

The Acts 16:5 Initiative®

Gathering 1: Develop a Defining Vision

(2nd Meeting of *Acts 16:5 Initiative*)

Table of Contents

Word-Share-Prayer

Ministry Design Module 4	Identify Essential Defining Practices	p. 1-18
Ministry Design Module 5	Growing in the 3-D Lifestyle	p. 1-14
Going Deeper Module 2	The Transformational Ministry of Fellowship	p. 1-16
Ministry Design Module 6	Small Group Life - Face-to-Face Ministry	p. 1-18
Ministry Design Module 7	Multiplying Small Groups	p. 1-12
Application Module 2	Next Steps: The Adventure of the <i>Acts 16:5 Initiative</i>	p. 1-10

Note to Participants: At each *Acts 16:5 Initiative* meeting every 6 months or so you will receive additional Ministry Design, Leadership, Take the Adventure (Application of material), and Going Deeper modules on pertinent transformational topics.

Ministry Design Modules are the foundation of the *Acts 16:5 Initiative*. Leadership Modules provide timely and effect management information for pastors. Take the Adventure Modules explain the “how to” of applying the information learned within your own congregation. The Going Deeper Modules suggest ways to expand or take additional steps with the *Acts 16:5* material.



The Vital Churches Institute

Mailing address: P. O. Box 18378
Pittsburgh, PA 15236

Physical address: 901 Allegheny Avenue
Pittsburgh, PA 15233

Phone: 412.246.4847

Email: contact@vitalchurches.com

www.VitalChurchesInstitute.com

<http://vitalchurches.blogspot.com>

www.buildingoneanother.org (free weekly devotional e-letter)



withStanOtt

The purpose of the Vital Churches Institute is to:

- Build the vitality and effectiveness of the local church.
- Promote the Christian Faith and Practice through the development and distribution of training materials, seminars, and services.

Word-Share-Prayer

For personal and small group study

READ: Mark 2:1-5, 10-12 Supportive Fellowship

When he returned to Capernaum after some days, it was reported that he was at home.² So many gathered around that there was no longer room for them, not even in front of the door; and he was speaking the word to them.³ Then some people came, bringing to him a paralyzed man, carried by four of them.⁴ And when they could not bring him to Jesus because of the crowd, they removed the roof above him; and after having dug through it, they let down the mat on which the paralytic lay.⁵ When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, “Son, your sins are forgiven...¹⁰ But so that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins” —he said to the paralytic—¹² “I say to you, stand up, take your mat and go to your home.”¹² And he stood up, and immediately took the mat and went out before all of them; so that they were all amazed and glorified God, saying, “We have never seen anything like this!” NRSV

REFLECT: Jot down everything you learn about the four friends who carried the paralyzed person.

What did Jesus do? What was the reaction of the onlookers?

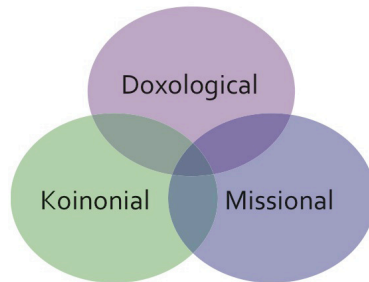
RESPOND: List some of the stretcher-bearers in your life who carry you into the presence of Jesus when you are down. How will you show gratitude to them?

REQUEST:

Jot down some blessings in your life and prayer requests that you and others may have.



Identify Essential Defining Practices



The process of re-shaping our own lives and our church activities around the elements of the Three-Dimensional (3-D) vision of the Church is an adventure upon which we embark on for the rest of our lives. The three dimensions of the Christian life and the church are God, the Church, and the World. We find them in the commandments that are dear to our Lord:

Know, love, and experience the God who loves us. (*Doxological*)

The Great Commandment:

You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind. - Luke 10:27a

Equip and care for the people God gives us. (*Koinonial*)

The New Commandment:

That you love one another even as I have loved you. - John 14:35

Engage and serve the world to which God sends us. (*Missional*)

The Great Commission:

Go into all the world and make disciples. - Matthew 28:19-20

The Great Commandment:

And thy neighbor as yourself. - Luke 10:27b

In laying out this 3-D vision for the life of the church, we encourage every congregation as it is led by the pastor and Session, to clarify its Defining Vision. This means being able to express in a tight, cogent way “what we aim to accomplish by God’s grace.”

