. If the church has a Web site or prayer hotline, staff members can post daily prayer requests that are appropriate to share with the entire body of the church. The entire church should be encouraged to pray regularly for these matters:

- That God will watch over the staff members and their families
- That God will protect the staff members' personal time with God
- That the church will give the staff members time to be with God
- That God will give the pastoral staff direction and guidance in leading the church
- That God will give staff members keen insight into the Word

In addition, the staff of the church should be prayed for regularly during worship services. Emphasize a particular ministry periodically through the year and pray specifically for the staff member leading that ministry. Also, the church can have special recognition days for the staff and their families. Pray for the staff members and their families on their birthdays and wedding anniversaries. Celebrate their annual anniversaries of service at the church and pray for them.

Other possible prayer strategies might include:

- Praying for a different staff member each month
- Praying specifically for staff members' families between Mother's Day and Father's Day
- Using prayer time every Friday or Saturday night to pray for the pastor's strength and guidance as he or she leads the church on the next Saturday or Sunday



## **81. Prayer meetings in our church are boring.**

Prayer meetings should never be boring, but the reality of some churches is that they are. To overcome this problem, try to analyze your prayer meeting as a first-time visitor to your church. What would he see? What would she think is the purpose of the meeting? What would the visitor think your church believes about prayer?

**What the visitor sees.** The first question to ask is will the visitor to your prayer meeting see people praying? If your prayer meeting has turned into a weekly Bible study with only a passing glance given to prayer, it is time to make some important changes. Bible study during the prayer meeting is not wrong, but it should not take the place of genuine prayer. If you wish to continue a Bible study time during your prayer meeting, shorten it in to no more than 15 minutes (based on a one-hour prayer meeting). The second step is to use the Bible study time to lead the church to prayer. For example, if the Bible study is on Nehemiah rebuilding the wall, lead the church to pray for the leaders of the church to be wise in building up the church or pray that the church will be strong when discouraged or challenged. If the Bible study is on the peace that God provides, have members that need God's peace stand while the rest of the church prays for them.

**What is the purpose?** If a visitor comes to your prayer meeting, will she see anything of importance taking place? Are you praying for the lost to be saved by name? Or are you only praying for the sick to be healed? Is there a time for confession of sins? Are prayers of adoration and praise being lifted up to God, or does your church only practice prayers of intercession? Confession, intercession, adoration and thanksgiving are all attitudes that should be included in the corporate time of prayer.

**What does your church believe about prayer?** The reason that prayer meetings at your church are boring could be that your church does not have a true understanding of what prayer is. Perhaps some teaching on the doctrine of prayer is in order. Topics to include in your study of prayer are:

- God created prayer so that he could communicate with us
- God also created prayer so that we could communicate with him
- God promises to always answer prayer according to his perfect will
- Biblical prayer does not necessitate special words or a special location
- God encourages us to approach his throne boldly (Hebrews 4:16)
- Prayer includes confession, adoration, intercession (supplication and petition) and thanksgiving

You could also look at specific prayers from the Bible to examine the types of requests made of God and the types of attitudes that God approves in prayer. (See in particular Matthew 6:5-15).

## **87. Prayer meetings in church tend to be gossip times.**

Does the weekly prayer meeting at your church sound like the community's gossip session? It usually goes something like this: "We need to pray for Mrs. \_\_\_\_\_. She hasn't been feeling well. She told me that her nephew . . ." And it continues for five more minutes or longer as the well-meaning church member requests prayer for every dysfunction found in Mrs. \_\_\_\_\_'s family.

Prayer meetings are still an effective way to encourage prayer among church members and they can be more than gossip sessions. To avoid this problem, do not stop having a time for intercessory prayer. Just **restructure** it. For example, have the members form groups of twos, threes or fours. They can share prayer requests and pray for those requests within the small group. You can also limit this time so that the group does not take 30 minutes sharing requests and then not have time to pray.

Second, we encourage you to establish **a new rule** for making prayer requests: a member can only request prayer for a person if the member will then return to the person and tell him or her that the church prayed for them. Not only does this process cut down on the gossip level in prayer meetings, it also provides the opportunity for an evangelistic encounter and, thus, gives an added evangelistic dimension to your prayer ministry. If a person knows that your church has prayed, he or she will be more likely to visit your church.

Last, one extreme measure your church can take to remove the gossip element from prayer meetings is to have members submit **written prayer requests** prior to the meeting. Then, during the prayer meeting, these requests can be prayed over by distributing them to individual members or in the small groups mentioned earlier.

### **93. When we pray in our church, nothing happens.**

What happens when “no” is an answer to prayer? When a church prays and nothing happens, there are two possible reasons:

#### **1. There is sin in the church.**

Sometimes sin in a church, especially open and unconfessed sin, can block communication with God. Isaiah recorded that God told the Israelites that he would not accept their offerings or prayers because they had sinned against him. In one particular verse, he said: “So when you spread out your hands in prayer, I will hide my eyes from you; Yes, even though you multiply prayer, I will not listen” (Isaiah 1:15a). God later promised forgiveness for those who are repentant: “‘Come now and let us reason together,’ says the Lord, ‘Though your sins are as scarlet, They will be as white as snow; Though they are red like crimson, They will be like wool’” (Isaiah 1:18).

If prayer is not being answered, first have the ministers and the governing board examine themselves to see if there is any unconfessed sin in their lives. If someone is openly disobedient to the Lord, he or she should resign immediately and prayer should be made for the person’s restoration. Next, the church should be called to confession. The ministers should confront any church member who they know is in sin according to biblical precepts.

#### **2. It is not God’s will.**

As Christians we are always supposed to pray and bring petitions before the Lord. We are even taught in the Bible to be persistent in prayer. But we must know (and teach others) that God will never give us bad things, no matter how hard we pray. Part of praying to the Lord is recognizing that he is sovereign over all things and that he has the power to accomplish any good thing. Accordingly, he will never give us things that are not good for us even though they seem that way to us. Sometimes the answer to our prayers is “no”— not because God does not hear us or want to grant us what we have prayed for — but because he is giving us something better.

Sometimes, God’s answer to our prayers is a delayed response. Part of the reason for the delay is so that our faith will be purified as we wait upon the Lord. Another reason is that God is bringing all elements into play in order to accomplish his will.

Prayer is trusting God to accomplish his will, not ours. We pray to bring our will into alignment with his.

## **99. We have a place in our church where many people pray each week.**

A special room or area of your church which is singularly devoted to prayer will make an important statement about the primacy of prayer to your ministry.

### **Location**

First, choose a location in your church which can house the prayer ministry. This place can be as small as a closet, but it will show more of your church's emphasis if the room is larger and in a primary location in your church. You might consider subdividing one classroom into two to three prayer stations with one larger area where a small group might meet to pray.

### **Substations**

If you are able to have a large enough space, you can divide your prayer room into areas dedicated to specific prayers. One area might house prayer requests for missions along with a globe, a map of the world and a list of missionaries. Another area could be dedicated to prayer for your church, its staff and the lay leaders. Ministers could be encouraged to leave weekly prayer requests related to their ministries in this area. In addition, have an area where praises for answered prayer can be recorded and rejoiced over.

### **Access**

Make a decision at the beginning of this ministry who will have access to the room and when. Will it be open at all hours with a private entrance? Will it be open during worship times? Who will be responsible for the prayer room's upkeep, including maintaining records and updating prayer requests?

Designating a specific area to prayer will have a tremendous effect on the life of your church. As members recognize the value placed on prayer by the ministry team, they will be inspired to make prayer a priority in their own lives.

## **105. I believe the Bible teaches that prayer should be a daily part of every Christian's life.**

The Bible teaches that prayer should be a daily activity in the Christian's life. Ministers can encourage church members to incorporate this discipline into their lives by recounting their own personal testimony of daily prayer from the pulpit, by providing church members resources on prayer and by providing corporate times of prayer.

### **From the Pulpit**

It is unlikely that church members will begin praying daily if they do not think that the pastor is doing likewise. As the spiritual leader of the church, the senior pastor must set the example. Other ministers should set an example as well, but the church especially needs to hear it directly from the senior pastor. The pastor may share his testimony about how he developed a daily prayer time. He may also mention in passing during the sermon things he is learning in his quiet time.

### **Providing Prayer Resources**

Often members would like to begin praying on a daily basis, but they do not know really where to begin. Or they begin, but quickly become discouraged when they realize that they have only spent five minutes praying when they thought 30 minutes had passed. Ministers can help their members in these situations by providing resources on prayer. Point them to specific sources in the prayer section of the local Christian bookstore. Draw attention to books, both recent and classics, which teach biblical concepts related to prayer. In addition to literary aids, offer classes and seminars that teach the importance of prayer.

### **Corporate Prayer**

It may seem contradictory to encourage corporate prayer in order to promote daily prayer among church members. Corporate prayer, however, stimulates personal prayer and vice versa. Corporate prayer energizes personal prayer by showing that the church believes that prayer is important. Because corporate prayer provides an opportunity to hear mature Christians praying, it also helps the struggling Christian develop a prayer time. Last, corporate times of prayer assist members in developing a daily prayer life because praying together, in general, creates a more healthy church body. Churches can have corporate prayer times during their mid-week service and special prayer vigils. They can encourage individual ministries to gather monthly for prayer.

## **111. I pray regularly during the day.**

Having a personal devotional time is important and praying throughout the day is important as well. We are taught to pray unceasingly (1 Thessalonians 5:17). Two ways to pray throughout the day is to “rejoice always” and “give thanks in everything” (1 Thessalonians 5:16-18).

### **Rejoice Always (1Thessalonians 5:16)**

Whenever something good happens, we should stop and praise God. Make it a practice to recognize the good in life. The good in our life may be our good health when we see someone who is sick. It may be children who we hear laughing in the park. It may be something as simple as a flower. It may be God helping us avoid an automobile accident. It may be the ability to finish a task that was thought to be impossible. There are so many good things in life that we sometimes do not recognize them for the blessings from God that they are. We, as Christians, should make a special effort to acknowledge these and rejoice in them.

### **Give Thanks in Everything (1 Thessalonians 5:18)**

Unfortunately, life does not always go the way we think it should, but we can still give thanks to God. Being able to be thankful, even in bad situations, results from a prior recognition of the fact that we can trust God. Some reasons to trust God in the midst of bad situations are:

- He will never give us more than we can bear (1 Corinthians 10:13).
- He will bring good out of bad for his children (Romans 8:28).
- God the Father gives us only good (Jeremiah 29:11; Matthew 7:11; James 1:13, 17).
- He is in control (Psalm 121:2-4).

Trusting God will help us give thanks in everything.

## **117. Our church communicates prayers that are answered to the people of the church.**

Communicating answered prayers is important to the life of your prayer ministry and to your members' spiritual lives. Communicating how God has responded to prayers creates an environment in which praises are lifted up to God. It also encourages more praying since people are able to see that God truly does answer prayer. In order to communicate answered prayers to your church, consider the following:

- **E-mail prayer chain.** If most of your members use e-mail, ask them to submit prayer requests and answers to prayer by e-mail. The leader of the prayer ministry can then redistribute these to the member list.
- **Celebrate answered prayer.** Allow members to share testimony about an answered prayer during a worship service. Ask the person to write what they are going to say prior to the service and to provide the appropriate minister a copy. This method will allow the minister to help the person clarify what he or she wants to say as well as helping him or her stay within the allotted time. Following the person's testimony, the senior minister should lead the church in praising God for the answered prayer.

Also consider having a designated service to celebrate the prayers answered in the church. An entire service will be especially appropriate if the church as a whole has been praying about a specific issue or has had a special prayer emphasis.

- **Maintain records.** In addition to the two suggestions above, the leader of the prayer ministry should maintain records regarding answered prayer. These records should be open to those who visit the prayer center so that they can praise God for his faithfulness. Every two years these records may be compiled into book form to be shared with the church's membership and others. These records will be a living testimony of what God has accomplished in your church.

## 125. I believe that prayer works.

Jesus promised us in John 15:7 “If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish and it will be given you,” *NIV*. If we would only remain in God’s will, he has promised an answer! When you pray, you are joining in a relationship with the God of the universe. It is one-on-one communication.

If you are unsure that your prayers are being answered or if they are even necessary, try these helpful ideas to get back on track and back in God’s will:

- **Keep a prayer journal.** Often when we pray, many things come to mind for which we need to pray. We either become distracted and forget some of them or end our time too soon. To remedy this problem, try jotting down your prayers in a notebook. Then, when you see an answer to the prayer, note the date or put a star beside it. This practice will help you to track what is really important. While some of the answers may not have been what you were expecting, they will allow you to see the direction of God’s will.
- **Pray with other believers.** God said where two or more are gathered, he is there with them. You may participate in your church’s scheduled prayer meeting, or you may simply schedule time with a few praying friends. If you are new to prayer, praying with others can be an opportunity to learn to pray just as Jesus taught his disciples.
- **Make prayer a priority.** Prayer should be our key to the morning and our lock in the evening. Schedule a time when you can be alone with God. Be diligent about making this time a priority. Once you begin, the world will try to tell you that other things come first, but do not be fooled. Bathe every thought, request, concern and decision in prayer. Do not, however, let your prayers become a laundry list of requests. Praise and thank God for who he is, confess your sins and be open to the ways he will use you while you make your requests known to him.
- **Make praying an adventure!** Do not become complacent with praying, feeling it is a “duty” you must fulfill as a Christian. Remember that you are meeting with your Savior and Redeemer. That he would call you to be a part of his ultimate plan should be of immense gratitude and satisfaction. Be open to hearing from God during this time. He has much to share, so be prepared to encounter him.



### 131. I feel adequately trained in prayer.

Prayer is a key that God has given us to use in communicating with our Savior. If a Christian does not practice prayer, he or she will never know the power that exists within it. When it is used, however, unimaginable doors are opened and lives are changed forever. The Bible mentions prayer more than 100 times. If it is that important to God, it should definitely be important to us.

A sad fact is that some Christians in their walk do not fully understand what it means to have a healthy prayer life. They have had no training. Begin teaching them about prayer as Jesus did with his disciples – with the Lord’s Prayer.

- **“Our Father”**: Pray that God may be glorified in his name. The world is moving at such a hectic pace that family ties are often viewed as unimportant. But you are God’s child and he longs to have you near him. It is wonderful to know that in this spinning world, your heavenly Father stands ever-present waiting for you to call upon his name.
- **“who art in heaven”**: Pray that God may be glorified in his kingdom before which every evil will eventually fall. God wants us to understand that he is Lord of all. His kingdom is heaven, but he is with us on earth as well. He always hears our prayers.
- **“hallowed by thy name”**: God is unique in all aspects of the word. While many would refer to him as a “divine being,” he is Lord over all, and one day every knee will bow and every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord. He wants us to glorify his name.
- **“Thy kingdom come”**: Understand the big picture. It is all about glorifying God and increasing his kingdom. Christians await the day the Lord will return and take his children with him to heaven.
- **“thy will be done”**: With Christ in our life, we are expected to follow his plans for us. God knows what is best for us even when we do not. If we seek his will in our lives, he will show it to us.
- **“on earth as it is in heaven”**: We want God to be in our lives on earth just as he will be when we are with him in heaven. God is in control of heaven and earth and we need his control in our daily lives here on earth.
- **“Give us this day our daily bread”**: We are to be thankful for all that God gives us. Take the time to be truly thankful and to ask God to provide your daily necessities.
- **“And forgive us our trespasses”**: Sin is a very unpopular concept in our world today. We do not want to be condemned for the things we do. Sin, however, will keep us from heaven. To stay in God’s will requires that we avoid sin. When it occurs, we must repent and ask forgiveness.
- **“as we forgive those who trespass against us”**: God told us that to love our neighbor is vital to our life, next to loving him. If we are unable to forgive others, how can we expect God to forgive us?
- **“And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil”**: While God does not lead us to temptation, temptation remains a part of this world. Pray that God would keep you faithful in avoiding all temptation. Be aware of the evil side of the spiritual world. It is very real.
- **“For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory”**: This world holds many mysteries but when we see God working in and through our lives, we can rejoice that we are part of it.

- ***“forever and ever. Amen.”***: Regardless of the evil in this world, it will one day end and those who have called on the name of Jesus will be taken up with him to live eternally in his kingdom. Pray that God will continually increase your faith and help you walk with him until the end.

### **137. I pray regularly for missionaries.**

The Great Commission is a command that all Christians should comply with in their walk with the Lord. Churches should keep missions ever before the people. They should know at least one missionary by name so that they can pray daily for this person and his or her mission. Doing so reminds people that we are, in reality, all part of the Great Commission; God has simply planted us in different locations.

The leadership of the church must be the driving force in promoting missions. While some may not feel led to go elsewhere, we should all commit to faithful prayer that God will become known among all people groups. If your church does not have a heart for missions, take this opportunity to ignite a passion for it.

- **Create enthusiasm for missions.** Invite missionaries to your church for a special “missions” day conference. Encourage members to “adopt” a missionary to keep in touch with through mail, visits and prayer.
- **Support work on the mission field.** Contact your denomination’s missions board to see how your church can send volunteers for short-term trips. Also consider collecting a special offering for missions in general or for a particular missions effort.

**Express your confidence in God.** If you prayerfully consider missions to be of the utmost importance, God will bless it. Ask him to guide you to serve missions and missionaries as a church.

### 143. I pray regularly for lost people.

Prayer is the best communication tool God has provided for us. With it we have direct access 24 hours a day, seven days a week. So if we have been given such a powerful tool, why do we find that most Christians fail to use it on a regular basis?

God not only commands that we pray often, he commands that we pray for those who are living without Christ. Paul informed Agrippa how long he intended to pray for him, “Then Agrippa said to Paul, ‘Do you think that in such a short time you can persuade me to be a Christian?’ Paul replied, ‘Short time or long — I pray God that not only you but all who are listening to me today may become what I am, except for these chains” (Acts 26:28-29 *NIV*).

As Christians, it is our responsibility to have a heart burdened for lost people. If we are reticent to pray, we are missing out on being used greatly by God. If we do not pray for the lost, who will? While God will not allow our disobedience to hinder his ultimate plan, how unpleasant it would be to explain when we stand before him!

Only after we take that first step and submit the lost to prayer will we begin to see God’s manifestation in the lives of others. When we pray to be used in sharing the gospel message, we will become a part of the “good news.”

As you begin to consider the lost state of the world and who that involves consider these thoughts when you pray:

- *Pray with perseverance.* Once you have started to pray for the lost, you will be pushing Satan a little further away. You may not see fruit from your prayers for a while, but persevere. Do not be discouraged. Be like Paul — continue to pray short or long, however long it takes. Through your prayers God will direct you.
- *Pray with faith.* Jesus said if we would pray in his name, he would be faithful to answer. Pray knowing that God hears your prayers and will answer. Keep in mind that if Jesus, the God of the universe, found it important to pray always and on every occasion, how much more important it is for us to pray.
- *Pray with your feet.* Take your prayers to the streets and put them into action. Continue to pray for the lost, but also pray that God would use you. Who can you reach for Christ today?

### **149. Sometimes our church is so busy “doing church” that we pray too little.**

It is not uncommon for the people of God to get so caught up in the duties of the church that they neglect prayer. It is important, however, to remember that without prayer, people tend to begin working within their own power to accomplish the goals of the church. If the church is truly going to change lives, God must be involved. Prayer is the way we express our dependence upon God, seek his guidance and invite him to do his work through us. The following are some suggestions that will enable a church to make prayer a priority in ministry:

- Evaluate what the church is doing that is preventing it from praying. The lack of prayer in a church is often an issue of wrong priorities. Make certain that the tasks of the church are supportive of the mission and eliminate anything that is not.
- Use the church services to teach a series on prayer. Such a series can educate the people about the importance of prayer and about their need to be praying.
- Develop a prayer team within the church. Look around in the church for people who are enthusiastic about prayer and enlist them to be on the prayer team.
- Use the prayer team to pray throughout the sanctuary before the church services begin. Have members on the team pray at each pew or seat asking God to work in the lives of those people who will be sitting there.
- Have members of your prayer team alternate weeks in which they will commit to praying during the church services, preferably in a separate area designated for prayer.
- Have members of the prayer team go throughout the church praying in each Sunday school classroom prior to the class beginning.
- Have the prayer team and the church staff spend time weekly praying through the church directory.
- Hold an annual prayer retreat where the church and its leaders are lifted up in prayer as they make plans for the upcoming year.