Such a vision has two fields of application: the personal lives of the people and the programs of the church. For example, if the congregation's vision is, "Glorify God, Make Disciples, and Meet Human Need," then we would lead the people of the congregation to so embrace the vision. They would say, "My *personal* vision is to glorify God, make disciples, and meet human need." At the same time we would re-shape our church programs to align with that vision.

What Are Defining Practices?

- A Defining **Vision** is that vision that defines the aims of our ministry.
- A Defining **Practice** describes something we do in order to fulfill our Defining Vision.



Practices lead to fulfilling Vision

Our Defining Vision for the church rests upon a theological foundation, such as the Seven Vital Signs of Life-Changing Transformational Ministry (Ministry Design Module 3 - *Refine Your Defining Vision*).

Defining Practices also rest upon a theological foundation and are the "how-to's" of ministry. For example, prayer is a Defining Practice of Christian ministry.

There are a variety of ways to think about the concept of Defining Practices of Ministry. Defining Practices are our means of cooperating with the Holy Spirit in the building up of Christ's church. Defining Practices are "pictures of ministry" that offer us ways of "seeing" what to do. Think of the practice of encouragement – and "see" yourself speaking words of encouragement.

Every Defining Practice offers you a way to imagine a ministry behavior. Such practices are God-given principles and as such offer us patterns of behavior that transform the spiritual life and meet the needs of people in every time and culture.

Since transformational ministry is biblically-based, Scripture is our most basic source and authority for Defining Practices. With Scripture as our defining epistemology (the basis of what we know) of Christian faith and practice, we always consider if the practices we discern from observation or the teachings of others are consistent with our understanding of Scripture.

Defining Practices lend themselves to a variety of methods and means of expression. Take the Defining Practice of “hospitality,” and you may imagine a great many ways in which you may go about including people in your life.

While the particular way you carry out these practices may find different expression in different times and in different cultures, the practices themselves are biblical principles that apply in all times and places.

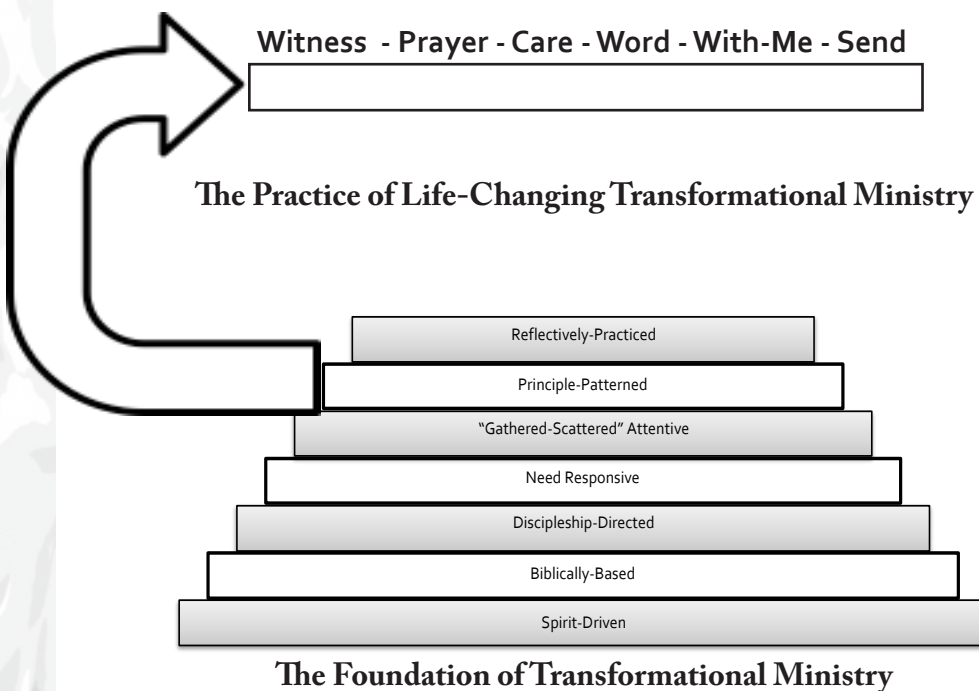
For Reflection:

🔥 What are some of the key Defining Practices of the Christian faith? Sometimes they are also called spiritual disciplines.

Six Master Defining Practices of Ministry

There are a great many biblical practices of transformational ministry. Thankfully those practices may be summarized as six Defining Practices each of which describes a family of behaviors of transformational ministry.

1. Witness
2. Prayer
3. Care
4. Word
5. With-me
6. Send



Why six master practices and not five or seven or eight?

There are actually a great many expressions of Christian faith and practice that enable us, by the grace of God, to grow in and reflect the image of Jesus who lives within us. Classic studies of spiritual disciplines show that they enable us to grow in the 3-D lifestyle. Spiritual disciplines that connect us more deeply with the Lord who loves us, which bond us to others in the Body of Christ, and that pattern our service in the world.¹

¹ See Richard Foster's *Celebration of Discipline* and Dallas Willard's *The Spirit of the Disciplines*.

Such studies tend to focus on helping you grow Christianly. But what are the spiritual disciplines that help you help others grow Christianly?

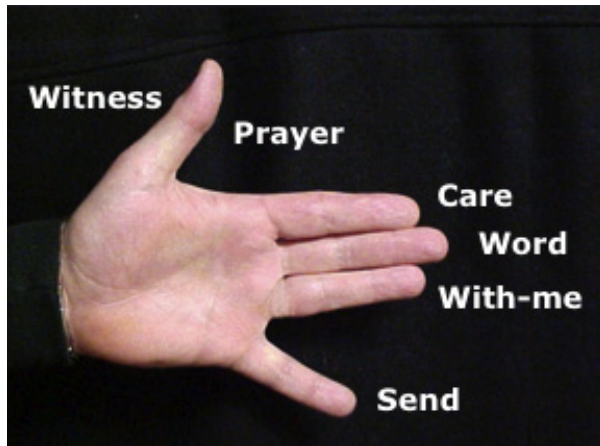
So ask yourself the question, “What are the practices that I may engage in that help me to grow as a disciple of Jesus *and* that help me to help you grow as a disciple of Jesus?” Now we are going beyond the spiritual disciplines of personal faith development to those that serve to help the faith development of others: family members, friends, the people of God.

A study of scripture looking for the biblical methods used by Jesus Christ and the people of God to encourage and equip persons to grow as disciples of Jesus reveals dozens of practices. So many, in fact, that it would take a lifetime to assimilate them all into our personal lifestyle.

So the question was asked, “Of all the methods we find in scripture by which we may help people grow as disciples of Jesus and meet human need, what are the master practices that would allow us to summarize the dozens of ministry practices within the domains of these master practices?” That question led to these six Defining Practices: witness, prayer, care, Word, with-me, and send.

The six Defining Practices cover all three elements of the 3-D Christian lifestyle.

A simple way to remember the six Defining Practices is with your hand.



**Witness
Prayer
Care
Word
With-me
Send**

Witness

Prayer

Care

Word

With-me

Send

The Defining Practice of Witness

To witness is to see, observe, or experience something. Stand in a rain-storm, watch the snowfall, enjoy a meal at a restaurant, and in each case you are a witness to what's going on.