“But you will receive power  
when the Holy Spirit comes on you;  
and you will be my witnesses in  
Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria,  
and to the ends of the earth.”  
--Acts 1:8 NIV

**Evangelism is...** “the proclamation of the historical, biblical Christ as Savior and Lord, with a view to persuading people to come to him personally and so be reconciled to God. The results of evangelism include obedience to Christ, incorporation into his church, and responsible service to the world.”<sup>1</sup>

Evangelism is particularly important to the church that seeks true growth since healthy growth comes primarily through new Christians. Just prior to Jesus ascending, he gave the church a specific task: to be his witnesses beginning in Jerusalem and continuing to the ends of the earth. Since not everyone on earth has heard the good news of Christ, the church must still be involved in fulfilling our assignment through effective evangelism.

A healthy church must provide its members with opportunities for evangelism training, and it must also provide opportunities for evangelizing. The articles found in this section will provide an abundance of material related to these issues.

# EVANGELISM

<sup>1</sup>Thom S. Rainer, *The Book of Church Growth*, Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 1993, 77-78.



# Evangelism

The following questions about evangelism are addressed in the Church Health Survey:

4. People in our church share their faith regularly.
10. Our church supports missionaries generously.
16. Our church seeks ways to reach people in our area.
22. Visitors feel welcome in our church.
28. Our Sunday school classes or small groups seek to reach people outside of our groups.
34. Our church emphasizes church planting as a means of reaching people.
40. I have certain fears and apprehensions that keep me from sharing my faith.
46. Our church sends people regularly to do mission work around the world.
52. We have a known plan for regularly reaching out in our community.
58. A church should meet the needs of its own members before it reaches others.
64. A church should not start a new church until it has adequate surplus in the budget.
70. People who share their faith should have the gift of evangelism.
76. I regularly attempt to establish relationships with people who do not have a church home.
82. Our church provides regular opportunities for evangelism training.
88. I have at least a few friendships/relationships with people who are not Christians.
94. Our church sees people accept Christ on a regular basis.
100. I believe you have to be called to be a lifetime missionary to do international missions.
106. I believe that one of the purposes of Sunday school classes or small groups is evangelism.
112. Our church has a portion of its budget allocated for mission work around the world.
118. When I see a new person in our church, I make every effort to introduce myself to him/her.
122. I share my faith regularly with lost persons.
128. My pastor/minister/clergy models personal evangelism for our church.
134. I would be willing to do personal evangelism if I had more training.
140. There are enough churches in our community.
146. Our church is growing more by transfer members from other churches than by reaching lost people

#### **4. People in our church share their faith regularly.**

If your congregation is struggling to share their faith, please understand that you are not alone. The majority of Christians do not share their faith on a regular basis. Many explanations quickly surface as to why this problem persists within the church: lack of commitment, lack of conviction, lack of training, lack of boldness, possible discomfort (to the believer and to the audience), and a host of others. Unfortunately, there is no simple way to remedy all these issues. While we cannot offer you an easy formula for evangelistic success, we can offer four suggestions that may lead your people to become intentional about sharing their faith.

*Suggestion #1: Preach about evangelism.* Though this suggestion may seem simple (even elementary), you would be surprised at how poorly many churches use their pulpit to preach and teach about sharing the gospel. In too many messages about evangelism ministers talk about the Great Commission, but do little else. If churchgoers are to understand what evangelism entails, the pastor must engage listeners in not only evangelism, but also other topics related closely to it. For example, preach about salvation and the lost. As you preach these sermons, weave into them the need for your members to be committed to evangelism. Consider preaching a sermon series on how Jesus or Paul witnessed to people. If you want evangelism to be a priority in the heart of your congregation, make it a priority in the heart of your pulpit.

*Suggestion #2: Equip for evangelism.* Preaching about evangelism will lead to a better congregational awareness and understanding about witnessing, but it may not always bring change in their witnessing. It is essential at this point to put in place discipleship classes that teach practical methods and strategies for witnessing. Begin with studies like “Share Jesus without Fear” that are simple and concise. After you see some success with this program, move on to programs like “Becoming A Contagious Christian,” “The Net,” and “F.A.I.T.H.” As your people move through these studies, they will become better equipped to share their faith with others.

*Suggestion #3: Plan for evangelism.* If your congregation knows how to share their faith, they should be ready to seek out witnessing encounters. In most cases, all that people need to help them share their faith is encouragement and structure. Set up and implement a short-term witnessing program, like the one included in question #94 of this manual. Not only will this program provide the needed stimulus to motivate personal evangelism, it may also lead to a concentrated ministry focus for the entire congregation.

*Suggestion #4: Model evangelism.* As a leader in your church, you must model evangelism. It is not enough to talk about witnessing. It is not enough to teach witnessing programs to others. If you want to see people share their faith, you must be sharing your faith too. As a pastor, a deacon, a Sunday school teacher, or other church leader, the most important thing you can do to help others share their faith is to model the practice yourself. Whether you are doing visitation, eating dinner at a restaurant, or just taking a walk, seize every moment you can to show others how to present the gospel.



## 10. Our church supports missions generously.

If your congregation feels that it does not support missions generously, you most likely have one of two problems. Either your church is supporting missions and your people are unaware of it, or your church is simply not supporting missions. Both of these problems are correctable and can be remedied.

If you are presently supporting missions and your people are not cognizant of what the church is doing, you must take steps to better inform them about what your church is already doing in missions.

**Idea #1: Invite missionaries to speak.** Furloughing missionaries offer powerful missions insights that cannot be found anywhere else. Encourage these missionaries to share about what God is doing among the people group(s) with whom they are ministering. Ask missionaries to make presentations that will allow your congregation to see and understand other cultures. Finally, make sure you give plenty of time for your people to interact with the missionaries. Consider planning fellowships following missionary-led services where ethnic foods from the missionary's country might be served. The ultimate goal of bringing in these speakers and having them interact with your people is to show your church family the importance of their role in supporting mission work.

**Idea #2: Promote your ministries and budget more effectively.** Keep your church informed about missions support by promoting missions ministries and giving. Use the church bulletin or newsletter to advertise these ministries. Pray publicly for missionaries your church supports.

If your church has not yet begun to support missions, we urge you to begin planning to do so immediately. Missions support not only furthers the gospel message of Christ, but it can also bring focus and unity to a congregation. As you begin planning a missions support program, make sure to implement both internal and external missions initiatives.

*Internal initiatives.* Missions must start within the church through preparation. The best way to prepare your people for missions involvement is to preach and teach about it. You might focus on the disciples and how they were empowered by the Holy Spirit to preach the gospel to unbelievers. You might show your congregation how Paul gave his life to see the gospel spread throughout the world. By using the Bible to establish the agenda for missions, you display before your people how important mission work is in God's eyes.

After laying an adequate biblical foundation for supporting missions through preaching, introduce some hands-on events where your congregation can provide or raise missions support. Mission meals, car washes, and penny wars are just a sampling of the many activities you could employ to raise missions funds. Invite some of your creative congregants to help you dream big in supporting missions.

*External initiatives.* By external, we mean sending members of your congregation outside the church body to participate in mission work. If you want to get your people excited about missions, send them out on mission. Minister in a local prison. Serve dinner at a homeless shelter. Plan a mission service project within your state—help another church. Work with missionaries to plan and lead an overseas mission trip. Your goal is to get your church actually *doing* missions.

## 16. Our church seeks ways to reach people in our area.

Every church should be outwardly focused as we seek to win the world for Christ. In order to reach people in your area:

- **Create an awareness.** The first step in reaching unchurched people is to create an awareness of the need in your own congregation. You can accomplish this task in two ways. First, create an awareness by communicating information regarding the number of unchurched people of your area. Study your community's demographics and provide your congregation with pertinent statistics. For example, tell your church the size of the general population and then tell them how many unchurched people are in your community. You may also want to point out if the average age of your congregation does not approximate the average age of the general population of your community.

Second, create a biblical awareness about the reality of people needing to know Christ. If the members of your church do not understand the eternal importance of knowing Christ as their personal Savior, they will likely be unwilling to reach people in the area. They will not sense any urgency to see others come to know Jesus nor to become part of a local body of believers. Many times, church leaders take this information for granted, but in today's pluralistic society, many people in the pews of your church may not believe that Jesus is the only way of salvation.

- **Provide opportunities.** As a church, intentionally plan special events and ongoing visitation programs to introduce the people in your area to your church. Special events may include a block party, Vacation Bible School, school supply give-away, free vision/hearing checkups, handing out free drinks at the local park, or any other event that places your members in the community.

Ongoing visitation programs are also important in reaching your community. An effective visitation program will involve a variety of ages and will provide training for the members who want to participate in the program. Visitation should be done in teams of three (two males/one female or vice versa). One person can present the information; the second person can run interference to reduce distractions; and the third person can pray during the visit.

While the visitation program should include visits to those who have visited the church, it should also include specific times for unobtrusive, drop-in visits. These types of visits may include a packet of information about the church that can be left at the home visited. Teams may also ask the person or family if they can pray for them in a particular way. The team should be instructed to pray at the home and also to bring the request back to the church. Church members who do this type of visitation should be trained in evangelism for when the opportunity to share about Christ presents itself.

## **22. Visitors feel welcome in our church.**

While there is no easy solution that will always make visitors feel welcome in your church, the following method for welcoming people gives your congregation a way to reach out to those stopping in. This team-based approach does two things. First, it gives everyone in your church a specific role in the welcoming process. Second, it makes everyone in the congregation more aware of visitors and the need to reach out to them. Try the following team model and adjust it to fit your congregation.

**Greeter team.** The greeters are people who are responsible for greeting every person who comes into your church building. They should arrive well in advance of your services and stand ready at all major church entrances. While they should greet everyone, their primary goal is to watch out for new or unfamiliar faces. After giving visitors a warm welcome, they should ensure that guests have a bulletin and can find their way to a Sunday school class or a seat in the sanctuary. The greeter should also secure someone to sit with the guest, though everyone should be careful not to overwhelm the guest.

At some point during the service your church should be doing some type of welcome and have a way of securing information from visitors. If you do not have a plan in place for getting important contact information about visitors, do so as soon as possible. Many churches use a registration form that is passed through the pews, with each person signing his or her name.

**After-service fellowship team.** Greeters should invite guests to a brief, 15-minute after-church fellowship with the church staff and leaders. Refreshments always help people feel more at ease. Secure a team of church members to coordinate this fellowship each week.

**Sunday visitation team.** The Sunday visitation team takes important information about the church to the homes of visitors. These packets should be equipped with door hangers to fit on the front door. They should include items like a letter from the pastor, a calendar of church events, an explanation of church programs, a doctrinal statement, and some sort of small gift. The goal here is simply to say "thank you for visiting" rather than making an extended visit.

**Caller team.** The caller team will commit to call the visitor within the next week. During the conversation, they should make sure to thank the visitor for coming, invite them back to another service, and make them aware of any church events that the visitor might enjoy attending.

**Writer team.** The writer team will commit to write visitors a brief note within the following week. Older members of your congregation are ideal for this type of role.

## **28. Our Sunday school classes or small groups seek to reach people outside our groups.**

If outreach is to take place within small groups, group members must be intentional about reaching out to people. The following is a simple outreach strategy that can be applied within the context of any Sunday school class or small group. Feel free to modify the strategy in order to make it conducive to your church situation.

**Phase 1: Weekly Prayer**—As you begin any outreach initiative it is essential that you start with prayer. On a weekly basis, set aside a few minutes to pray for your small group's spiritual and numeric growth. Be deliberate about asking God to grow your classes with new believers from outside your church family.

**Phase 2: Outreach Coordinator**—Every class that is serious about reaching out to others and seeing growth within their group should elect a person to coordinate the outreach efforts of the class. This individual's role is strictly confined to the planning and coordinating of outreach events and activities. It will be the duty of every class member to be involved in the outreach strategy as agreed upon by the coordinator and the class as a whole.

**Phase 3: The Empty Chair**—Once prayer for outreach has begun and the coordinator has been elected, it will be time to reveal the empty chair. The empty chair will be placed in the room to serve as a reminder of the outreach effort. The goal of the empty chair strategy is encourage class members to diligently work and pray to see the empty chair continually filled. Once the empty chair is filled, another chair should be added to the group and filled in a like manner. Ultimately, if a class follows through with the empty chair strategy, the class will soon outgrow the room.

**Phase 4: Quarterly Outreach Events**—These events (planned by the outreach coordinator) will be efforts to reach people outside the church. Putting on free car washes, distributing Scripture and working at food kitchens are all things small groups can do to reach out to new small group prospects.

**Phase 5: Believer Fellowships**—At least twice a year plan a small group party at the home of a group member that is explicitly for fellowshiping with non-Christians. During this fellowship time, the primary goal should be for small group members to build relationships between the small group and prospects. No gospel presentations or conversion tactics should be attempted during these fellowships. Relationship development is the goal. If relationships come about on this level, it will lay the foundation for group members to reach out to prospects in other venues.

### **34. Our church emphasizes church planting as a means for reaching people.**

If we were able to see into the minds of your church members as they responded to this question, we would probably see a little confusion and maybe even defensiveness. For most churchgoers, church planting is a type of mission work that takes place overseas where no churches presently exist. They look at the surrounding American landscape and think to themselves: “There are plenty of churches here for everyone!” What many Christians fail to realize (lay leadership and pastoral leadership alike) is that church planting continues to be an enormous need in the United States.

In his book, “Planting Growing Churches for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century,” Aubrey Malphurs address this situation with a chapter titled: “Do we need another church?” Within it, Malphurs gives five reasons why Christians must make church planting a high priority. Consider the following summary of Malphurs’ findings.

1. *The Decline of the American Church.* Instead of growing, many churches have reached a plateau in their growth rates or have begun declining. For many churches the decline leads to death. Malphurs notes that an average of approximately 3,000 churches die each year.
2. *The Growing Number of Unchurched People.* While the number of churches in America is declining, the American population is increasing. With this increase, there continues to be an ever-growing population of unchurched people. The more unchurched people there are, the greater the need for more churches to reach them.
3. *The Growth of Cults and Non-evangelical Groups.* As much of the American society continues to shift into the post-Christian mindset, cults and nominal Christian groups are flourishing. In order to refute these groups and spread the gospel, there must be a growing number of churches to do it.
4. *The Biblical Promise of Church Growth* – Matthew 16:18 – Jesus exhorts that the church will not be a finite organism, but rather one of continual growth.
5. *The Mandate of the Great Commission* – Matthew 28:19-20; Mark 16:5; Luke 24:46-47; Acts 1:8. Jesus also clearly mandates that his followers must be continually laboring for the growth of God’s kingdom for His glory.

Malphurs goes on to give four distinct advantages church planting offers over other forms of church growth and evangelism.

1. New churches grow faster than established churches.
2. New churches evangelize better than established churches.
3. Leaders gain credibility faster in new churches.
4. People are more open to change in new churches.

If your church is not currently involved in church planting, we urge you to pray about becoming involved as soon as possible. There is clearly a need for church planting. What is stopping your church from helping plant a church in the next year?

#### **40. Our church has been involved recently in starting a new church.**

For many church members, the idea of church planting is a foreign concept for two reasons. First, many churchgoers view church planting as merely a part of foreign missions (see response to question #34) and second, most church members have no understanding of what church planting entails or what it looks like in practice. This discussion targets the latter issue.

The following is a list of nine models for church planting. Adapted from C. Peter Wagner's book, "Church Planting for a Greater Harvest," this list is based on his chapter entitled, "Twelve Good Ways to Plant a Church." As you read through these ideas, contemplate which model might best serve as your church's planting strategy.

- **Model #1: *Hiving off planting (mother/daughter church planting)*.** This model of church planting calls for a group of church members to separate from the church with the explicit purpose of growing a daughter church, usually in the same vicinity as the mother church.
- **Model #2: *Colonization planting*.** This model of church planting is much like hiving off, but it plants the daughter church at a farther distance from the mother church, with the purpose of targeting different groups in different communities.
- **Model #3: *Adoption planting*.** This model of planting revolves around the adoption of a preexisting church by a mother church. Here the mother church supports, refurbishes or builds up the adopted church.
- **Model #4: *Accidental planting*.** This model is the result of unplanned issues within the church, sometimes resulting from infighting or doctrinal disagreements. New churches begin as a group of church members break off from a church body to begin a new church.
- **Model #5: *Satellite model planting*.** This model calls for the creation of new churches that remain loosely connected to the planting church, even after the church is developed and functional.
- **Model #6: *Multi-congregational church planting*.** This model of church planting occurs as a new church congregation (usually ethnically specific) begins with the site and situation of the existing church. The planted church remains autonomous, but shares the same facilities with the planting congregation.
- **Model #7: *Multiple campus church planting*.** This model is similar to the satellite model, except that instead of having some self-autonomy (satellite model), all church campuses function together as one extended church. Each campus shares the same staff, the same membership record, and work under the same budget.
- **Model #8: *Mission team planting*.** This model is carried out by sending a mission planting team from a church with the explicit purpose of planting a new church. Unlike other models, the team works with the new church for a limited time and retracts from the plant after a foundation is established.
- **Model #9: *Catalytic church planter planting*.** This model revolves around the recognition of certain member's giftedness for being a church planter. Within the model the church sponsors an individual(s) and their family members to go out and plant churches.

#### 46. Our church sends people regularly to do mission work around the world.

If your church is not sending out individuals to do mission work on a regular basis, remedying this situation may be easier than you think. There are two ideas you should keep in mind when initiating a new missions program in your church: start small and ensure success. Mission work is really a peculiar phenomenon. If Christians participate in a mission experience and they find excitement and joy in doing it, they instantaneously become powerful missions advocates. Understanding the trend, we have a proposal for how you can begin a successful worldwide missions program in your own church:

- **Step #1: Research mission programs.** Before you begin to talk about a mission trip in your church, gather as much information as you can about current mission groups, programs and opportunities throughout the world. Contact your denomination and ask them to send you information about what they do to support missions. Additionally, look outside your denomination to find out where and how good mission work is being done in the United States and abroad. In short, make it your goal to become your church's resident expert on global evangelism.
- **Step #2: Make connections with missionaries.** This step is crucial! Once you feel confident in knowing the basics of the missions scene, contact missionaries who are presently serving on the mission field. It is important that you try to find missionaries who are from your city or state. Spend time talking with the missionaries and seek to learn as much as you can about their ministries. If you have trouble making connections, contact your denominational mission board for assistance. In developing a relationship with a "homegrown" missionary, you will be laying the foundation for your next step.
- **Step #3: Establish mission partnerships.** After learning about various missionaries around the world and making contacts with those closest to you, you will be able to determine with which missionaries your church could partner. While there is no universal plan for a missionary and church partnership, the idea is to create a mutually beneficial relationship between the two entities. For instance, as a church with resources (prayer, people, time, money, etc.) your congregation has the ability to aid and assist the missionary in his or her mission endeavors. Hence, the missionary is greatly blessed. Likewise, by sending resources to the missionaries, your congregation is being obedient to the Great Commission.
- **Step #4: Send your people on mission.** With a cooperative partnership in place your people will know about the missionaries, the setting, and the field where they labor. You are now ready to begin taking short-term mission trips to your partnering location. Again, it is important to start small and ensure successful trips. Consider going to a far away state in the first year, heading to Canada or Mexico in the second, and then going overseas in the third year. For the first few years your church may only do a summer trip, but then with success, your church could do several trips to multiple locations throughout the year.
- **Step #5: Maintain your relationships with your missionaries.** If you select missionaries based out of your home state, it is likely that they will return to your area when on furlough. As they return home, do your best to provide atmospheres of interaction between them and your church people. Have the missionary come to speak about what they are doing on the field. Ask your people to open their homes to the missionaries, to bless them with meals, or maybe help them with transportation while they are at home. Few things will solidify and maintain a mission partnership better than favorable relations between a missionary and your congregation.