To *bear* witness is to represent what you have witnessed. It is to convey to others what you have seen and experienced.

When Jesus said, “and you will be my witnesses” (Acts 1:8), he was telling his followers that they would convey to others what they had seen and experienced of him.

Bearing witness is Christ's command for every disciple and every church.

Then Jesus came to them and said, “... go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you...”
- Matthew 28:19-20

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

Bearing witness spreads the light of God's love in our world, speaks of God's reality, and invites others to faith.

There are three ways (at least) in which we may bear witness to others of the Lord who loves us:

- **Speak up** (evangelism) in which we seek to introduce others to the reality of God and to following the person of Jesus.
Matthew 28:18-20
- **Show up** (compassion) in which we offer the compassion of our Lord to those who are ill, downtrodden, and in need.
Matthew 25:35
- **Stand up** (justice) as we represent the temple cleansing.
Matthew 21:12-14

☹ See if you can find all three of these ways of bearing witness in Jesus' remarks as recorded in Luke 4:18-19.

The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor, He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor.

Witness is both a matter of our lives and our lips, our walk and our talk.

Our Lives are the light of God's love in our world. Our deeds of compassion, mercy, justice, and encouragement bear a visible witness to the reality of God.

Let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven. - Matthew 5:16

 Do you live your life in a way that honors our Lord and draws others to Him?

We Speak of the presence, love, and power of God.

We are to speak about God's work:

One generation will commend your works to another; they will tell of your mighty acts. - Psalm 145:4

We bear witness to fellow disciples of Jesus Christ and to our watching world by affirming the reality and work of God... both as it is expressed in Scripture and the Confessions of the church.

Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect. - I Peter 3:15

 Are you able to express the heart of the Christian message in a simple straightforward manner?

Evangelism is speaking the good news of Jesus Christ in sensitive and effective ways, relying on the power and timing of the Holy Spirit, and leaving the results to God.

Invite others to faith:

We proclaim to you what we have seen and heard [telling about Jesus], so that you also may have fellowship with us. And our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ.

- I John 1:3

We bear witness to those who have yet to profess faith in Christ by speaking of Jesus Christ in a sufficiently clear way; so that, by God's grace, we may lead a person to repentance and faith in Jesus Christ.

Can you, will you, speak about Jesus Christ in a clear way; so that you may lead a person to turn from self (repentance) and to Jesus Christ in faith?

The Gospel: Promise, Problem, Provision, Decision [PPPD]

The **promises** of God – God’s love in our lives today the hope of eternal life. John 3:16; 10:10; Romans 6:23.

The **problem** of sin – sin separates us from God and damages our lives. Romans 3:23.

The **provision** of Jesus Christ – Jesus lives for us, died for our sins, and was raised to life. I Peter 3:18, I Timothy. 2:5-6, I Corinthians 15:3-4.

Our **decision** of faith – repentance and faith in Jesus Christ. John 1:11-13; Revelation 3:20.

The Defining Practice of Prayer

There are many forms and practices of prayer. Remember that these six Defining Practices are those specifically focused on the development of one’s own life and that of the lives of others as disciples of Jesus. So the Defining Practice of Prayer is concerned with what we pray for to enable people to grow as disciples, *and* that we actually do pray.

There are two key kinds of prayers for people. They are prayer of reflection and the prayer of intercession.

The Prayer of Selection: Lord, who do you want me/us to focus on?

One of those days Jesus went out to a mountainside to pray, and spent the night praying to God. - Luke 6:12

While Jesus ministered to large crowds and knew a great many people, he prayed asking God to help him discern the few he was to most significantly invest his life in.

Jesus loved the many and focused on a few.

Jesus loved the people in the crowds, and he loved individuals as he met them. In the same way, we also show interest in and offer encouragement to everyone our Lord places in our lives. Jesus also gave himself more

Witness
Prayer
Care
Word
With-me
Send

deeply to a few, the Twelve Apostles, as well as some other small groups such as Mary, Martha, and Lazarus and Mary, Joanna, and Suzanna (Luke 8:2-3).