## **52. We have a known plan for regularly reaching out in our community.**

For many churches, developing a deliberate outreach program is a difficult task. Too often, people become content with their church size and situation and neglect Christ's call for kingdom growth. In order to overcome this misconception, you will need to spend time showing your congregation biblically why an outreach program is essential for your church.

Once your people understand the importance of outreach, you can begin planning an outreach program. Planning a balanced outreach program is the foundational step to ensuring your church reaches out beyond its walls. The largest and most important focus of your outreach efforts must be *relational outreach*. Relationships, above all other factors, are the most important tool for bringing new people into your congregation. If your people do not build relationships with people outside the congregation, your outreach program will fail.

The second type is *sacrificial (or service) outreach*. Here, members of your congregation reach out to their community through acts of service. The intent of sacrificial outreach is to demonstrate your church's care and concern for the people of the community without obligation. Serving others gives your people a way to show the love of Christ in a visible and tangible way without pressing people to become involved in your church.

The third type of outreach is informational. *Informational outreach* encompasses mailings, gift sending, and other forms of interaction and publicity that are non-personal. As noted in the chart, informational outreach should be the smallest portion of your outreach efforts. Informational outreach cannot be the mainstay of any good outreach program, because it is not personal.

Consider using the following ideas to develop an outreach program of your own:

### **Relational Outreach**

- *Quarterly church-wide outreach events.* Based upon the season of the year, plan an event where members of your church invite friends and family to a fish fry, a fall festival (Halloween substitute activity), a church-sponsored fireworks display, or a country chili cook-off.
- *Age/group specific outreach activities.* Plan outings for youth, men, women, senior adults and other groups within your church, where outreach is the purpose of the event. Paint balling, golf scrambles, craft parties, camping trips, ski trips, rafting trips and ice skating, are just a few examples to choose from.

### **Sacrificial Outreach**

- *Need-meeting outreach events.* Send out church members to do activities that meet the needs of people within your community. The youth group could adopt a local highway to care for by picking up trash, etc. The seniors could make dolls for underprivileged children. A Sunday school class could adopt an individual for a *Meals on Wheels* program.
- *Blessing outreach events.* Send people in your church out to do random acts of kindness. In the fall, you could rake lawns for free or in the winter shovel snow from driveways. Mowing lawns and washing cars are also a way for people from your church to simply show people the love of Christ.



**Informational Outreach**

If you want to tell people about your church and show them you care for them, try sending care packages. Obtain the names and addresses of all the families in your area who have just had a baby. Assemble a package containing baby shampoo, a gift certificate for diapers, baby wipes, baby food, a children's video, information about your church, and a letter of congratulations and invitation from your pastor. Send the package to the family and follow-up with them. The same thing could also be done with families moving into your area, a family who just built a new home, newlyweds, or even those dealing with a family loss. The idea is to show people you care about them without expecting anything from them. This notion may seem fruitless, but those receiving the packages will not likely forget the generosity you extend toward them.

## **58. A church should meet the needs of its own members before it reaches to others.**

A church that believes the above statement is inwardly focused, and that characteristic must be changed if the church is to become healthy. If your church is suffering from this type of inward perspective, begin to correct the problem by choosing a specific need outside of the congregation on which to focus.

### **Step 1: Choose the Need**

Since the church cannot address every need at one time, begin by choosing one need outside of your church on which to focus. Look at the community surrounding your church. Is there an ethnic group that would benefit from an English class? Are there older people who need repairs made on their homes? Are there single mothers whose children could benefit from Christian male role models? Is there an established homeless center at which church members could volunteer? Whatever the need you choose, make sure that it is a need that your particular congregation can address well. Capitalize on the strengths of your congregation to meet the needs of others.

### **Step 2: Communicate the Need**

Once you have chosen the need, you must communicate the need to the congregation. Address the need at a service or meeting in which the most members are present. Following this first declaration of the need, announce that a meeting will be held at a specific time and location in order to discuss what your church can do to help. In order to impact the entire church, ask that all Sunday school teachers, deacons, committee chairmen, elders or other church leaders come to the meeting. Also indicate that anyone else interested is encouraged to attend as well.

### **Step 3: Consecrate the Need**

During the first meeting and repeatedly throughout the project or first year of ministry, the staff of the church should help the congregation adopt the need by consecrating it. Have special times of prayer for those involved in the ministry. Celebrate victories in the ministry during public services. Highlight the ministry in newsletters, bulletins or other church publications. Taking these actions will help keep the need in front of the congregation, will maintain an active interest in the need, will generate new workers and, in general, will help your church replace its inward focus with an outward-looking ministry.

#### **64. A church should not start a new church until it has adequate surplus in the budget.**

The first error in the statement above is that a church will likely never believe that it has an “adequate” surplus. If every church waited until it believed it had enough *extra* money to begin a church, few new churches would be started. The second error found in the statement is that a church’s budget should not determine its involvement in church planting. An element of faith is necessary for church planting and should be cultivated within the mother church. If not, the whole process will be severely limited. To determine if your church should be involved in church planting, consider the following.

- **Is there a need?** Does your community need another church? In almost every case, even in North America, the answer to this question is an unequivocal yes. Examine the demographics of your area. If your town or city is typical, there is likely one church per several thousands of inhabitants. This ratio is extremely high since the typical church has less than 200 members. When you have established that there is a need for a new church in your area, plot the location of all evangelical churches on a city map. Where is the largest area or densest population location that does not have a church?
- **Form a team to study the area.** Once the approximate location of the new church start has been determined, form a team of interested church members to begin a concentrated study of the area. Include on this team any members who live in that area of the city and any members who might transfer to the new plant as a core group. Remember to be willing to send your best members (and tithers!) to the new church.

Ask this team to begin surveying the area for people interested in attending a Bible study. The goal during this time is to locate interested people and to identify someone in the area who might host the Bible study in his or her home. A current member of the mother church who lives in the area may also fulfill this need. Begin the Bible study as soon as possible.

In addition, the team should identify community leaders who might promote or hinder the work. Specific issues of the area should also be identified during this time. For example, what type of people live in the area? What types of businesses are in the area? Is there a large ethnic population?

- **Bathe these beginning efforts with prayer.** Involve the entire church in specific times of prayer for the study team and the leaders of the church plant. The church should feel that, even if they are not directly involved in the new church, they are a part of the effort. Encourage specific groups within the church to conduct prayer walks through the neighborhood where the new church will be located. Ask the study team to give regular updates to the church and to request prayer for specific items. Not only will the church feel involved, but the prayers lifted up on behalf of the church plant and its leaders will provide spiritual strength to the effort.

## **70. People who share their faith should have the gift of evangelism.**

This statement is one of the great fallacies related to sharing the Good News, and many times it is used as an excuse. The truth of the matter is that every Christian should be involved in sharing Christ with a lost world (see Matthew 28:19-20).

To encourage *everyone* in your church to participate in evangelism, opportunities should be given for training and for practicing what has been learned. First, **different types of training should be provided** for church members to learn how to share their faith. There are numerous training programs of various lengths and styles available at any Christian bookstore. Any material used, however, should be thoroughly reviewed to make sure that it agrees with the theology and the needs of the church.

**After training has occurred, varied and on-going opportunities should be given** to put into practice what has been learned. These evangelism opportunities should take place on differing days of the week and at different times to provide the greatest participation by members. In addition, these events should incorporate different types of evangelism. For example, events of servant evangelism can be organized in which church members perform different services for the community: giving out cold water at a nearby park on a hot summer day (cups can have the name of the church and church address on them); picking up litter from a roadside while wearing T-shirts with the church logo; serving at a homeless shelter, etc. Besides these pre-evangelism types of events, groups can be formed to hand out tracts or flyers on street corners, in an apartment complex, or at a sporting event (with prior permission). Lastly, home Bible studies can be organized for inquirers. These Bible studies may deal with apologetics issues or they may deal with basic truths of the gospel.

In addition to these planned activities, we should all recognize that **the most effective evangelism takes place within relationships**. Thus, church members should be encouraged to form friendships outside the realm of their Christian friends and to become closer to non-Christian family members. As the relationship grows, the church member will have opportunities to share about his or her love for Christ and Christ's love for us.

**76. I regularly attempt to establish relationships with people who do not have a church home.**

Non-Christians respond well to evangelistic attempts made by someone with whom they have a relationship. Unfortunately, Christians tend to cocoon themselves within the church and among Christian friends. **To reach the unchurched, Christians must be intentional about building relationships with them.**

One key to establishing relationships with the unchurched is to realize that the relationship may include **awkward moments**. As you are establishing relationships with the unchurched, keep in mind that you should not be surprised when they act differently than you. Our goal is to show them the love of Christ, even when we're not always comfortable with their lifestyle.

Many church members, though, do not know any unchurched people. This problem occurs as a result of Christians cocooning themselves within the walls of their Christian world. **To become acquainted with non-Christians in your neighborhood, you might:**

- Join a sports team
- Join a bowling league
- Join a book club
- Organize a neighborhood yard sale or block party
- Get to know the gas station attendants, bank tellers, grocery clerks, etc.
- Invite your neighbors to dinner
- Begin a neighborhood discussion group to investigate religious issues (most non-Christians are actually eager to discuss these topics in a non-judgmental forum)
- Invite the parents of your child's friends over
- Get involved in the local parent/teachers association
- Join a local club (Rotary, Lion's, Chamber of Commerce, etc.)
- Prayer walk in the community, taking time to get to know the neighbors

**The church might also choose to sponsor a "Friends Day,"** when members are encouraged to invite their friends to church. This simple emphasis encourages members to seek the unchurched and invite them to attend church with them.

These are just a few suggestions on how to meet unchurched people in your community. The most important thing to remember is that we are seeking to develop relationships with the unchurched. If we treat people as "evangelistic projects," they will likely not hear our message. Plan to invest in the lives of others; let the invitation to church be only one aspect of an overall relationship.

## **82. Our church provides regular opportunities for evangelism training.**

Regular opportunities for evangelism training should exist within the structure of your church's educational ministry. To begin providing these opportunities, you will need to:

- Choose carefully the materials used
- Schedule classes with varying formats
- Offer occasions to practice what is learned in the classroom

The **choice of materials** for evangelism training is great; therefore, the pastor, in conjunction with the minister of education or evangelism, should choose carefully the programs to be used. Characteristics to examine in choosing an evangelism program are the theology of the program, the length of the program, the practicality of the program, the scripture references used in the program, and the proposed audience for the program (children or adult, normal education or seminary-trained, etc.). In choosing the materials, the entire evangelism program should also be considered. For example, do you wish to offer various types of introductory evangelism courses or do you hope to offer a four-step evangelism program from which a member may eventually graduate? Another option for churches is to write a program that focuses on the particular needs of your church instead of buying a packaged product. Anything that is produced, however, should reflect the same quality that published programs have.

In **scheduling the classes** for evangelism training, take into consideration the portion of your congregation that you are trying to reach with each class. Who will they be witnessing to most? How much time will they be able to devote to the class and to homework? What is the best day for them to meet? Most churches will benefit by offering different types of programs and offering them on varying schedules. Different types of programs will take into account the different types of evangelism (prayer evangelism, servant evangelism, proclamation, etc.). They will also consider the learning styles of the class members by incorporating visual aids, technology (i.e. Power Point), lecture classes, discussion groups, etc.

The **time which class members are able to devote to the program** should also be considered in scheduling the class. For example, a 10-lesson evangelism program can be taught either on a weeknight for ten weeks, or it can be offered during an evangelism retreat weekend (as long as there are 10 hours of class time during the weekend).

Finally, an integral part of evangelism training is to **provide opportunities** for the students of the evangelism classes to practice what they have learned. Based on the type of course, opportunities should be provided immediately following the course for the students to practice their evangelistic skills in real-life situations. If these opportunities are not provided, often students are unsure how to take their newfound skills out of the classroom.

## **88. I have at least a few friendships/relationships with people who are not Christians.**

As Christians, we are to be salt and light in the world. To accomplish this mission, we should actively seek out non-Christians whom we can befriend.

### **False Interest**

In seeking to establish friendships with non-Christians, remember that they will sense false interest. If you want to become someone's friend for the sole purpose of being able to witness to him or her, then you are not being honest. You must seek their friendship because you are truly interested in them as people and because you want to be their friend.

### **Mutual Interests**

Try to establish relationships with people with whom you have something in common:

- Your children's friends' parents
- Someone with the same hobby or sports interest
- Someone who likes to volunteer at the same place as you
- Co-workers
- Neighbors

Sharing a mutual interest with someone is the easiest and most natural way of establishing a relationship.

## **94. Our church sees people accept Christ on a regular basis.**

If your church regularly sees people accept Christ, praise the Lord! If it does not, take a moment to reflect on some possible causes and corrections:

**1. Your church does not welcome “outsiders.”** Many churches automatically say that this description does not fit them. “We’re a friendly church,” they might reply before dismissing the idea. Sometimes, the reality of our churches is much different. Try having a stranger known only to the pastor visit the church, and then ask this person to reflect on how members treated him or her. Also, ask this person if there were enough signs indicating where bathrooms, childcare, classrooms and the sanctuary were located. You might be surprised by an outsider’s perspective. Beginning a greeter’s ministry can also help in this area.

**2. The worship service is uncomfortable for non-Christians.** Obviously, the worship service will be uncomfortable for non-Christians when the gospel is preached, but churches should be intentional about removing other distractions from the service. The cross by itself is stumbling block enough! Evaluate your worship service from five minutes before to five minutes after. Will a visitor understand what is going on? Will a visitor understand what he or she is supposed to do? Are there distractions, such as bad lighting or a bad sound system, which can be corrected? Are there unruly children whose parents should be encouraged to leave them in the able hands of childcare workers? Is everything done with excellence? Is the purpose of the offering explained? If it is a service of baptisms or with the Lord’s Supper, are these elements explained?

**3. Do you offer opportunities for people to accept Christ?** In some churches, attendees are never challenged to accept Christ publicly. While we want visitors to be comfortable, we also want them to be challenged with the claims of the gospel. Many ways exist to offer these opportunities, including altar calls, inquirer’s rooms, seeker’s classes, etc.

**4. Incorporate evangelism training into the church’s educational program.** For people to accept the Lord, they must first have heard about Him. Empower the laity of your church to do evangelism by providing some training for them. Then, help them seek out people with whom to share.



## **100. I believe you have to be called to be a lifetime missionary to do international missions.**

Individual Christians are not all called to be *career* international missionaries, but every Christian is called to do international missions (Matthew 28:19-20). Unless God specifically tells a Christian not to do international missions, then he or she is called. Obviously, not everyone will become lifetime missionaries, but we all should participate in spreading the gospel outside of our comfort zone. God has called his people to be a light to the nations (Isaiah 49:6).

### **The First Step**

If your congregation is nervous about doing international missions, encourage them first to become aware of the needs outside of the United States. Cite statistics about the number of Christians in other countries. Invite missionaries in to share with the church—not only to tell about the strange things overseas, but also to share how other churches have participated in their overseas ministry.

### **The Second Step**

Encourage your church to become involved in the international mission field that God has brought to our doorstep. Reach out to international university students by having special meetings for them or by recruiting families to incorporate these students into their family activities—especially during the holidays. A more advanced version of this second step is to sponsor an ethnic church in your facilities. While this option takes a bit more planning, it is possible even for small churches.

### **The Third Step**

Organize a short-term missions trip for a group of church members. Train these members in cross-cultural communication. Orient them to the needs of the community where they will be ministering. Then, commission them during a regular worship service. Recognize them as being sent out by your church. The magnitude of these trips will depend largely upon your church and the skills of the group going. A first trip should be no longer than two weeks, but it may incorporate any focus: construction, prayer walking, sports evangelism, medical missions, Vacation Bible Schools, evangelistic campaigns, etc.

### **The Fourth Step**

When the group has returned, allow them opportunities to share their testimonies about what God did in them and through them while in the international setting. Then, immediately begin recruiting for the next trip!

## **106. I believe that one of the purposes of Sunday school classes or small groups is evangelism.**

When the Sunday school was first developed, it was designed to be an outreach tool for the local church. It can still be evangelistic today. Sunday school classes provide a non-threatening, small group setting in which non-Christians can ask questions and discuss important issues. Research is revealing that this type of setting is what non-Christians desire: an open forum to ask questions and to explore the claims of Christianity. To recover this important benefit of the Sunday school, examine the structure of your evangelism and visitation program and your Sunday school structure.

### **Evangelism and Visitation**

To take full advantage of the Sunday school at your church, consider having outreach done through the classes. Sunday school teachers and class members can visit, telephone or write prospective members who would be in their classes in order to invite them to the class and to church services. There are two primary benefits of this strategy. First, a prospect would have an immediate contact with someone who is of the same age, marital status, etc. Second, the assimilation of new members will be much higher if they become involved in Sunday school. Making Sunday school their first point of contact in the church will facilitate this process.

### **Sunday School Structure**

For Sunday school to function as an evangelistic outreach of the church, some changes in your current system may be necessary. First, examine the size of classes. If classes have grown to more than 15 members, consider dividing the class. Dividing classes will encourage growth and smaller classes will allow for a more intimate setting where members can have true fellowship. Second, train Sunday school teachers how to respond to non-Christians. Instruct them in basic apologetics so as to be able to respond to some of the common questions that may arise. In addition, help them learn to refrain from judging non-Christians for not acting (or dressing!) like Christians.

## **112. Our church has a portion of its budget allocated for mission work around the world.**

Participating in missions is one of the tasks God has called us to do. The Great Commission (Matthew 28:19-20) tells us to go and make disciples of all nations. The church should support missions by sending, praying for, and supporting missionaries around the world.

### **Sending**

The first call of the church is to send out missionaries in order to spread the gospel. The church should commission those who feel called to missions and send them out with its blessing. Church members can participate in missions by going on short-term trips (two weeks to two years) or by becoming career missionaries.

### **Praying**

Churches should pray in general for the propagation of the gospel into every tongue, tribe, and nation. Your church can pray more specifically for the needs of missionaries that you or your denomination has sent.

### **Supporting**

When planning the church budget, provision should be made for supporting missions. Your church may decide to pay a missionary's salary. You may decide to help support national missionaries in reaching their own people. You may elect to unite with the other churches in your denomination to jointly support all of your missionaries. One principle to apply when budgeting for missions is to consider tithing your budget. In other words, give ten percent of your church's total budget to local, national, and international missions.

**118. When I see a new person in our church, I make every effort to introduce myself to him or her.**

After attending the same church for a while, most members forget what it feels like to enter a new church for the first time. Help your church members remember to greet new people warmly.

- **Provide a simulation exercise.** Help your church members remember what it feels like to walk into a new place by creating a simulation exercise. Invite shifts of church members to an off-campus location for a meeting. Tell them only that the meeting is about the church. When members arrive, have them sit at designated tables where they do not know each other (as much as possible). Use this method to help members remember what it feels like to walk into a strange place where they do not know exactly what will happen and they do not know anybody else.

After you reveal the purpose of the meeting, have each table make a list of what they felt coming to the meeting. Relate their feelings to what someone coming to your church for the first time might feel. Then, have the church members develop ways to alleviate some of those feelings for a new person at your church. Ideas might include:

- **Sitting by the new person**
  - **Finding the sermon Scripture passage in the Bible for the visitor**
  - **Inviting the guest to lunch or dinner after the service**
  - **Helping the guest find the nursery, restroom, etc.**
  - **Greeting the new person kindly with a smile**
  - **Asking the visitor if the member can pray for him or her about anything in particular**
- **Emphasize your church's greeter ministry.** Mentioning and highlighting your greeter ministry regularly reminds church members that new people may be at each church service. If they are reminded regularly, members are more likely to make an effort to be outgoing and welcoming.

## 122. I share my faith regularly with lost persons.

The problem with evangelism is not theological, but social. Sharing our faith regularly with lost persons involves action on our part; evangelism should be the Christian's way of life. When we wake in the morning, our prayer should be, "Lord, today I am yours, make me aware of every opportunity and use me!" We should then be prepared to make contact with the world.

For some, sharing their faith comes easily, while for others, it can be a fearful event. John 3:15 reminds us "whoever believes in [Jesus] should not perish but have eternal life." This truth should be the catalyst that ignites action within us. Here are a few things we should do in reaching others for Christ:

1. *Be prayerful.* Everything we do in the name of Jesus should be lifted up in prayer. Colossians 4:2-4 tells us "Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful. And pray for us, too, that God may open a door for our message, so that we may proclaim the mystery of Christ ... Pray that I may proclaim it clearly, as I should." God will be faithful to answer those who commit the lost to prayer. Consider keeping a prayer journal. List the names of those you know who are lost as well as those you meet daily. Praying specifically for them will encourage you to make every effort to be their friend and to share what Christ has done in your life.
2. *Be proactive.* Be aware of your surroundings. Often we live our lives with little regard to those around us. Christ, however, calls us to be set apart. He calls us to be the salt of the earth and to succeed means you must get out of the saltshaker and into the world. Meet your neighbors. Most people say they do not even know the names of those living next door. Take the time to be a part of their lives. Take the first step. Join a secular hobby club and make a new friend while learning a craft. People will talk to you if you will open yourself up to them. Take the initiative and reach out to others. Consider those with whom you have a relationship already, such as co-workers, business or school associates, and family. Nurture those relationships and be ready to share the gospel when the opportunity arises. When we make ourselves available to God, He will bring people to us.
3. *Be productive.* Many churches offer training in evangelism through "Evangelism Explosion," "FAITH," or other materials. If a class is offered, consider being a part of it. Memorizing Scripture and writing your testimony can prepare you for sharing the gospel on your own. Remember, however, that the gospel presentation does not have to be a step-by-step plan. Simply sharing who Jesus is, what he has done for you, and what accepting him can mean to a person can be all that is necessary to win someone to Christ. Realize that it is ultimately the Holy Spirit who changes a person's heart. It is our role to be obedient to the Great Commission.
4. *Be persistent.* We will usually share the gospel or a conversation about Jesus once or twice with a person. Then, if a response does not come quickly, we simply give up. That is the wrong thing to do. While God does pierce the heart of some to immediately give their life to Christ, others may not turn so quickly. Galatians 6: 9 reminds us "Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up." Continue to pray and never give up too easily.
5. *Be powerful.* Acts 1:8 encourages us "But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria,

and to the ends of the earth." We are not in this alone! "...You will receive *power* [added italics] when the Holy Spirit comes on you." Just as we begin to worry that we are not trained or that we already share as much as we should, God reminds us that if we would only be obedient, He will provide the way. When we live like we intend on God using us, evangelism will become our attitude.

## **128. My pastor/minister/clergy models personal evangelism for our church.**

Jesus said, “You will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.” (Acts 1:8 *NIV*) At the same time Jesus commissioned his disciples, he issued us our responsibility as well. As leaders of the church, God has called us to tend His flock. However, if you find that you break out in a sweat when it comes to sharing the gospel or you “simply have no time,” you need to seriously consider the situation. As called ministers, we should be eager to share with others how to have eternal life. While we all admit to a natural fear, we need to find a way to overcome that fear and move on. Often, we are afraid that we will not know how to respond or that the reaction of the person will be hostile. If fear is a factor, you need to recognize that it is first of all normal, and secondly, it can be a good thing if it leads us to lean totally on God instead of ourselves. If time is the reason, you will need to evaluate your heart and your calendar.

If **fear** is your issue, God told us that he would provide his power when the Holy Spirit comes upon us. This statement alone should remind us that we do not save people; God does. He also provides us with his love. Love can overcome any fear (John 4:18); we cannot allow fear to overcome us. Our response to fear must be faith because God longs to teach us to rest in his strength. The next time you feel fear at the thought of practicing personal evangelism, remember that the Holy Spirit is calling you to trust in him alone.

If **time** is your dilemma, God reminds us that it is for his purpose that he called us. It often takes God more time to get a Christian prepared to share the gospel than it does breaking someone’s heart to finally accept him as their Lord and Savior. It is understood that the issue of time is a significant problem. However, God has ways he can help with this area, too. First, allow God to develop within you a proper perspective on time. Keep in mind that “our” time is not our own; it is on loan to us from God. He expects us to be good stewards of that time. The most important thing we can do is to strive for balance. Pray that God will show you the areas in your life he would set to be priority.

In the life of a Christian, it has often been said that we do not share because we do not have the same compassion that we see in Christ. Christ longed for people to come to him; Scripture tells us that he often wept over people and over cities. Have you taken time to consider what hell will be like for someone? Do you see darkness in the faces of those you meet because they are lost without Christ? Have you taken the time to pray by name for those outside the church? Are you weeping for the lost?

### **134. I would be willing to do personal evangelism if I had more training.**

Fear is the number one reason Christians give for not sharing the gospel. There is fear of the unexpected, fear of how the person may react, fear of not knowing what to say, and fear of messing the whole thing up. Fear is a very real emotion that can rule our lives if we suppress it. God, however, will help us overcome our fear.

Our first task in the process of overcoming our fear is to give it to God. Understand that if we are afraid, we will depend wholly on God during every situation. Also, if the possible response of others scares you, it is good to know that most people are not hostile towards the gospel. Lastly, fear does not excuse us from our duty. We must tell the good news!

If you feel that you are not prepared for evangelism, take a trip to your local Christian bookstore. There are hundreds of books on the subject. You will find there are numerous “models” of evangelism and that the hardest part will be choosing one. Therefore, the first place to check is your church. Does your church have a visitation program in place? If it does, consider going out weekly to meet new people in the community. Sometimes, just being around other people who are sharing can put you at ease. Presenting the gospel should become familiar and comfortable to us. You will be more relaxed when you see how easy it is.

Does your church offer evangelistic training? If not, talk with your pastor about starting one. If you are feeling apprehensive and under-trained, perhaps others are as well. There are numerous programs available and all follow a basic format of testimony, presenting the gospel facts, and decision time. If your church decides to initiate a program, the support of the pastor and other key staff members is vital. To ignite a passion in people about evangelism, leaders in the church must help them understand why it is important.

Begin praying that God will open doors for you to share Jesus Christ with others. The main point is to start sharing where you are at this moment. If you wait until you complete a training program or read a book, you will never start. Think back on how you came to know Christ as your Lord and Savior; use that pattern to start sharing with someone today.



#### **140. There are enough churches in our community.**

Take a look around you. How many churches exist in your local area? Too many you say. Now, take a look around and see how many people are in your community. How many are in church? The numbers are less than impressive. Regardless of how many churches are in your community, for some reason we are not reaching the lost.

First of all, you will find that many of the churches in your area are of different theological persuasions. Once you look beneath the initial layer of denominational name, usually you will discover that there can be startling differences between churches. More churches are needed that will teach the Bible as God's word, that will grow true disciples of Christ, and that will share the gospel with a dying world.

Often we worry about what someone else is doing before we worry about ourselves. We should take this time to spread the word. There are many needs in our communities and it is up to us to address them. We should become a lighthouse to the community, picking up where others falter.

Here are some ways your church can reach out and let its light shine:

- *Research the needs in your community.* Check out local agencies such as the homeless shelters or abuse clinics. Conduct surveys with people to see what areas they would like to see your helping hand. Rely on God to direct your paths. If you pray for ways to help, he will use you.
- *Evangelize.* This should be a priority of the church. We must take a stand in the community and reach others for Christ. Many are lost and face numerous problems. We need to tell them that the answers to their problems can only be found in Jesus Christ.
- *Attitude.* Have a positive attitude and teach others in your congregation to do the same. Have a burden for the lost and those who need assistance. God has called us to compassion and love.
- *Challenge others.* There are probably other churches in your community who also call on the name of Jesus. Join forces to combat evil in your area. Remember, God is in total control and if we work together, anything is possible.
- *Hold others accountable.* As we reach out to others, hold your congregation accountable and encourage them to do the same for you. Also, hold those you are helping accountable. Love them, love them, love them, but tell them the story of Jesus. Hold them accountable to consider what he has to offer.

**146. Our church is growing more by transfer members from other churches than by reaching lost people.**

When a consultant or church leader looks at the members added to a church each year, he or she should ask the question: What type of growth is this church experiencing? There are basically three types of growth:

- **Biological.** Newborns in the church. Depending on the church polity, these babies are counted either as members or they merely increase the attendance.
- **Transfer.** Christians who move from one church to another.
- **Conversion.** People who have recently accepted Christ and become members at the church.

Many leaders who look at these statistics are surprised to find that very few of the new members come from the world of the lost and unchurched. What can a church do to be more effective in reaching lost people?

- **Look at Reality.** Examine the statistics. Do not get comfortable with “sheep shuffling,” or Christians moving from one church to another.
- **Intentionality.** Successful evangelistic churches are always intentional about reminding the members to invite the unchurched through announcements in sermons, in the church newsletter and through casual conversation. Church leaders must be persistent in reminding the congregation to invite the unchurched.
- **Accountability.** Evangelism and invitations to church do not typically happen by accident. Church leaders should seek to devise some type of accountability process which encourages members to invite the unchurched. One outstanding possibility is to have small groups or Sunday school classes request prayers for unchurched people each week. This process will remind the church members that lost and unchurched people matter to God and, thus, encourage them to invite their friends, relatives, neighbors and acquaintances.
- **Friend Day.** A Friend Day is an outstanding way to show members how to invite others. The best Friend Day source is published by Church Growth Institute and written by Elmer Towns. The instructions in this resource packet are explicit and detailed. But make certain that the members focus on inviting the unchurched rather than active members of other churches.
- **Evangelism Training.** There are over 50 denominational, parachurch and independent evangelism training programs. Some of the members may feel uncomfortable sharing their faith and, thus, need training to be better equipped.
- **Leadership Example.** Perhaps the best way to increase conversion growth is for the leadership at the church to demonstrate its commitment to reaching people for Christ. Through personal testimony and by taking others with them when they share their faith, leaders can ignite a fire for evangelism.
- **Pray.** The power of prayer should never be underestimated. Pray for lost people by name and pray for workers in the harvest.

For further ideas, see Question 145.

“Be completely humble and gentle;  
be patient, bearing with one another in love.

Make every effort to keep  
the unity of the Spirit  
through the bond of peace.”  
--Ephesians 4:2-3 *NIV*

**Fellowship is...** communion with other believers in order to encourage one another's walk with the Lord. Christian fellowship is unique. It is something that occurs only as we unite ourselves first with Christ and then to other Christians. Indeed, it is only the love of Christ that can unite people from diverse backgrounds and with distinctive personalities so that they are able to call each other “brother” and “sister.”

The articles in this section provide tools for creating, maintaining and evaluating the unity within the fellowship of believers in the local church. While addressing these issues, the articles also help churches consider ways to bring new members into the body of believers.

# FELLOWSHIP



The following questions about fellowship are addressed in the Church Health Survey:

5. We have several cliques in our church.
11. Becoming a part of existing groups in our church is hard.
17. The priority focus of the church should be meeting the needs of the members.
23. People in our church are willing to start new groups and classes.
29. Our church has been recently involved in conflict between members.
35. A number of the people in our church are angry with one another.
41. We have unresolved conflicts in our church.
47. The people in our church enjoy being together.
53. I have fellowship or social times with church members outside of church activities at least once a quarter.
59. New members are quickly invited to different groups in the church.
65. Our church is unified.
71. One of the reasons I come to church is because I enjoy the fellowship of other members.
77. I believe my voice is heard in this church.
83. A healthy relationship exists between the pastor/minister/clergy (and other church staff) and the people.
89. Our church deals quickly with open, flagrant and unrepentant sin of church members.
95. I am a part of a group or class that attempts to reach other people.
101. I am excited to be a part of this church.
107. Coming to church on a regular basis is becoming increasingly difficult for me.
113. The community outside of our church sees us as a very unified church.
119. Our church has a good reputation in the community.
125. I feel like I belong in this church.
132. I think visitors to our church sometimes feel unwelcome.
138. Our church is more interested in ourselves than in reaching out to unchurched people.
144. One purpose of fellowship in our church is to encourage one another to live faithfully before God.
150. I felt quickly loved and accepted when I began attending this church.

## **5. We have several cliques in our church.**

Cliques are a sign of disunity in a church. While it is healthy to form friendships with other people who have similar interests, those friendships become unhealthy if they become exclusive and they begin to criticize those who do not belong to the same group.

**Sunday school classes** sometimes become cliques in churches. If the leadership of the church becomes aware of a clique in a class, it is their responsibility to make sure that the fellowship of the church is not harmed. Before taking any action, begin by talking to the teacher of the class to see if the issue can be addressed in the class itself. If this step is not productive, consider dividing the class into two different classes. As a last resort, dissolve the class and send the members to other classes.

**Ministry teams** are another source of cliques within the church. Everyone thinks his or her favorite ministry is the best and should receive the most accolades (as well as resources!) This issue can be resolved by having rotating members on these committees. Another way to minimize the occurrence of cliques on ministry teams is to emphasize at appropriate times throughout the year that every ministry is valuable (1 Corinthians 12:12-31).

Sunday school classes and ministry teams are not the only areas where cliques may exist in the church, but the principles mentioned above may be applied to any area where an exclusive group has formed in the church. The main point is that cliques are dangerous and destructive in a church and the leadership of the church must be vigilant in not allowing them to disrupt the unity that Christ intended for the local body of believers.

## **17. The priority focus of the church should be meeting the needs of the members.**

While the church should try to meet the needs of its members, it should not make this task its highest priority. A church that makes this mistake will quickly find itself with an inward focus that does not allow it to reach the surrounding community.

**Be Proactive.** To avoid creating an inwardly-focused church, be proactive by designing specific ministries to meet the needs of members. From the beginning of these ministries, they should have specific strategies and programs in place for ministering to the members of the church. If well-planned guidelines control the scope of the ministry, then it is less likely that individual members or even specific groups of members will be able to take advantage of the system. Ministries to consider include food pantry, clothes closet, counseling center, daycare or Mother's Day Out, benevolence funds, discipleship or mentoring, job training, etc.

**Provide Outlets.** To lessen the amount of complaining that sometimes occurs from needy members, provide ministry outlets for them. Causing them to focus on the needs of others will make them less focused on their own needs. Older women may give parenting classes, or they could teach a young person how to sew. Men in the church may be able to help with small mechanical problems or other household tasks for single women and widows. A childless couple may be encouraged by working in the children's department. An intelligent but socially-challenged person could make a wonderful research assistant for the staff. An unemployed member may enjoy being asked to complete simple tasks in the church until he or she finds a job. In reality, there are many jobs in the church that need to be done and giving people a ministry outlet provides them a sense of accomplishment.

**Instruct on the purposes of the church.** If you sense that your church has lost its understanding of what the church is supposed to be and do, consider a sermon series or other teaching vehicle to communicate the purposes of the church: worship, prayer, discipleship, ministry, fellowship and evangelism. Then, use your results from the Church Health Survey to draw attention to areas in which you can begin to work.

### **23. People in our church are willing to start new groups and classes.**

The following program is a strong and aggressive approach for encouraging church members to begin new small groups and classes within the church. As you contemplate this proposal, be sure to think through how it could fit into your church context. As with any program you will need to tailor it to your own site and situation. Our aim in submitting this idea is to agitate stagnation within a church's small group system. It is explicitly intended to disassemble existing church groups with the purpose of assembling new groups and classes within your church. This concept is the small group *Divide to Multiply* model.

*Step #1: Preparation for division.* – This all-important step requires prayer, vision and a great deal of planning. It is at this point you will decide what new groups your church needs. You will also decide which existing small groups you will target for division. Additionally, you will need to establish a leadership base, which will lead the single group through the division into two. Finally, at the end of your preparations you will need to begin talking in general terms about the addition of more small groups. Subtle hints, suggestions and questions to target group members about adding small groups will give you an idea of how they feel about additional groups.

*Step #2: Explanation of division.* – After assembling a core leadership base to help the small group through the transition, it will be time to explain to the group that they have been selected to be a division and multiplication group. In your presentation, be very positive and affirming and help each group member realize that their group is the best and most promising candidate for the division. Help the group to understand that the change will be permanent. They should be aware that the group they're in now will be dissolved completely, thus dividing their group in order to multiply.

*Step #3: Establish timeframe of division.* – After you have given everyone in the group adequate time to handle the shock of division, it is crucial to set a timeline for division and especially a date of separation. This measure will give everyone enough time to familiarize themselves with the new class leaders and situation, while at the same time urge people to determine which group they will take part of.

*Step #4: Evaluate the division.* – Once the class split has taken place, monitor the new classes carefully and spend time working with the new class leaders. Make sure the leaders know that the two new classes will be divided again. As you continue to work with class leaders throughout the split, they will gain an understanding of how the division transition works. Seek out wisdom and insight from your group leaders as you plan to divide and multiply the classes again. Lastly, continually involve more leadership in the division process and slowly pass ownership of the program on to them.

## **29. Our church has been recently involved in conflict between members.**

The church universal is composed of saints who though sanctified, remain sinful. What does this tell us about church conflict? Conflict is inevitable. No matter how wonderful, holy, educated, wise, humble or godly a church is, it will always face conflict. Leas Speed has written an insightful article based on his studies in church conflict. In this article “The Ten Most Predictable Times of Church Conflict,” Speed highlights times in the life of a church where conflict will likely occur. As you evaluate the church conflict currently taking place in your church, see if there are links between your conflicts and the usual times of conflict listed below:

1. Easter
2. Stewardship campaigns or budget time
3. Addition of new staff
4. Change in leadership style
5. The pastor’s vacation
6. Changes in the pastor’s family
7. Introduction of baby boomers into the church
8. The completion of a new building
9. Loss of church membership
10. Increase in church membership

Are there any connections between the conflicts you are having at present and the predictable times of conflict Leas mentions? Again, church conflict will happen, no matter what you do to prevent it. How you handle these conflicts will ultimately determine whether they benefit or hurt your church. Once you recognize your conflicts, the next step is to evaluate them and pray over them. If the conflict is too great and your church cannot resolve it through diligent attempts at reconciliation, you should contact outside advisors for help. Many denominational offices offer this aid.



### **35. A number of the people in our church are angry with one another.**

If anger exists among the members of your church, it probably prevents any real fellowship from occurring. Because fellowship is one of the primary purposes of the church, the anger problem must be resolved. Begin by trying to diagnose the problem.

- **Is the anger caused by personality conflict?** If the cause of the problem is an interpersonal relationship between members, instruct the parties involved to resolve the problem by talking to each other. The Bible gives clear instruction on what we should do if we have a problem with another person and you should empower your members to be proactive in resolving their personality conflicts. Help them to see how the gossip and the tension that usually surround these situations will be detrimental to the entire church if they can not work out their problem.
- **Is the anger caused by an “institutional” problem in the church?** If members are angry with one another over a specific program or event in the church, take steps to diffuse the issue if possible. For example, if a change in worship style has caused problems in the church, first decide as a staff how important the change is to your overall mission. If you determine that the new worship style is essential to your goals, then try to meet with the group that is upset to work through some of the issues. Try to offer them alternative opportunities to listen to the music they like, such as a monthly Sunday evening traditional hymn sing. Many times the anger caused by these situations is a result of the congregation not being prepared for a drastic change and by the angered group not feeling like their voice is heard in the church.
- **Is the anger directed toward a particular staff member?** If certain people in the congregation are angry with a member of the church staff, the staff member should meet with the group privately to try to resolve the problem. If this initial meeting does not work, the staff member and the group should meet a second time with a mediator—either another trusted minister from the area, someone from the regional denominational headquarters, or some other impartial person. Over time if the conflict has not been resolved, the staff member should leave the church in order that the unity of the church not be dissolved and so that his or her ministry may continue unhindered in another location.