In the same way, we give ourselves more deeply to a few - the people we would like to encourage in their spiritual growth. As those few grow as disciples, we send them to give themselves to others – their “few.”

The Prayer of Selection will help you discover your “few,” the family members, friends, and others whom you deliberately seek to encourage and equip to grow as disciples and to address their human needs.

The Prayers of Intercession: Lord, I pray for those you would have me focus on.

- a. Intercessory prayers are prayers on behalf of others.
- b. Intercessory prayers pray for the discipleship and the well-being of others, which works to fulfill our Defining Vision, grow disciples, and meet human need.

For Reflection:

💧 What are the kinds of prayer requests people pray for when they pray for one another?

Most of the prayers we pray today are “shalom prayers.” May it be well with this or that person’s health, relationships, work, and life. Now, according to the verse below, what did Epaphras pray for?

Epaphras, who is one of you and a servant of Christ Jesus, sends greetings. He is always wrestling in prayer for you, that you may stand firm in all the will of God, mature and fully assured. - Colossians 4:12

While it is very appropriate to pray “shalom prayers” for a person’s health, relationships, and loved ones; it is equally appropriate to pray for their spiritual growth and maturity in the image of Jesus. This is the “discipleship prayer.”

It means praying, for your “few,” that they would individually know and experience the Lord who loves them, grow in his likeness, and serve him with heart and soul.

Witness
Prayer
Care
Word
With-me
Send

The Prayer Covenant: agree to pray for each other daily and (if appropriate) with each other weekly for a specified number of weeks.

Again, I tell you that if two of you on earth agree about anything you ask for, it will be done for you by my Father in heaven. – Matthew 18:19

Agree to pray for each other daily for 30 days.

Lord, grant _____ and me the grace today to commit our lives to the Lordship of Jesus Christ without reservation, and grant _____ and me further the grace to know your strength and your guidance this day. Amen.

Another great prayer to use in a prayer covenant is from Ephesians 3:16-19:

I pray, according to the riches of God’s glory, that God may grant that _____ and I be strengthened in our inner being with power through his Spirit, and that Christ may dwell in our hearts through faith, as we are being rooted and grounded in love. I pray that _____ and I may have the power to comprehend, with all the saints, what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, so that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.

The people who have most fully illustrated Christ in their character, and have most powerfully affected the world for Him, have been people who spend so much time with God as to make it a notable feature in their lives...to be little with God is to be little for God. E. M. Bounds, noted 19th century theologian and author of *Power Through Prayer*.

The Defining Practice of Care

Care is one of the practices of the church that we best understand. We all want to grow in our individual and corporate capacity to offer sustained care to those facing any situation from the “ordinary” challenges of daily life to those facing illness, grief, anxiety, loneliness, depression, sexual abuse, relationship issues, employment concerns, and on, and on.

And Saul’s son Jonathan went to David at Horesh and helped him find strength in God. – I Samuel 23:16 NIV

Filled with compassion, Jesus reached out his hand and touched the man. "I am willing," he said. "Be clean!" - Mark 1:41 NIV

Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ.
- Galatians 6:2 NIV

- Care seeks the total well-being of another person. Shalom is the Hebrew word typically translated, "peace" and is used in a greeting. It is a robust word that speaks of our total well-being – body, soul, and spirit.
- Care addresses changing needs of people such as physical, relational, emotional, intellectual, and spiritual needs.
- Care offers need-responsive ministry to persons and to groups.
- The key to care is to "Be There."

The Defining Practice of the Word

God's Word is food for the soul. Reading it, meditating on it, and living it brings life. The Bible is both a message book and a method book. Read and study it for its message about God and about the life God gives. Read it to learn the methods of ministry that develop the spiritual life of a disciple, grow the church, and serve the world.