## 41. We have unresolved conflicts in our church.

While the Christian church should be the model for dealing with conflict and finding resolutions to problems, often the church handles conflict very poorly. The causes of the situation cannot be discussed at length here, but it should be noted that the church is the bride of Christ and because of this relationship it is the prime target of the devil. While a “devil made me do it” mentality is unacceptable in church conflict, the demonic factor does feature heavily into dissension among believers. Understanding the implications of this situation, we suggest a biblical measure that will help your church be better equipped to resolve conflict.

Our suggestion is the adoption of a conflict commitment or covenant to be accepted by all members of your congregation. Based on Scripture and developed with the common good of the church in mind, a conflict covenant would explain the proper attitude and process by which conflict should be addressed and resolved in your church. With a conflict covenant in place, church members would be obligated to follow the covenant and could be disciplined accordingly if unwilling to abide by it. Though this measure may seem extreme, it offers a reliable way to manage church conflict that would otherwise go unchecked and uncontrolled within the church.

The Mennonite Church General Assembly and the General Conference Mennonite Church in their 1995 national conference constructed an excellent model for a congregational conflict covenant. While the following is by no means a complete or comprehensive guide, it is a well-organized, Scriptural and insightful work. After reading the document, “Agreeing and Disagreeing in Love: Commitments for Mennonites in Times of Disagreement”, consider the possibility of applying a similar covenant in your church.

*Making every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace (Ephesians 4:3), as both individual members and the body of Christ, we pledge we shall:*

### *In Thought*

1. *Accept conflict: Acknowledge together that conflict is a normal part of our life in the church. Romans 14:1-8, 10-12, 17-19, 15:1-7.*
2. *Affirm hope: Affirm that as God walks with us in conflict we can work through it to grow. Ephesians 4:15-16.*
3. *Commit to prayer: Admit our needs and commit ourselves to pray for a mutually satisfactory solution (no prayers for my success or for the other to change but to find a joint way). James 5:16.*

### *In Action*

4. *Go to the other: Go directly to those with whom we disagree; avoid behind-the-back criticism. Matthew 5:23-24; 18:15-20.*
5. *In the spirit of humility: Go in gentleness, patience and humility. Place the problem between us (at neither doorstep) and (admit) our part in the conflict instead of pointing out the other's. Galatians 6:1-5.*
6. *Be quick to listen: Listen carefully, summarize and check out what is heard before responding. Seek as much to understand as to be understood. James 1:19; Proverbs 18:13.*
7. *Be slow to judge: Suspend judgements, avoid labeling, end name-calling, discard threats and don't act in a defensive, reactive way. Romans 2:1-4; Galatians 5:22-26.*
8. *Be willing to negotiate: Work through the disagreements constructively. Acts 15; Philippians 2:1-11.*
  - a. *Identify issues, interests and needs of both (rather than take positions).*

- b. *Generate a variety of options for meeting both parties' needs (rather than defending one's own way).*
- c. *Evaluate options by how they meet the needs and satisfy the interests of all sides (not one side's values).*
- d. *Collaborate in working out a joint solution (so both sides gain, both grow and win).*
- e. *Cooperate with the emerging agreement (accept the possible, not demand your ideal).*
- f. *Reward each other for each step forward toward agreement (celebrate mutuality).*

*In Life*

- 9. *Be steadfast in love: Be firm in our commitment to seek a mutual solution; be stubborn in holding to our common foundation in Christ; be steadfast in love. Colossians 3:12-15.*
- 10. *Be open to mediation: Be open to accept skilled help. If we cannot reach agreement ourselves, we will use those with gifts and training in mediation in the larger church. Philippians 4:1-3.*
- 11. *Trust the community: We will trust the community and if we cannot reach agreement or experience reconciliation, we will turn the decision over to others in the congregation or from the broader church. Acts 15.*
  - a. *In one-to-one or small group disputes, this may mean allowing others to arbitrate.*
  - b. *In congregational, conference, district or denominational disputes, this may mean allowing others to arbitrate or implementing constitutional decision-making processes, insuring that they are done in the spirit of these guidelines and abiding by whatever decision is made.*
- 12. *Be the Body of Christ: Believe in and rely on the solidarity of the body of Christ and its commitment to peace and justice rather than resort to the courts of law. 1 Corinthians 6:1-6.*

#### **47. The people in our church enjoy being together.**

Churches should provide times of fellowship for their members outside of regular service times. These enjoyable moments will create a sense of unity in the church and will also present opportunities for true friendships within the church body. Small classes and groups may provide fellowship opportunities for their members, but the church as a whole should also gather together. Ideas for church events include:

- **Church picnic**
- **Church fair or carnival**
- **Church-sponsored sports teams or events**
- **Church fellowship meals (where seats are assigned randomly)**
- **Church day at a local amusement park**
- **Church-sponsored mission events in the city**
- **Church-sponsored mission trips**
- **Work day at the church**

Some of these events may precede another event that is not specifically fellowship oriented. For example, a fellowship meal could precede a church-wide Bible study or evangelism training session.

In addition to these church-wide events, individual members should be encouraged to invite other members out to eat or to their home for coffee. Church-wide events are important for meeting new people, but close friendships will be built over time in small groups.

### **53. I have fellowship or social times with church members outside of church activities once per quarter.**

Fellowship among believers is an extremely important part of the Christian faith. Yet, for many church members, if church fellowshiping does not occur within the scope of regular church activities, it will not take place at all. While there is no formula that will ensure every member of your congregation will fellowship on a regular basis, planning special activities, events and programs targeting fellowship can bring church members together outside the normal church setting. Consider how some of the following ideas may help your church develop a stronger fellowship ministry:

#### **Special Trips**

- Whitewater Rafting – Send various age groups or Sunday school classes on a rafting trip.
- Site Seeing Adventures – Send the older members of your congregation on a site seeing adventure together.
- Camping Trips – Father-and-son camping trips are a great way to unite families and build the friendships of men.
- Shopping Excursions – Send mothers and daughters on a shopping trip together.
- Mission Trips – Mission trips unite believers together as they share the responsibility of sharing the gospel with others.
- Lake Day (water skiing, tubing and jet skis) – A day at the lake is not only relaxing, but it provides groups plenty of time for conversation and fellowship.

#### **Special Events**

- Christian Concerts and Dinner – Send couples out for an evening of concert-going and evening dining. Couples have a venue for fun and then a setting for fellowship.
- Men's Golf Scramble – Ask a lay member of your congregation to organize a men's golf scramble for your church. The golf course provides an incredible venue for getting to know other men within the church body.
- Sporting Events – Make arrangements for church members to go to a football, basketball or baseball game. If you have the interest in your church, you could also plan trips to tractor pulls, NASCAR races, or even figure skating events.

#### **Special Programs**

- Getting to Know You Banquet – Plan a banquet at a nice restaurant in your community where church members are invited to get to know one another. During the meal, play games, ask questions and award prizes that encourage participants to fellowship together.
- Enchanted Evenings – This program connects couples with similar interests by sending them on fellowship dates. Participants sign up to go on dates with other couples within the congregation. Using a participant survey, a program coordinator arranges for couples to share an evening of fellowship together. Each month, couples are connected with another group of couples.
- Parents' Day Out – Facilitate a day or evening of free childcare at your church. Allow parents to bring their children with one stipulation. Parents must spend their free day doing something (anything!) with another individual or family within the church.

## **59. New members are quickly invited to different groups in the church.**

When most people become members of a church, they are looking for ways to become involved.

- **New Member's Class.** Your church can help speed up the process by having a new member's class in which a minister or lay leader from each ministry area and adult class explains their ministry and meet the new members one-on-one. This type of exercise will give the new members an overview of the different areas of the church and an idea of who works with each ministry. Perhaps the easiest way to make this time effective is to have a meal at the end of the presentations. Each minister or leader can sit at separate tables and people interested in a specific area can sit at the appropriate table. If one ministry usually has a much larger number of interested members, consider having several leaders host their own tables.

**Follow up.** In addition, as a part of the new member ministry, follow up on each new member after a month to ensure that the person has found a ministry or Bible study class in which to be involved. If not, have a member of the staff meet with the person again in order to provide him or her more information or in order to address any concerns.

## **65. Our church is unified.**

Unity in the church was important to Jesus. In John 17:11 he prayed, “Holy Father, keep them in Your name. . .that they may be one even as We are” (NASB). Like Jesus, we can all agree that unity in the church is the ideal; the difficulty is in achieving it.

No simple answers exist to deal with conflict and disunity in the church. There are steps, however, that we can take to create unity so that if conflict does occur, it will not be allowed to gain a foothold.

First, church members are usually united around a well-publicized and accepted mission. When members know that they are working toward a common goal that pleases God, they are less inclined to be in conflict. On the other hand, churches with no common mission often turn inward—and conflict is the result. Work with church leaders to develop and publicize a well-worded, clear mission statement.

Second, members should be taught how to deal with conflict on a personal level. Bible teaching, case studies and role-playing provide opportunities to teach these important skills. It is best, of course, to teach these skills prior to the outbreak of conflict. Once the conflict has erupted, emotions often get in the way of learning.

Third, opportunities should be given for church members to get to know each other. Fellowship is one of the keys to creating unity in the church. Be sure to introduce new members to the congregation. Adult Sunday school classes can have dinners at members’ homes. Sponsor church-wide outings such as picnics and ballgames. Promote unity by promoting friendship first.

Fourth, unity is created in a church by working together. Clean-up days at the church, service opportunities in the community and mission trips are ways to create long-lasting bonds among the congregation.

If your church perceives that they are not united, these steps might help you to address this issue:

- Enlist a prayer team to pray for wisdom and discernment.
- Make sure that the church staff is united; if not, address those issues.
- Talk with lay leaders to determine possible sources of conflict.
- Preach a series of sermons on the importance of unity.
- Address any known conflicts; be willing to confront as necessary.
- If necessary, enlist an outside mediator to guide the church toward conflict resolution.
- As much as possible without compromising the church’s beliefs or goals, address any structural, procedural, or polity issues that led to division.
- Re-unite the church around a common purpose—help the church to think outwardly (toward others) rather than inwardly (toward themselves).
- Pray for continued unity.

## **71. One of the reasons I come to church is because I enjoy the fellowship of other members.**

Fellowship is one of the primary functions of church. Where fellowship is not happening, long-term growth is difficult to maintain. In a community of believers, ample opportunity should be given for fellowship among smaller groups and among the entire congregation.

Consider ways for members to get to know each other. **Introduce new members** in the services. Place pictures of new members on a prominent bulletin board. Use the church bulletin or newsletter to provide information about new members.

**Small groups** are another effective way to promote fellowship. Sunday school classes or cell groups not only provide opportunities for study, they also offer intentional opportunities to promote fellowship. Age-graded classes promote fellowship among persons at the same stages of life.

Another popular method of fellowship is the **potluck supper**. Whether your church eats together on a weekly or a monthly basis, this fellowship time is important to the life of your church and should not be overlooked. Perhaps, however, some variations can be made to this time that would benefit all of the members. One suggestion is to occasionally have assigned seating at round tables so that members can come to know people outside of their normal circle of friends and age group. Second, if your mission groups are studying or have adopted a specific people group, your potluck dinner can revolve around foods that the people group would eat.

A **retreat for families, singles, students, youth, or children** can also provide an extended time for fellowship. These retreats can simply be a time for fun and relaxation at a state park or a denominational camp. They can also be a time for spiritual reflection. For example, you can have a prayer retreat, an evangelism camp, or a marriage-building weekend. These times for fellowship can be of differing lengths depending on the needs and time constraints of the church members.

The last suggestion for building fellowship among a congregation is to **fellowship as members work**. Mission trips, work days and community service opportunities build camaraderie among members that cannot be found elsewhere. This type of fellowship will be especially attractive to youth.



### **83. There is a healthy relationship between the pastor (and other staff of the church) and the people.**

The key to understanding this statement is the definition of a healthy relationship. A healthy relationship between the pastor or staff and the rest of the church family is paramount for having a healthy church. This relationship will consist of, on the part of the pastor or staff member, a transparency that is not common in other jobs. Pastors live in the proverbial glass house where their entire lives are subject to review by the church members. Part of ministry, whether we like it or not, is learning to live our lives within that glass house.

One way for the minister to deal with life in the glass house is to **schedule time away from the ministry setting**. Whether it is a day trip or for a longer period of time, ministers should use their days off and vacation time to be refreshed. There is a reason that God gave us the example of resting on the seventh day: we need it! Since ministers usually do not rest on Sundays, they should choose another day of the week to find the spiritual and physical renewal that is necessary for continuing in the ministry.

Another way for the staff of the church to handle being in the glass house is to have a **rotation of on-call ministers** to attend to emergencies that arise within the church family. Your Minister to Children should be as capable as the Senior Pastor to minister in the different situations that church work requires.

One last suggestion for those trying to deal with the transparency that ministry requires is to **be genuine**. If you do not expect to be perfect all the time, your parishioners will be less likely to have those expectations of you. If you stumble over a word while teaching a Bible study, laugh at yourself. If your singing voice is terrible, enjoy singing to the Lord anyway. If the minister can keep his or her humanity in perspective, church members will too.

The second aspect of having a healthy relationship between the staff and the people of the church lies with **the members** themselves. Church members must be taught that ministers are not the only ones who should be ministering and the best way to teach this fact is to involve the laity in the ministry of the church. One way to accomplish this feat is for the staff to work side-by-side with a church member while training him or her to participate in the ministry of the church. For example, staff members can invite members of the congregation to go with them on visitation. To deal with the complaining type of church member, ministers can involve them in whatever aspect of the ministry with which they are dissatisfied. Complaining in the church will soon decrease significantly! The pastor and staff are responsible for training the congregation to minister and for overseeing its spiritual growth, but they should not be expected to do the ministry of the entire church.

One last part of having a healthy relationship between the pastor, the rest of the staff and the people of the church is to **maintain a viable means of communication** at all times. The congregation needs for the staff to clearly articulate the direction of the church. At the same time, they need the pastor and staff to hear their concerns. Depending on the size of the church, the pastor may not always be able to meet individually with all church members. A system should be in place, however, where members can express themselves through voice mail, letters, meeting with other staff, or meeting with their family deacon or elder.

## **89. Our church deals quickly with open, flagrant and unrepentant sin of church members.**

Sin is not only wrong; it will destroy a church. If the leadership of the church becomes aware of open sin within the membership of the church, it must address the issue quickly and directly. This action, taken in love, will help eradicate the cancer of sin and will promote unity among members.

- **A staff member should first speak to the individual.** The first step in dealing with sin within the body of believers is for a member of the staff to speak individually with the person. The staff member should be the person who first recognizes the situation or who works most closely with the person. If the staff member and the individual are of the opposite sex, appropriate measures should be taken to eliminate any chance of misunderstanding or accusation of impropriety. In the meeting the staff member should confront the person directly but with love about the situation.
- **If the church member is repentant,** appropriate steps should be outlined for the member's restoration. A decision must also be made regarding the member's participation in the church while the situation is being corrected. All action taken should be communicated to the senior pastor and elder or deacon board of the church for approval.
- **If the church member is unrepentant,** the senior pastor and elder or deacon board should be notified about the situation. In most cases, the unrepentant individual will be called to appear before the board to give his or her explanation of the events in question. The board will then present the individual with steps to be taken—including disfellowship. All of the actions should be supported by biblical evidence and by the church's constitution regarding discipline of fellow believers.

The main purpose of church discipline is the restoration of the individual. All action should be taken with a spirit of love and with the most confidentiality possible.

**“Brothers, if someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should restore him gently. But watch yourself, or you also may be tempted.” (Galatians 6:1 NIV)**

## **95. I am a part of a group or class that attempts to reach other people.**

The small group structure lends itself particularly well to reach out to others. In fact, many churches are once again realizing the potential of Sunday school to be an effective outreach arm of the church. Encourage your Sunday school classes or other small groups to be involved in evangelism.

To assist these classes, **make sure that your church has various types of classes.** The most obvious way to divide classes is by age. These classes, when possible, should further be broken down into subgroups. For example, break the post-university age group into singles and couples since they will sometimes have different focuses in their lives.

**Do not rely on age division to be the only guide** in class formation, however. Many times people enjoy being with people from other age groups. A senior adult may prefer to be with younger people because she finds her age group to be too “stuffy.” Or a young adult may choose to be involved with a group of older men who can be personal and spiritual mentors to him. To encourage these age-different relationships, plan Bible studies that are gender-specific, that revolve around a specific hobby, that provide support to people in crises, etc.

**After organizing the classes, help them reach out** to others who would fit into their class. The visitors will feel more comfortable knowing that they are in a class with people with whom they have much in common. If, for example, the class is composed of people who share a specific hobby, encourage those members to join a secular group that also participates in the hobby. Through building relationships in the secular group, the church members can then invite their new friends to church.

## 77. I believe my voice is heard in this church.

Church members who feel that their voice is not heard in the church will probably feel unwanted or unneeded in the church. While it is not always possible to hear *every* opinion in the church, the healthy church should strive to help members feel that their input is important.

**Utilizing the deacons or elders is one way to secure input from the members.** If your church does not assign deacons or elders to specific families, you should consider implementing this structure. Making each deacon or elder responsible for ministry to particular families provides for a more personal relationship between the member and the governing bodies of the church. Encourage the deacon or elder to seek information and feedback from the church members and expect the deacon or elder to relay that information to the church's leadership.

**Surveying is another way to discover the opinions of the membership.** Simple questions such as the following examples allow members to give input:

Strongly agree	Agree	Uncertain	Disagree	Strongly disagree
SA	A	U	D	SD

1. \_\_\_\_ A church should meet its members' needs before reaching out to others.
2. \_\_\_\_ A pastor should do most of the ministry in the church.
3. \_\_\_\_ Our church spends money wisely.
4. \_\_\_\_ We have sufficient worship center space for continued growth.

Leadership should determine the best time to take a survey and they should seek to secure as much feedback as possible. While too much use of surveys can become a chore, occasional surveys teach the church that their input is important.

**Small focus groups** are another means to hear from church members. If, for example, the church is considering adding a second worship service, small group discussions will help church leadership understand the potential obstacles they may face. Sunday school classes and cell groups provide ready groups for these discussions, though times for these discussions should not interfere with Bible study and outreach.

**Evaluations after church events also provide immediate feedback** from members. Provide evaluation forms after training events, special speakers, conferences, revivals, etc. Always ask members to provide positive suggestions for improving future events. Then, as much as possible, be certain to utilize the feedback in future planning. Help members to sense that their opinions are heard and respected.

Finally, if your church holds business meetings or sessions, promote the importance of these meetings. Celebrate God's blessings in these meetings. Strive to allow discussion of issues without allowing confusion and division. Members who view business meetings in a positive light are more likely to attend—and thus have more opportunity to express their opinions through approved means.

## **101. I am excited to be a part of this church.**

Excitement is contagious, so ministers should try to maintain an atmosphere of celebration in church activities. If the church members are to be excited about what is going on at the church, the staff must demonstrate that they are excited about the church. Ministers can communicate excitement by casting a vision, by supporting other staff members and by exhibiting exuberance related to what God is doing in the church.

### **Cast the Vision**

The ministry team of your church should be specific about casting a vision for the church. Vision provides a rallying point for members and serves as a guiding strategy in the evaluation of the church's ministries. Members are more likely to be excited if they know what the purpose of the church is and how the leaders are planning on reaching specific goals. Ministers should be intentional about communicating their church's vision repeatedly and through varied types of media.

### **Mutual Support**

As the ministry team works together to fulfill the church's vision, they will only decrease excitement and cooperation among church members if they are not united. Unity among the staff is paramount to the success of the church. Therefore, staff members should be especially cautious about making derogatory comments about other staff members. If one staff member is struggling, the rest of the team should help and support him or her.

### **Exuberance**

The staff can communicate excitement to church members by exhibiting exuberance themselves. They should visually show a passion about their ministries. Ministers should also verbally celebrate God's work among the church's fellowship. They can introduce specific times of celebration for what God is doing in the life of the church. Excitement in the staff will produce an exciting church.

## **107. Coming to church on a regular basis is becoming increasingly difficult for me.**

People seem to be inordinately busy today. Many tasks compete for the 24-hour time period that we all have each day. Family responsibilities and work demands join forces to shrink those 24 hours, leaving little time for regular church attendance. To help church members attend church as frequently as they would like:

### **1. Evaluate church schedules.**

- Are services held at times convenient to members or are they scheduled according to tradition?
- Are too many church activities scheduled at different times? Remember that mothers and fathers have to transport children to activities as well as attend adult activities.

### **2. Encourage members to serve according to their spiritual giftedness.**

- Members should only serve in areas that highlight their gifts.
- This action will alleviate certain members from feeling like they have to participate in everything. It will also open the door for other members, especially new members, to identify an area of service.

### **3. Teach biblical time management.**

- Are members using all of their time wisely?
- Are they tithing their time as well as their money to the Lord?
- Ask members to record for one week how many hours they spend:
  - Watching television
  - Fulfilling family responsibilities
  - Participating in personal Bible study and church activities

### **113. The community outside of our church sees us as a very unified church.**

Unity is very important for a church to be able to function well. As outsiders examine your church, they will note immediately if you are not unified. Create unity within your church by:

- **Establishing Trust**  
In order to create unity in your church, you must establish trust among your staff, the congregation and the community. The key to establishing trust is to build a credible staff and leadership in your church that are all on the same team. Factions among staff are the beginning of disunity in the church.
- **Squelching Rumors**  
Do not allow rumors to destroy your church's testimony in the community. Once a rumor has been heard, squelch it immediately by identifying the person spreading the rumor and confronting them.
- **Building Up Staff and Leaders**  
Take every available opportunity to encourage church staff and lay leaders, both privately and publicly. This action will show a united front among the leadership in the church that will filter down to the congregation. When staff members, deacons and other leaders verbally recognize and affirm each other, they encourage others to do the same.

## 119. Our church has a good reputation in the community.

A church may occasionally receive bad press because of its biblical stance on a certain issue, but the church should always have a good reputation in the community. The church should be known as a place of conviction and compassion. Be proactive as a church body in building a good reputation.

- **Church members are representatives.** Help church members realize that they represent Christ and the local church in all of their activities. Teach church members that they must be honest in their business dealings. Ask them how a nonbeliever would view their family lives. Are the members' moral standards higher for themselves than an unbeliever's?

Provide your church members with practical suggestions about how to represent Christ and his church well. Give ideas on ways members can demonstrate a kind attitude during their encounters with gas station attendants, hairdressers, retail assistants, etc.

- **Community involvement by members.** Church members usually spend a great deal of their time with other Christians in church and other social activities. Encourage them to develop relationships in the community. They may become involved in a Parent/Teacher Association, coach or participate on a sports team, or even run for a local political office. The purpose is to be involved in the community and represent Christ there.
- **Community involvement by church.** The church as a whole should also to represent Christ in the surrounding community. Develop projects that will place the entire church body outside the walls of the church. Sponsor a block party in a lower-income neighborhood. Give out blankets to the homeless on a cold night. Have a worship concert in a local park. Provide a neighborhood counseling or recreation center.



## 125. I feel like I belong in this church.

To belong is to experience one of the best feelings a person can have. Being part of a group where each member plays a vital role increases our self-esteem. God did not create us to be islands cut off from the rest of the world. We were meant to be part of “the body.” What about those of us who feel like an outsider in our own church? How do we find connection with a group?

- **Do not rationalize that attending a church service is enough.** With larger churches and multiple services, simply attending church will not plug you into the congregation.
- **Pray about it.** Ask God for direction in making friends and finding your “niche.” Make sure you are in the church where God has called you to be a member. Not every church will suit every person.
- **Talk to your minister.** Meet the staff and get to know them and let them know you. They will be able to get you connected with the right Sunday school class or group. Most churches offer many ways to be involved and many opportunities to serve. Participating in a choir or teaching children or youth are just a few ways of becoming involved. Generally, many Sunday school classes offer additional events to allow people to meet and fellowship.
- **Be bold.** If God has led you to a particular church, he has a plan for you. Be open to his guiding and he will lead you on a wonderful adventure.
- **Be prepared to open up.** If you are the shy type, be prepared to work on coming out of your shell. While on earth, Christ modeled for us how to love one another. We cannot do this at a distance; it requires opening up to others and getting involved. It also requires us to depend totally on God and his calling. Once you have trusted God to lead you in the right direction, you will find that belonging to the body of Christ is the best place to be.

### **132. I think visitors to our church sometimes feel unwelcome.**

First impressions *do* count. Visitors can determine in mere seconds if they plan to return. Because impressions are so crucial, it is necessary that we give them our full attention. Begin by making each visitor feel like a guest, someone you have invited. If there are any doubts about the way you greet your guests, review what you are doing in order to do it better. Here are a few suggestions:

- *Be prepared.* If you plan to have guests visit your church, you should be prepared for their coming. It is wise to organize a team of greeters to ensure that no one is ever missed. The size of your team depends on the size of your church. Have enough people to cover your parking lot, all entries and inside the lobby. Have them wear something that will identify them as greeters. Also, make sure that your greeters are friendly, outgoing people.
- *Begin in the parking lot.* Mark the best parking spots for guests only. Do not wait for your guests to enter the building; instead, greet them in the parking lot. Place greeters in various areas to welcome everyone and direct them to the building. Another idea is to equip them with weather-related paraphernalia, such as an extra large umbrella for those rainy mornings.
- *Get the door.* As people enter the building, have someone to open the door for them. Usually, people are encumbered with Bibles, purses and children and this thoughtful act can go a long way.
- *Welcome each person.* Greet each person with a smile and thank him or her for coming. If you do not know their names, introduce yourself. Ask if this is their first time. If it is, try to jot down their name after they walk away. It would be a good idea for your evangelistic team to follow up later in the week. If the person is new, direct him or her to the welcome center.
- *Assist them with their needs.* After asking what type of class they are thinking about, help them choose a class that will fit their needs. Since there should be at least two people at the welcome center, one person may offer to lead guests to their classroom and their children's classroom. This method will also allow them to be introduced to their teachers.
- *Make a friend.* Have each Sunday school class assign people ahead of time to greet and sit with guests during Sunday school. These same greeters should, if possible, lead the newcomers to the worship center and sit with them there too. Some guests may want to go it alone, but others will like the idea of having someone they "know."
- *Say Goodbye.* After church, ask if they have questions before you say goodbye. Depending upon the situation, members may choose to offer their phone number if questions arise later.

It is important to review your guest program with others and get suggestions on how you can continually improve it. Do not let the first impression your church makes on guests be the last impression.

### **138. Our church is more interested in ourselves than in reaching out to unchurched people.**

If you are finding that your church is more interested in itself than in the dying world around it, the church has become self-absorbed. If God has convicted you of the situation, he will help you decide how to correct it. First, you must evaluate the ministries your church offers. What is the purpose of each ministry? Who is involved and whom are we reaching?

Our purpose in existing as a church should be to evangelize the lost (Mt. 28:19), equip Christians (Heb. 10:24-25) and exalt the Lord (Jn. 4:24). The ministries of the church should allow us to succeed in these purposes. As you begin to formulate a plan, consider the following ideas for new church ministry:

- Homebound ministry program
- Evangelistic program
- Missions and outreach programs to serve the community
- Bible studies for new and old members
- Summer camp programs for children
- Prison ministry
- Senior adult ministry
- Youth ministry

These are a few areas the church may need to be involved in to fulfill the commission God has set forth. Prayerfully seek him for the direction he would take your church.

**144. One purpose of fellowship in our church is to encourage one another to live faithfully before God.**

Although fellowship is one of the main purposes of the church, some types of fellowship make the church seem more like a social club than a royal priesthood. True fellowship in the church should encourage us to be more faithful to the God we serve at the same time that friendships are formed. To foment Christian fellowship in your church:

- **Encourage Sunday school or Bible study classes to meet in homes.** It is a good idea for classes to meet in the homes of members for fellowship occasionally. These meetings may be social in nature, but they should also include a time of Bible study and prayer.
- **Encourage the development of Bible study times around fellowship events.** Begin a businessmen's breakfast Bible study class or a stay-at-home mother's coffee or Bible study. These and other similar activities will link members who have a natural affinity while providing spiritual support at the same time.
- **Encourage members to form accountability groups or partners.** While members will have to take ultimate responsibility for forming these associations, they will be greatly blessed by them. Accountability friendships will allow for natural fellowship to occur, but the primary purpose of these groups is to encourage each other to live faithfully.
- **Encourage members to invite each other into their homes.** Being in a person's home allows everyone to relax and more open relationships can be formed. As members begin to share with each other in their daily lives, they will be more open to sharing about their spiritual lives as well. In this informal setting believers can discuss and explore biblical truths in new and exciting ways.

## **150. I felt quickly loved and accepted when I began attending this church.**

Joining a church can be a scary moment for new members. They may feel disoriented about the ministries the church offers and how they can become involved. As a church body, current members can aid in the assimilation process by forming open and loving relationships with recent members. Encourage these types of relationships by taking the following actions:

- **Assign new members a specific deacon or elder.** New members should know that they have a specific conduit for voicing their opinion in the church. The deacon or elder assigned should also be available for providing spiritual guidance.
- **Assign new members a mentor.** Mentors can be assigned during a new members class or orientation session. Older, spiritually mature Christians will help new members make an easy transition into their new church home.
- **Train Sunday school teachers.** Sunday school or Bible study teachers should be trained to reach out to new members. By the time they join the church, new members may already have chosen a class. If not, help them know about the different Sunday school classes that are open to new members. Then, train Sunday school teachers to be attentive to new members' needs. Teachers can also give specialized attention to new members who are new Christians.
- **Schedule regular fellowship opportunities.** One of the foundational purposes of a church body is fellowship with other believers. By providing regular opportunities for the church to come together, new members will become acquainted with others in the church.

A church that truly loves and accepts new members is a church that will continue to receive new members.

“Each one should use  
whatever gift he has received  
to serve others,  
faithfully administering God’s grace  
in its various forms.”  
--1 Peter 4:10 *NIV*

**Ministry is...** a Christian using his or her spiritual gifts for the edification of the church and in service to a lost world. God uniquely gifts his people with abilities in order that his Church may advance. Serving and ministering go together in God’s kingdom.

This section of articles addresses specific ministries of the church while at the same time examining what hindrances may exist in the church that prohibit members from serving. Is a member’s reticence to serve due to a lack of training or a lack of willingness? Does the church have a specific plan for ministering in times of death or in other moments of need? Suggestions for dealing with these questions are found in this section.

# MINISTRY



The following questions about ministry are addressed in the Church Health Survey:

6. Our church has a good youth ministry.
12. Our church has a good music ministry.
18. Our church has a good preschool and children's ministry.
24. Our church does a good job of ministering to different ages of adults.
30. When there is a need in our church, many people respond.
36. I believe the pastor/minister/clergy (and staff) should do most of the ministry.
42. I am regularly involved in doing ministry in our church.
48. Most members in our church know their spiritual gifts.
54. Most members in our church use their spiritual gifts in ministry.
60. Whenever a job needs to get done, many people in our church volunteer.
66. It is difficult for me to get involved in ministry in my church.
72. It is difficult for new members to get involved in ministry in our church.
78. Most of the ministry in our church is done by a small number of people.
84. Our church members have freedom to be creative in ministry.
90. I receive fulfillment by doing ministry in our church.
96. The leadership of our church does a good job of equipping people to do ministry.
102. Our church is strong in benevolence ministry.
108. We reach many people in our church by ministering to them.
114. Our church is willing to minister to people regardless of ethnic background.
120. People in our church have someone to turn to when they need counseling.
124. I am willing to serve in the church.
130. Our pastor/minister/clergy regularly challenges us to get involved in the ministry of the church.
136. Our church has a clearly defined strategy for ministering to people in times of sickness or death.
142. Sometimes I get tired of doing ministry because my responsibilities at church are probably too many.
148. I can count on my church to minister to me if I am in need.

## **6. Our church has a good youth ministry.**

Even in churches with outstanding youth programs, church members sometimes criticize the youth ministry. While some criticisms may be justified, more often than not they stem from people's perceptions. A faulty perception of the youth ministry can be corrected, but it will take time and commitment on the part of those working with your youth. The following ideas are some simple steps you can take to revise your congregation's view of the youth ministry.

*Step #1: Involve the parents.* Youth leaders with lasting and significant youth ministries know that the term "youth ministry" is a misnomer. Youth ministry is really family ministry. It is not just about interacting with, leading and discipling youth. Youth ministry is also about coming alongside parents to help them and their students grow in Christ. Youth ministries that lack parental involvement are usually weak and anemic. They too often have the tendency to stand and fall based on the skill and the success of the youth minister. Conversely, ministries built upon the foundation of parental involvement will last long after the greatest of youth ministers is gone. Do whatever you can to involve your youth group's parents in their youth ministry.

*Step #2: Involve students in the life of the church.* Students will need to have age specific interaction times alone with their peers at church. A youth group should operate apart from the congregation for special activities on a regular basis. This separation, however, should never become the goal. If student segregation happens too often, a damaging detachment can occur between the youth and the adults. Be sure to keep a balance between the times your youth gather separately and times they spend with rest of their church family. Get the students involved in the whole church—sponsor dinners for the senior adults, provide child care for young parents, sing in the adult choir, etc.

*Step#3: Make the youth visible.* As a leader, make the youth ministry visible to the congregation. Through any variety of positive activities (skits and special music in services, community service projects or mission trips) help your people see the importance and value of your youth ministry.

*Step#4: Praise the youth.* The power of a leader's praise is remarkable! As a church leader, use your platform to recognize and praise the youth. Praise the acts of the group or praise those of individual students. The goal is to affirm the youth verbally. Not only will your comments give your students pride in themselves, but they may also help your congregation more favorably view their youth.



## 12. Our church has a good music ministry.

Following are four qualities of a good music ministry. Compare your present music program to what we suggest here. If you realize you need to make some changes, these traits are a great place to begin.

- 1) *Create a lay person-rich program.* It is important to show your congregation that anyone who is willing can take part in your music ministry. Show them (and tell them) how they can take part in your worship ministry even if they are not vocally gifted. Establish yearly services and programs where senior adults, parents, singles, youth and children can all actively participate in the musical aspect of the worship services.
- 2) *Balance variety and consistency in your music program.* A consistent worship program and schedule gives your congregation the assurance that they can know what to expect when the music service begins. At the same time, a monotonous music program can lead to stagnation and staleness in the worship experience. Keeping these two issues in mind, attempt to strike a balance between the two extremes. Work to create a worship experience that is both usual and unique. Continually strive for a freshness in worship that engages all your people in worship.
- 3) *Integrate your congregation.* Like an audience watching a theater play, many congregants enter the worship service thinking that they have come to be entertained. This mindset is devastating to worshipping God. Correcting this faulty perception about churchgoing can be difficult, but making attempts to do so is imperative. Here are a few ideas that may help you:
  - Divide verses between different groups. When singing a song, have your men sing one verse and then your women sing the next. Ask your congregation to sing the verse of a song and then have the choir sing the chorus. You could also alternate verses or choruses between sides or aisles within the congregation.
  - Use visual aids during songs. If you have a projection system, use slides or video footage to connect visual images to the verbal messages and teachings of the songs. If you sing a song about mountains or the ocean, plug them in where appropriate.
  - Include congregational testimony. Ask a member of your congregation (prior to the service) to share a brief testimony about a hymn or chorus that will be sung in the service. If a testimony is not available, do research on the author and find out the background on why the composer wrote the song. Use testimonies like these to connect real-life stories to the songs your people sing.
- 4) *Don't go solo.* A music ministry that revolves around the music minister is bad for the congregation. Not only does it defeat the overall purpose of bringing God's people together to worship him, it also undercuts the gifts God has given his people to use in worshipping him. If the music minister *is* the music ministry, you should resolve the problem as quickly as possible.

## 18. Our church has a good preschool and children's ministry.

Ministry to children is one area of church ministry that, while vitally important, can easily be neglected. This oversight may not seem problematic at first glance, but the implications of a bad children's ministry can significantly weaken any church for at least two reasons. First, most people who become Christians do so at an early age. If a church does poorly with ministry to children, the church is wasting away the most fruitful years for evangelism in the life of their prospects. Second, churches that have good children's ministries have children; churches that have children have families. If your church is going to be effective at reaching out to families in your community, it must have an effective and vibrant children's ministry in place.

While many measures can be used to determine how good a children's ministry is, all measures revolve around three primary issues. The three marks of a healthy and effective children's ministry are: *a safe environment, a family friendly infrastructure and a biblical education program*. If your church is able to demonstrate a continual commitment to these three marks, church members and visitors alike will acknowledge and appreciate the quality of your ministry.

**A safe environment.** When parents place their children into the church's hands, they have high expectations. They are giving their kids to you, trusting that at your church their children will be safe. Knowing this, you must make it a high priority to do whatever possible to ensure that children return to their parents safe and sound.

- 1) *Safety inspections* – Regularly inspect all nursery and classroom areas for safety. Remove toys, furniture, appliances and any other objects that could be dangerous to children.
- 2) *Cleanliness inspections* – Routinely clean all areas where children will be playing and interacting. If a parent perceives areas are dirty and unclean, they will be hesitant to leave their children in the church's care.
- 3) *Certification of staff* – If you want parents to have confidence in your children's program and you want to protect the church from possible problems in the child-care area, consider implementing a church certification program for your childcare staff. Criminal background checks, CPR certification and first aid training are all prerequisites that your church could require of adults to provide the highest possible safety and security for the children.

**A family-friendly infrastructure.** Raising children is an enormous challenge, especially when children are young. When planning and organizing your children's programming do whatever you can to make the program as easy as possible for parents. Consider the following ideas:

- 1) *Establish a standard check-in or check-out procedure.* Any time a child is trusted into the care of the church, there should be a system in place to keep track of that child. At the time of check-in, the parent should be told where the child will be in case of an emergency and the parent should also inform the staff member of who is allowed to pick up the child.
- 2) *Sanctuary communication system.* If your church can afford the cost, install a numeric digital display system inconspicuously within the sanctuary. As parents drop their children off for the children's program, they can be given a number for their child. If there is a health or discipline problem with the child during the service, the number can be displayed and the parent can then leave the sanctuary to remedy the situation.

**A biblical education program.** While less important to many parents, a well-planned biblical education program for children is essential to having a good children's ministry. In reality, the

education the children receive during this time may be the only Scriptural teaching they get anywhere. Make it a priority to efficiently, correctly and consistently teach children about God through God's Word. The dividends from a solid children's ministry program will yield fruit in the lives of children for the rest of their lives.

**A few other thoughts to consider:**

- If your church can afford to do so, consider bringing on a part-time children's minister to better plan and organize the ministry.
- Begin a children's church program during the Sunday morning service.
- Conduct Scripture memory activities and teach students how to do Bible ("sword") drills.
- Conduct quarterly children's events, e.g., Vacation Bible School, field trips and family fellowship picnics.

## 24. Our church does a good job of ministering to different ages of adults.

A healthy church is one in which all ages are present. Different churches reach different ages of adults for a variety of reasons, but a healthy church will represent its surrounding community. For example, if a church is near a university, it may have a higher number of “twenty-somethings.” On the other hand, if a church is located in a retirement village, its congregation will likely have a higher average age. In general, though, every church should minister to different ages of adults.

- **Twenty-somethings.** In order to minister to those in the congregation who are in their twenties, you must realize that you probably have a wide variety of personalities and lifestyle situations. In this group, you will find fairly immature college students, other college students who have identifiable priorities and goals, young married couples, older singles, tech school graduates and those who began full-time employment immediately following high school. With this amount of variety, it will be impossible to develop a one-size-fits-all ministry. Depending on the size of your church, you could initiate different Sunday school classes and weekday Bible studies for the different types of twenty-somethings in your church. If your group is smaller, try to plan outings that will appeal to the different groups. For example, with university students you might conduct a lecture series on evolution. Older singles might enjoy a dinner at an elegant restaurant once a quarter. Young married couples would benefit from a marriage enrichment Bible study.
- **Thirty-somethings.** In the group of adults ages 30-39, you will likely find a few singles, some professional couples and other couples who are struggling to make ends meet while raising a family. Plan some activities that couples may attend together, but also plan others where the men can be together with other men and the women can be with other women. Sports teams and breakfast Bible studies for the men and movie or coffee outings for the women are good options for this group.
- **Forty-and Fifty-somethings.** Like the other groups, this group will contain a mixture of persons, but it will likely be a little more homogenous. The majority of this group will be couples on the threshold of or going through the empty nest syndrome. For many, having the house back to themselves will be a blessing. Others may face a period of depression as the children leave home or marry and they must build a life with their spouse again. Mid-life crises are also possible during this period as those who are facing retirement begin to ask themselves if their life has made a contribution to society. Activities for this group include Bible studies that focus on the impact one can make on the world. In addition, involve these newly-freed parents in reaching out to their community and the world by planning specific missions activities.
- **Senior Adults.** This group will include a variety of ages, but most of them will be at the same point in their life. They have retired, the children have left home and they have a good amount of free time on their hands. Those who are recently widowed will need special attention from a group to meet their emotional need for companionship. The widows or widowers may also need help in their homes fixing a leaky faucet or preparing a meal. Involve other members of the group in assessing and meeting these needs. Senior adults make great volunteers, but they probably will not want a regular schedule. They need time to travel, visit grandchildren, etc. Last, involve senior adults in the mentoring ministry of your church. Their experience is invaluable in the mentoring process.

### **30. When there is a need in our church, many people respond.**

If the members of your church do not respond when a need exists, they are probably lacking a clear sense of ministry and fellowship. The Bible teaches us that when one member of the body suffers, we all suffer (1 Corinthians 12:26). In order to help your church improve its ministry:

- **Encourage people to respond to needs through their Sunday school or Bible Study classes.** Teach church members to minister to their fellow classmates instead of relying on a staff person to do it. Class members are better able to assess the true situation and they already have a relationship with the person. In addition, urge classes to adopt particular needs in your church for various lengths of time.
- **Design a system for people to make their needs known.** If members are to respond to needs, they must know what the needs are. While the best option is to have people make their needs known to their Bible study class, sometimes this method is ineffective. People who do not attend a class or whose needs are greater than what one class can handle will need another option for making their needs known to the greater church body. To handle these types of requests, design a system with clear guidelines in order to respond to the different needs of the church body.

### **36. I believe the pastor (and staff) should do most of the ministry.**

It should be no surprise that a majority of avid church members answer this question affirmatively. Such responses are symptomatic of a weak and faulty understanding of ministry. If a majority of your congregation has answered this question poorly, address their misunderstanding of ministry and use it as a point of encouragement and instruction. Consider how you might use the following ideas to teach your people the truth about ministry.

**Idea #1: The biblical model:** Though it may seem elementary, if your people do not understand their role in ministry, begin by taking them through the Scriptures. Present your people with a biblical model of church ministry. Begin with the book of Acts. Allow God's Word to show your congregation that preaching and teaching with a church is the duty of the pastoral leadership while much of the practical ministry falls upon the shoulders of the people. If people do not first realize that ministry is their responsibility, then efforts to get them involved in ministry will be an exasperating endeavor.

**Idea #2: The pastoral model:** Once people understand that ministry must be done by church members, the next step is to put people in positions to do ministry. Unfortunately, learning how to do ministry is like teaching a baby how to walk. It takes time and training. The best way you can help anyone move from the crawling to walking stage of ministry is by modeling ministry before them. Whether it is taking a church member with you to visit prospects, allowing them to lead someone to Christ with you, or doing mission work with them side by side, showing your people an example of ministry is the very best way to teach them how to do ministry.

**Idea #3: The church model:** When you reach the point where members of your congregation are able to do ministry on their own, it will be time for you to allow them to spread their ministry wings. If your people begin to enjoy acts of ministry and they are able to see the impact they can have for God's kingdom, their natural response will be a desire to do more. Many pastors struggle at this juncture. Some want to cast away all their ministry duties, while others are afraid to empower their people to do the ministry God has called the church to do. Whatever tendency is in this area, make sure you give your people room to do ministry on their own. At the same time, always remember to keep an eye on all the ministries your church engages in.

**42. I am regularly involved in doing ministry in our church.**

See Questions 72 and 78.

#### **48. Most members in our church know their spiritual gifts.**

If members of your congregation are unaware of their spiritual gifts or if they are unfamiliar with the concept of spiritual gifts, we have recommendations that could solve this problem. Consider this four-step model for helping your church members understand spiritual gifts.

*Step 1. Preach about spiritual gifts.* Take time to preach some basic messages about the role of spiritual gifts in the life of the church. Consider preaching on the body of Christ (1 Cor. 12). However you decide to preach about spiritual gifts, keep in mind that what you proclaim about spiritual gifts from the pulpit will greatly impact how your people come to comprehend spiritual gifting.

*Step 2. Conduct a spiritual gifts workshop.* After laying a solid foundation about spiritual gifts in your preaching, plan a spiritual gifts workshop that goes into more explanation about what spiritual gifts are and how they work. Invite a trusted facilitator who knows about the topic to lead the meeting(s). This workshop time should allow your people to ask more specific questions and receive feedback in a group setting. At some point in the program, have attendees do spiritual gift inventories for themselves. The workshop does not need to be long or extensive, but it does need to be well organized and well publicized.

*Step 3. Provide spiritual gifts surveys for the congregation.* Within a few weeks following the workshop, plan a service or meeting time when the entire congregation is invited to do a spiritual gift survey. After allowing everyone time to finish the surveys and review their results, spend the rest of the evening explaining the results of the survey. Be sure to show everyone how personal gifts can be used to edify the church body. Make copies of the survey results to keep on file at the church. These surveys may provide valuable insight in the future for matching ministry needs in the church with people's gifts.

*Step 4. Give new members a gifts inventory.* The best time to secure gifts information from members is when they join the church—when they are excited about ministering in the church. If your church has an orientation or new members class, use time in this class to complete a gifts inventory. If your church does not provide this kind of class, design a strategy so that each new member takes an inventory soon after he or she joins the church.



## **54. Most members in our church use their spiritual gifts in ministry.**

If your church members are not using their spiritual gifts in the ministry of your church, a minor adjustment in how you match members to ministries could radically affect the life and vitality of your church. The following is a five-step process that should help you better place your people in their spiritually gifted niche.

**Step #1: Educate.** The first step in the process is to educate people about what spiritual gifts are, where they come from, why they are given and how they are to be used. Preaching about spiritual gifts will be a great way to lay a foundation for further learning in this area. Ideally, it would be best to supplement a sermon series on this topic with a discipleship program or an in-depth Bible study examining in more detail what the Bible says about spiritual gifts. On a side note, be sure to keep spiritual gifts education available to church members on a frequent basis.

**Step #2: Assess.** Once your church members have a biblical view of spiritual gifts, the next step is to have them take a spiritual gift inventory. Whoever is administering the inventory should be equipped to do so and then follow up with explanation. The assessment step will aid people in understanding what their gifts are and how they can use their gifts to contribute to the life of the church.

**Step #3: Evaluate.** Numerous churches educate their people about spiritual gifts and give spiritual gift inventories to their congregations on a regular basis. Unfortunately, too many churches stop here. Instead of utilizing the records of the tests in the placement of church members in ministry roles, they just tell members their gifts and send them on their way. The results of the inventories are extremely valuable not only to the participants, but also to the church staff, the nominating committee and lay leadership, whose job it is to make important leadership decisions for the church. Be wise about using spiritual gifts inventories. Use them to evaluate people's abilities and be proactive about matching people with positions where they are gifted.

**Step #4: Document.** Even after the results have been used in placement, they do not lose value. Future use of inventories may yield valuable fruit in developing leadership around your church. Make sure to keep track of all spiritual gift inventory results.

**Step#5: Schedule.** Like dentist appointments, church-wide spiritual gifts assessments should be scheduled on a regular basis. Once every two to three years is probably sufficient. It is important to schedule assessments on the church calendar and to be intentional about keeping records up to date.

## **60. Whenever a job needs to get done, many people in our church volunteer.**

If people in your church are not jumping up to volunteer to meet needs around the church, there may be a good explanation. Some congregants reach church burnout because they do too many things around church. Others pass on volunteering at church because they feel neglected and unappreciated. Still others do not even realize there are things around the church that must be done. While none of these explanations may be excusable, they bring light to a tremendous weakness churches have in dealing with volunteers.

As you struggle with getting your congregation excited and involved in your ministry, we have three thoughts that you should keep in mind as you recruit volunteers.

- **People need to be aware.** Frequently, many things go undone around the church because people are unaware that the needs exist. If there is work to be done, classes to be taught or events to be planned at church, the congregation needs to be made aware of each specific need. A “ministry needs” board, weekly publications and a congregational address from the pulpit are all ways the church can inform its members about volunteer needs. As you make the needs known, be careful to be gracious in your presentation. Instead of using guilt, obligation or duty, show your people that volunteering is a way of serving our Lord.
- **People need to be asked.** For many people, just knowing a job needs to be done inspires them to action. Others, however, do not respond to awareness alone. Though this group may be cognizant of a need, they will not respond to that need until they are asked directly to meet that need. They do not have an aversion to meeting the needs; they just need to be asked before they will do something. Knowing that some people are wired this way, do your best to directly ask individuals to help out with needs around the church. Pay special attention to special gifts or talents that may suit individuals to certain tasks and match them accordingly. You may find that by politely asking a person directly to participate, far more needs will be met and far more people will be involved in your ministry.

**People need to be acknowledged.** One of the most subtle, yet powerful tools in finding help with any project is acknowledgement. If people know they will be appreciated or if they know they will be praised for their labors, they will do most anything that needs to get done around the church. Stroking egos and unhealthy self-esteems is not the goal to aim for here. The goal is to encourage the body of Christ to action. As a church leader, a word of thanks in a bulletin or during the message can be an incredible stimulus to participation in further ministry activities.

## 66. It is difficult for me to get involved in ministry in my church.

This question, like all of the questions in this inventory, takes into consideration the member's perceptions. It may *not* be difficult for someone to get involved at your church. The person who answers this question affirmatively *perceives* that it is difficult for him or her to get involved. Perception, however, is reality to that person.

To overcome this perception, the church could have a **ministry fair**. When the appointed time arrives to fill ministry positions in your church, the current workers can organize a fair with booths for each ministry or department. Prospective workers can go to the booths that interest them and receive information about current opportunities to serve, expectations of workers, etc. In addition, the ministry fair allows "hidden" ministries to be highlighted as well. The ministry fair should take place in a relaxed atmosphere with drinks, popcorn, etc. provided for those attending. Depending on the schedules of those members you are trying to attract, the fair may be scheduled for a Sunday afternoon immediately after church, before evening services, on a weekday evening or on a Saturday.

The ministry fair is usually an annual event to promote ministry opportunities. During the rest of the year, use the church bulletin, newsletter and bulletin boards to promote ministry openings.

Another option is to provide "**ministry trial**" **opportunities**. Under the guidance of current ministry leaders, members may briefly help out in ministries. This option gives prospective workers a chance to "try on" the ministry to see if it works with their personality, time constraints, spiritual gifts, etc.

Another way to involve new members in the ministry of the church is to give a **spiritual gifts inventory** to each new member. Then, members should meet with the staff member or lay leader who oversees an area that corresponds with the members' spiritual giftedness. A new members' class provides a good opportunity to give the spiritual gifts inventory.

Last, many church members are willing to serve, but they have not been equipped or asked to serve. **Current workers should be taught to be on the lookout for willing people** and to invite them to participate. While this strategy may seem simplistic, many times a little encouragement is all that is needed.

Remember, this question is about perception. If members of your church perceive that it is difficult for them to become involved in ministry, seek to determine the reasons for their perception. Ask them and then address the issues that are revealed.

Also see question 72.

## **72. It is difficult for new members to get involved in ministry in our church.**

Involving new members in the ministries of the church is one of the key ways to assimilate them into the congregation and not to lose them through the back door. A church that wants to involve members in ministry should base their assimilation efforts on three truths:

- People will not likely get involved in ministry unless they are asked to do so.
- People will not know about ministry opportunities unless someone tells them.
- God gives each person in the church a particular role or ministry (1 Cor. 12).

A **church covenant** that expects new members to get involved in ministry is one step toward involving new members. If they know when they join that they are expected to get involved in some ministry, they are less likely to be pew-only Christians.

**Inform the church about ministry opportunities** through bulletin boards, PowerPoint announcements, bulletins, newsletters and worship service announcements. Tell the church about the needs and assume that God has placed someone in the church to carry out each ministry.

Another way to involve new members in the church's ministry is to give a **spiritual gifts inventory** to each member. A new members' class provides a good opportunity to give this test. Following the scoring of the inventory, each new member should meet with the staff member or lay leader who oversees an area that corresponds with the new member's spiritual giftedness (see also question #66). This meeting allows new members to hear about an area (or various areas, if possible) that fit with the spiritual gifts that the Lord has given them.

**Assigning new members a mentor** may also help to incorporate new members into the church's ministry. (This arrangement is also a good strategy for discipleship). Of course, the mentor must be a spiritually mature Christian, but he or she should also share things in common with the new member. The mentor should be the same sex as the new member. Within the mentor relationship, the pair should be encouraged to meet regularly at times convenient to their schedules. Sometimes, these meetings may be informal meetings. At other times, the meetings can be a time for prayer and discussion of specific ways to grow in the Lord, including through ministry in the church. The mentor relationship should not, however, be construed as a counseling relationship.

Finally, consider **simple ministry opportunities** that any new member might be ready to do. Get the new member involved as quickly as possible by offering ministry options, according to the member's giftedness, such as:

- Parking lot greeters
- Classroom greeters
- Choir members
- Facilities care or maintenance
- Clerical help
- Landscaping or yard maintenance

## **78. Most of the ministry in our church is done by a small number of people.**

First Corinthians 12 indicates that God places all members in the church and each member has an important place in the church. Nevertheless, members often feel that only a few actually do the ministry of the church. This statement may be voiced by two different groups of people: the group who is doing all of the work and the group who wants to help but who are not being utilized.

The first group typically makes this statement when they feel unappreciated or simply burned out. In most churches, 80 percent of the work is done by 20 percent of the people. This 20 percent do not usually complain when they are reaping the benefits of serving the Lord. Only when the stress level reaches the high mark does this group object to being the only ones doing the work of the church. This problem can be alleviated by at least three methods.

- **The first method is to evaluate the programs of the church.** Sometimes programs are continued because of tradition rather than because of their effectiveness. Some programs may simply need to be eliminated. Streamlining some of the church's activities can ease the workload and help the ministries of the church be more effective.
- **The second method—recruiting and training new workers**—provides the answer for both of the groups mentioned above. Recruiting new workers will help the first group by decreasing the number of their responsibilities. Recruiting new workers also incorporates the second group who would like to be involved in the ministry of the church. Encourage the current workers to enlist others that they will equip to do the work alongside of them.

To recruit new workers, look for people who make positive and helpful suggestions, who tend to be leaders in their jobs, who are eager to serve and who demonstrate an ongoing personal relationship with Christ. Recruit them, but also provide adequate training so that they can do the tasks for which they are recruited.

- **The third method is to begin new ministries** that clearly help the church to fulfill its overall mission. New ministries require workers and new ministries often grow more effectively than older ministries. Consider doing a community survey to determine the needs of the unchurched and encourage members to begin ministries to meet those needs.

Other possible options for increasing the worker base include:

- Establishing a church covenant that expects new members to be involved in ministry
- Limiting the number of positions a church member may hold at one time
- Making certain that members know about specific church ministry needs
- Intentionally enlisting inactive attenders, interviewing them about their obstacles to ministry service and addressing those obstacles as much as possible
- Beginning a mentoring program to train new members for ministry

See also Questions 66 and 72.

#### **84. Our church members have freedom to be creative in worship.**

Creativity in worship may take on many forms, but the use of the arts is probably the most common. Members who have gifts in creative areas should be encouraged to use those gifts within the church and in worship services.

**Actors.** Actors can be of great inspiration in the church. The use of drama may include dramatic monologues, skits or a complete drama or pageant. Actors can also provide a special emphasis to the service by reading the Scripture passage prior to the sermon. Consider forming a drama team. Besides using their gifts during the worship service, they can also participate in evangelistic outreaches by presenting short plays in public parks or in other appropriate venues.

**Musicians.** In addition to singing in the service, music can be used in multiple ways to help the congregation focus on God. Instrumental music performed by a single musician or a small ensemble can call the congregation to worship. A soloist or praise team can introduce a new song. The praise team can also bolster the direction of the worship leader during congregational singing. Concerts (either instrumental or vocal) can also provide an opportunity for church members to be a part of a larger group and to use their gifts in worship.

**Artists.** Members who are artists can be encouraged to design worship banners to be used in the worship center, to design special promotional materials for the church and to tell the evangelistic story through drawings. The church can host a special art show to display sculptures and paintings depicting biblical scenes.

Besides these more obvious creative manifestations, creativity can also be used in organizing the worship service itself. After praying about your service, try to organize it differently. Add an unexpected prayer time. Introduce a song by reading from the Psalms. Have an additional song after the sermon. The point is not to be different just to be different, but rather to alleviate the problem of the service being monotonous. Your members will appreciate it and God will welcome the new worship.

## **90. I receive fulfillment by doing ministry in our church.**

While personal fulfillment should not be the goal of doing ministry, it is a wonderful by-product. From the pastor to the nursery worker, each minister in the church should be pleased by the work he or she has done for God's glory.

To increase the level of satisfaction among the ministers of your church (lay or professional) **encourage each person to use his or her spiritual gifts and natural talents in ministry.** When we work outside of our gifts and talents, we usually experience a sense of inadequacy or frustration. For example, those who are not gifted in the area of teaching will feel ineffective when trying to teach a class. Likewise, a person who is not naturally detail-oriented will not make a good volunteer administrative assistant. Encourage all members to be involved in the ministry of the church, but help them to recognize their strengths and weaknesses. Taking spiritual gift inventories can help in this area. In addition, each member can ask another person who knows him or her well to point out areas in which the member functions well. The church is a body and each of us has a job to do.

In addition, **institute some method of recognition for those who minister** at the church. It may be as simple as a pat on the back, but it should be intentional. This recognition can also be more elaborate, such as a recognition banquet for Sunday school workers.

## **11. It is difficult to become a part of existing groups in our church.**

Becoming a part of any new group can be a difficult task. Unfortunately, fitting into church groups can be one of the most challenging endeavors. In order to bring new people into your congregation and see them “fit in,” your church must facilitate connectivity. By connectivity, we mean the building and maintaining of relationships between newcomers and existing group (church) members. While the idea of connectivity is simple, it is a remarkably telling indicator of your church’s fitness. Those churches that are successfully growing connectivity are the churches that are growing. Those who are faltering with connectivity are faltering churches.

The following ideas are simple ways to facilitate connectivity. Use what you can and feel free to modify others to make them relevant for your ministry.

*In-Reach events* – Plan events on a regular basis where your core group members reach out to those who are marginally involved in church activities. Prior to the events assemble a list of people who your core members will contact about the event. Ask core participants to focus on just two individuals. They should contact the individuals by phone or by card well in advance of the event to begin building relationships. During the event the core member should plan to sit and interact with the fringe individual. Following the event the core members should then write thank you notes to those who attend the event with them. Virtually every church event you do can be in-reach focused. As you plan activities like these make sure your core members are well informed of their role in the process and also be careful that those being contacted do not feel as if they are being systematically “reached.”

*Small Groups* – Perhaps the best way to develop connectivity within your church is through small group activities and ministries. Small groups provide a setting where group members can develop relationships and enjoy fellowship that many times is not available in the larger worship setting. Small group activities at a church might include:

1. A developed and well-planned Sunday school program where group members find fellowship and spiritual challenge.
2. An organized home group program where Bible study groups meet once per week in church members’ homes.
3. A rotating dinner group program where couples (3 to 4 per group) meet together on a monthly basis to fellowship over a meal and prayer time.
4. Mission projects on the community, state, national and international levels are an excellent way for church members to get to know each other and build long-term spiritual connections.



**96. The leadership of our church does a good job of equipping people to do ministry.**

Equipping the laity should be of utmost importance to the leadership team of your church. Each minister should focus on training church members to use their gifts in service to the Lord.

Ministers should see it as their duty to equip members to function in the different ministries of the church. By training members to minister, the body of the church will be edified and fortified. **Various training courses** should be offered for each of the different ministries of the church. These courses should be offered at different times on different days and in different formats so as to provide possibilities for all church members. Besides these training sessions, the ministers of the church should make sure that **sufficient opportunities** are given for the members to put what they have learned into practice. If, for example, the church offers a course on personal evangelism, it should also provide several different opportunities in the weeks following the course for trainees to accompany a more-experienced member in doing evangelism.

In addition, the staff of the church should **be on the lookout for talented members** who the Lord might be calling into full-time ministry. Ministers should take a special interest in these promising men and women in order to help them develop their gifts and to encourage them in the discernment of their calling.

## **102. Our church is strong in benevolence ministry.**

In an effort to boldly proclaim the Word of God, some churches have retreated from doing benevolence ministry on a regular basis. Jesus reminds us in the Gospel of Matthew that we should be diligent in feeding the hungry, in clothing the naked, in visiting the sick and imprisoned and in providing shelter to the stranger (Matthew 25:34-40). While having a benevolence fund is good, the church should also be proactive in helping those in need.

### **Feeding the Hungry**

Churches can do much to alleviate the suffering of the hungry. An easy way to show love to those who do not have enough to eat is to begin a food pantry. Church members can be encouraged to bring non-perishable food items to a designated area once a month which can then be distributed on a weekly basis. Either church members can distribute the food to those in need or the needy can come to the church as long as they know when the food pantry will be open.

Church members can also be encouraged to work with other existing organizations in the area. Serving food weekly or monthly can be a good way for a member or minister to develop a servant's heart and for the church to have a witness in the community.

### **Clothing the Naked**

A clothing closet can be organized fairly easily in a church if someone is willing to maintain it. Various sizes of clothing donated by church members can be kept on hand for emergency distribution in case fire or other destructive forces strike a home in the community. Extra clothing received in this ministry can also be shared with community organizations.

### **Visiting the Sick and Imprisoned**

These two ministries are an important outreach to the church. When people are in crisis, they are much more responsive to the gospel. Both groups, the sick and the imprisoned, are in crisis and visiting them at this point in time may make an eternal difference. Incorporate these types of visitations into your evangelistic outreach program.

### **Providing Shelter to the Stranger**

As with the previous types of ministries, the ability to provide shelter to the homeless is a way of showing God's love to them. Being homeless due to an emergency situation or being in a chronic state of homelessness is a frightening and debilitating time. Your church can reach out to those who are homeless due to an emergency situation by having an arrangement with a local hotel to provide temporary shelter. To provide shelter for those who live on the streets, consider joining with other churches and shelters in your area. Each organization can agree to provide shelter and food for a certain number of people one time per month. This arrangement will necessitate the purchase of cots. Access to enough bathroom facilities will also be necessary.

## **108. We reach many people in our church by ministering to them.**

Ministry is one of the primary functions of the church. Ministering to people through benevolence, job services and counseling is a way to show people God's love and possibly to introduce them to the Savior.

### **Benevolence**

Your church can minister to the needy in a variety of ways. You can minister to individuals by providing food, clothing and shelter. You can minister to the sick or to those in prisons by visiting them. You can minister to a poorer section of your community by picking up trash, volunteering to paint a school or removing graffiti. The idea is to provide help in such a way that your church comes to have a positive testimony in the community. While giving money to needy persons or to particular organizations is helpful, showing love in tangible ways is more important.

### **Job Services**

In addition to the other benevolent ministries mentioned above, your church can assist those who have been marginalized by providing job training seminars. Women who have never entered the workforce need training on interviewing skills. Recent immigrants to this country may need appropriate clothing for interviews. Someone who can no longer work in a factory job due to physical restrictions will benefit from courses on basic computer skills.

### **Counseling**

An important point of ministry for some churches will be a counseling center. Qualified, biblically-based Christian counselors can help people deal with a recent death or other crises. They can also assist couples by providing pre-marriage, marriage and family counseling. If your church decides to offer this ministry to its members and to the community, it should provide appropriate facilities that will insure privacy and procure certified counselors.

## 114. Our church is willing to minister to people regardless of ethnic background.

The Bible records that God does not show favoritism based on economic class (James 2:1-5) or racial background (Revelation 7:9). We should not discriminate either. If your church is unwilling to accept fellow believers from a different ethnicity into the congregation, begin by taking the following actions:

- **Verbally identify the problem.** In some situations, church members may not be willing to recognize that their attitudes and words are racist. Once the specific words or actions are pointed out, highlighted and spoken aloud, many problem-makers will back down because they know that they are wrong. Depending on the cultural situation, the racist attitudes may be readily accepted in the area, but they must be addressed in the church.
- **Confront the problem.** Once the problem is identified, do not allow personal feelings to dictate the church's actions—or lack of action. Confront the problem directly with the Word of God. The Bible speaks directly to the problem of racism. Consult a concordance for help in locating specific passages regarding the nations, how to treat a stranger, etc. in addition to the passages mentioned above.
- **Encourage repentance.** Encourage biased members of your congregation to repent of their racist views individually. Instruct them to ask God to give them a heart for the nations. Ask them to lay aside any problems that they may have had with an individual of another race in order to minister to that entire ethnic group. Remind them that evil individuals exist in every race and that we, as Christians, are not allowed to discard any ethnic group as unacceptable.
- **Provide an environment open to those of another ethnic background.** After you have instructed church members to repent of their actions and attitudes, help them learn to minister to those of another ethnic background. Help your greeters welcome everyone to your church regardless of how they are dressed, what color their skin is, or what language they speak. Consider beginning “English as a Second Language” classes in your church if there is a need in the community. Invite persons of a different ethnicity to speak at the church. If the demographics of the area around your church have changed to include a large influx of persons of another cultural background, begin the process of either starting a church specifically for that ethnic group or plan to add a regular staff member who is from that ethnic group. If you decide to start a separate church for the ethnic group, make sure, though, that it is not an attempt to cover up racism in the church by merely placing those who are different in a separate setting.

## **120. People in our church have someone to turn to when they need counseling.**

Providing counseling to members is a very important ministry of the church. In order to increase the effectiveness of this ministry, consider implementing the following actions:

- **Designate a pastoral care minister(s).** Consider hiring or designating a minister of your church as the pastoral care minister. This person should have the spiritual gifts of mercy and exhortation. He or she should also have professional training in the area of counseling. Establish guidelines with the pastoral care minister regarding the church's stance on counseling involving divorce, abortion, homosexuality, physical abuse and drug or alcohol abuse. Besides counseling, this person may also oversee hospital visitation, pre-marital counseling and other tasks involving pastoral care. Designating this person will help members know whom to contact when they need counseling.
- **Consider counseling as an outreach tool.** Your church will need to make a decision based on its resources whether the pastoral care minister will counsel only church members or if the counseling center will be open to the community. If your church decides to minister to the community by providing counseling, it will be able to reach out to those who are hurting in a tangible way. The church may consider creating a fee schedule for non-members based on income level so as not to become cost prohibitive.

The counselors should make it clear to all who come for counseling that they will provide only biblically-based, Christian counseling. The person should also be informed of the counselor's qualifications. For example, every person counseled should know if their counselor is certified or only gifted in the area of counseling. If the church will be hiring a new counselor, it should look for someone who has been certified by an appropriate agency.

- **The counseling center.** Besides designating a counseling minister, the church should also designate a separate area of the building as the counseling center. If possible, the church may choose to use a separate building (such as an unused parsonage) as the center. In any case, the center should have a separate entrance or be near a low-traffic entrance in order to increase the anonymity of those seeking counseling. It should have a reception area and each counseling area should have a door with a glass window installed. This arrangement will allow the counseling to take place confidentially while at the same time minimizing the chance of any impropriety.

## 124. I am willing to serve in the church.

When church members do not wish to serve, they generally offer excuses of not having time, not being outspoken enough, or simply not being compassionate. These reasons, however, simply do not follow Scripture. Jesus Christ was sent to serve and still serves today. He was a Servant King. In Mark 10:45 Jesus said “For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.” *NIV* This thought was his guiding principle. Serving should be an attitude we all possess.

If your church has not developed an attitude of serving, try these suggestions:

- **Visit a shut-in.** Often the older people of our church do not get the opportunity to converse on a regular basis with other church members. If done in a sincere spirit, God will direct your conversation. Also, look for opportunities to help them around the house. They are often unable to do odd jobs that may be necessary.
- **Help in the nursery.** Unless they have experience or a child, most people think they are unqualified to work with children, but if they have a bright smile and the love of Christ, they are qualified! The nursery and preschool areas generally find that they are short on workers because many do not want to miss the worship service or Sunday school. What an opportunity to share your love with a child and possibly foster a relationship that will one day allow you to share the good news.
- **Help out on church workday.** God calls us to give him the first fruits of our labor. Should we not offer our labor to his holy temple? Most people come to church each week with little thought to the necessary work involved to maintain God’s house. Offer your best. Offer your time.
- **Don’t forget the obscure tasks.** These often include picking up trash on the church grounds as needed, or stopping to help someone carry a heavy load. It is appreciated when someone stays late after an event to clean tables or reorganize chairs. Working alongside others shows your willingness to have a servant heart.
- **Serve beyond your walls.** There is a selfish world waiting out there to be surprised by the love of Christ. Serving outside the church walls invites many opportunities to share the message of Christ while you are sharing his love. If your church does not regularly serve the community, start a program. Locate a few other servant hearts and hit the town. Serve at a local shelter or wash people’s cars for free. Clean up a park or give out water on a hot day—anything to put God’s love into action.

### **130. Our pastor/minister/clergy regularly challenges us to get involved in the ministry of the church.**

For a church to exist as God planned, it must act as a whole to carry out its purpose. We are all part of the body and one part cannot exist without the others. Yet, in most churches, 20 percent of the members are doing all of the ministry. Leaders of churches should challenge the members to become involved in the ministry of Christ.

As spiritual leaders, we should try to set an example for others to follow. While we cannot be involved in every ministry opportunity in the church, it is wise to pray and be involved in those where God leads us. When people see that it is important to a leader, they will become more involved.

Here are some ways you can share the big picture regarding ministry in your church with the members:

- Formulate a complete list of the ministries of the church. Get “buy-in” from all staff members. It also helps to have some key members involved in some areas so that they can begin to pray for their friends and family to help.
- Adopt a positive attitude. Often, when we get discouraged we can lose support instead of gain it.
- Listen to and consider input from every suggestion. Things may work better if we do them differently.
- Hold a ministry banquet. Set up stations displaying and describing each available ministry and what is needed to make it work. Have your ministry outreach leader or pastor speak on the importance of ministry, the church and the community.
- Pray, pray and pray. You can never pray enough over your situations. Remember that God is in control and if we are but obedient to him, he will take care of the details.

### **136. Our church has a clearly defined strategy for ministering to people in times of sickness or death.**

God has called us as believers to have mercy and compassion on all who are in the church. Many churches have ministries that reach out to children, the homeless and the lost, but what about those who are sick or have experienced a death in the family? This ministry can often be overlooked because managing it can be difficult. If your church does not regularly visit with or minister to people in these conditions, take a moment to see why this ministry is necessary and how it can be started.

To begin this type of ministry, create a way for information regarding the sick or recent deaths to be delivered to the church. The information may be provided through a special phone number, through announcements after church or during a weekly prayer meeting. This information will provide your team with the details of individual situations. A visiting team of two will usually suffice since too many people can be disruptive in some situations.

Train your team in how to make a successful visit with the following hints:

- Make arrangements for the visit. Once you have received the name of the person and his or her location, call ahead to check on when visitation is permitted. If the person is at home, call ahead to set the time of your arrival.
- Stand in close proximity to the person so that they can see you and you can hear them without distractions. Do not take a seat until offered to do so.
- Allow the person to share with you the details of the illness or recent death. Do not ask questions that could be too personal.
- Do not overstay your visit. Keep an eye on the time as well as the person's condition. However, do not act as though you are in a hurry to leave. You will be able to gauge the situation if you remain aware of their words and actions.
- Be positive. Often, illness and death naturally bring out negative reactions. Be understanding, but do not give your own opinion. Respond as a caring listener to what is being said.
- Offer to pray before you leave. Do not be longwinded. Pray for trust, protection and gratitude for God's wisdom in all situations. Our goal is to bring the church to people who are hurting. Be sensitive to their needs and love them with the love of the Lord.



## **142. Sometimes I get tired of doing ministry because my responsibilities at church are probably too many.**

In this day and age, we can become too busy before we realize what is happening. Because the “cause” is so great, there is much to do and Christ warns that time is short. It is easy to quote Scripture as to why we should press onward, but it can be truly hard to live it on a daily basis.

First of all, to help correct this problem, the Spirit must be the one who convicts you to move forward. If you are ministering out of allegiance or obligation, you are doing it for the wrong reason and God will not likely be in it. If you are working towards enlarging the kingdom because God has called you into it, you can rest assured that he will be with you.

How can you keep up the pace and continue working out where God has planted you? Here are some helpful thoughts:

- *Remember why you are doing the “job” you are doing.* Did God call you to it? Then he will see you through it. Recall the reason you started the particular ministry and find the joy again. When you feel that you are doing too much, do a soul check-up and make sure you are keeping God in focus.
- *Pray.* God calls us to his work, but he does not call us to do it alone. Often, we get in a groove and leave God out of the whole situation. Spend time with him in prayer and in his Word. Seek his will and see why you are having these feelings. Perhaps a change is due in a particular ministry.
- *Set your priorities to God’s standards.* Often we take on additional responsibilities because we think we are the only ones who can or will do it. Rediscover the areas God truly wants you in and mentor others with your skills as well as your vision and perspective.
- *Do not let stress get to you.* Satan wants us to feel chaotic, but God is not the god of chaos. God is order and direction. Stay focused. When stress does occur, do not let it derail you.

#### **148. I can count on my church to minister to me if I am in need.**

Churches should reach out to people in the local community, but they should also be very intentional about ministering to their own members who are in need. In our desire to be evangelistic, sometimes we forget about ministering to the very members who are the church.

Every church should have a strategic plan for ministering to members in need. To implement a strategy for accomplishing this goal, consider the following questions:

- **Who will minister to those who have had a death in the family?** Since the senior pastor is unable to minister to every member who has had a death in the family, others in the church should be trained and willing to do so. Deacons or elders are the obvious choice for this type of ministry, but others in the church who have the spiritual gift of mercy will want to participate as well.
- **Who will minister to those who are in the hospital or nursing home?** Again, an active and well-trained deacon or elder board will be able to shoulder some of the responsibility for this type of ministry. Others in the congregation, especially senior adults, will also desire to be involved. In addition, questions should be addressed about the particular type of ministry your church wants to have. For example, will you have an ongoing ministry to specific nursing homes or hospitals in the area or will you minister only to church members?
- **Who will minister to those whose home has burned or who have been affected by some type of natural disaster?** A church must be prepared to minister to its members when they are in these dire situations. Do you have a clothes closet? Do you have an arrangement with a local hotel where a family might stay temporarily at the church's expense? Does the church have a disaster plan? Since some of the church members will likely be affected by any local natural disaster, consider contacting the Red Cross in your area to see how your church can work with them in the event of a local emergency.
- **Who will minister to those who have a financial need?** From time to time members may experience financial need. Does your church have a benevolence fund? How do you determine who receives aid and how much they will receive? Do members receive priority over others?

These are just a few types of need that your members might experience. Look at your congregation, anticipate their potential needs and develop a strategy for meeting them.



# INDEX



# Index

Question	Section	Question	Section	Question	Section
1	Worship	26	Discipleship	51	Prayer
2	Discipleship	27	Prayer	52	Evangelism
3	Prayer	28	Evangelism	53	Fellowship
4	Evangelism	29	Fellowship	54	Ministry
5	Fellowship	30	Ministry	55	Worship
6	Ministry	31	Worship	56	Discipleship
7	Worship	32	Discipleship	57	Prayer
8	Discipleship	33	Prayer	58	Evangelism
9	Prayer	34	Evangelism	59	Fellowship
10	Evangelism	35	Fellowship	60	Ministry
11	Fellowship	36	Ministry	61	Worship
12	Ministry	37	Worship	62	Discipleship
13	Worship	38	Discipleship	63	Prayer
14	Discipleship	39	Prayer	64	Evangelism
15	Prayer	40	Evangelism	65	Fellowship
16	Evangelism	41	Fellowship	66	Ministry
17	Fellowship	42	Ministry	67	Worship
18	Ministry	43	Worship	68	Discipleship
19	Worship	44	Discipleship	69	Prayer
20	Discipleship	45	Prayer	70	Evangelism
21	Prayer	46	Evangelism	71	Fellowship
22	Evangelism	47	Fellowship	72	Ministry
23	Fellowship	48	Ministry	73	Worship
24	Ministry	49	Worship	74	Discipleship
25	Worship	50	Discipleship	75	Prayer

Question	Section	Question	Section	Question	Section
76	Evangelism	101	Fellowship	126	Fellowship
77	Fellowship	102	Ministry	127	Worship
78	Ministry	103	Worship	128	Evangelism
79	Worship	104	Discipleship	129	Discipleship
80	Discipleship	105	Prayer	130	Ministry
81	Prayer	106	Evangelism	131	Prayer
82	Evangelism	107	Fellowship	132	Fellowship
83	Fellowship	108	Ministry	133	Worship
84	Ministry	109	Worship	134	Evangelism
85	Worship	110	Discipleship	135	Discipleship
86	Discipleship	111	Prayer	136	Ministry
87	Prayer	112	Evangelism	137	Prayer
88	Evangelism	113	Fellowship	138	Fellowship
89	Fellowship	114	Ministry	139	Worship
90	Ministry	115	Worship	140	Evangelism
91	Worship	116	Discipleship	141	Discipleship
92	Discipleship	117	Prayer	142	Ministry
93	Prayer	118	Evangelism	143	Prayer
94	Evangelism	119	Fellowship	144	Fellowship
95	Fellowship	120	Ministry	145	Worship
96	Ministry	121	Worship	146	Evangelism
97	Worship	122	Evangelism	147	Discipleship
98	Discipleship	123	Discipleship	148	Ministry
99	Prayer	124	Ministry	149	Prayer
100	Evangelism	125	Prayer	150	Fellowship