We also constantly give thanks to God for this, that when you received the word of God that you heard from us, you accepted it not as a human word but as what it really is, God's word, which is also at work in you believers.
- I Thessalonians 2:13

Imparting Scripture into the lives of those whom we would encourage to grow as disciples, helping them understand it, internalize it, and apply to their daily lives is what the Defining Practice of the Word is all about.

There are a variety of methods we may use to impart this life-growing Word to another person:

- Invite the person to worship, a class, or a small group where he/she will hear the Word preached and taught.
- Ask the person to join a small group Bible study you are a part of.
- Mention in normal conversation some text of Scripture that may be relevant in a conversation. "The terrible earthquake in Japan reminds

**The key to
care is to
"Be There."**

Witness
Prayer
Care
Word
With-me
Send

Witness
Prayer
Care
Word
With-me
Send

MINISTRY DESIGN MODULE 4

me of that word that says, ‘God is a very present help in time of trouble.’” (Psalm 46)

- Challenge the person to join you in a class teaching Scripture.
- Give the person a book that will draw them into the Scripture.
- Request the person to join you in a Bible memory challenge – such as a paragraph from one of the Gospels or ten verses over ten weeks or even 52 verses!
- Share a time of devotion centered on Bible reading and prayer with those you live with.

Imparting the Word to people will not happen unless you consciously think about this Defining Practice and imagine ways to impart the Word to another person. Impart in ways that are appropriate both in what it says and when and how you address the person you seek to encourage to grow as a disciple.

The Defining Practice of the With-Me Principle

Our God is the “with us” God.

To Moses, *I will be with you.* Exodus 3:12

Through Isaiah, *Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I fear no evil; for you are with me; your rod and your staff— they comfort me.*
-Psalm 23:4

God is... a very present help in time of trouble. The Lord of hosts is with us.
- Psalm 46:1, 7

If I ascend to heaven, you are there; if I make my bed in Sheol, you are there.
- Psalm 139:8,

There is nothing you can do to earn God’s love, and nothing you can do to lose it. God loves you. Period! God is with you and loves being with you.

When God’s son was born, God could have asked Mary to name him anything. Name him Faith. Name him Reconciliation. Name him Joy. It is no surprise that the God who loves being with us spoke through Isaiah of the son as “Immanuel – God with us!”

With few exceptions, the gospel stories of Jesus show him with people, because he loves to be with people, that they may grow in faith, grow as friends and disciples, and grow as sent-ones sent to serve. Jesus himself models the 3-D lifestyle of the church.

He appointed twelve -- designating them apostles -- that they might be with him and that he might send them out to preach. - Mark 3:14

Jesus Christ invited people to be with him on his invitation and on his initiative. Come with me. Follow me. This is the with-me principle.

Jesus also said, "A disciple is not above the teacher, but everyone who is fully qualified will be like the teacher." (Luke 6:40) If Jesus Christ constantly asked people to join him in what he was doing and where he was going, and we are to be like him; then we too will use the with-me principle with the people in our lives.

Question: Whom do we ask to be "with me" on our invitation and initiative?

Answer: The "few" our Lord leads us to focus on.

Some "with-me" opportunities: "I invite you to be **with me** in my:

1. Small group fellowship

If you are in a small group of less than fifteen people and the group is open to a new person, you may invite someone from your "few" to join the group.

2. Family

With-me with one's family means taking children with you whenever you do something in which it is appropriate to take them. Shopping. Travel. Sports. It is ensuring family time with shared meals; and for married couples ensuring they have time together.

3. Ministry

Whatever you may do in the way of formal ministry, such as teaching Sunday School, singing in the choir, going on short-term mission trips, leading a PW circle, and so on, ask yourself, "Who is with me doing this, because I invited them to be with me." Then be sure the answer includes actual names.

Witness
Prayer
Care
Word
With-me
Send

4. Work

With-me isn't only for the world of the church. It is with-me in all of life. If you are employed, ask yourself what you do in your work in which you may appropriately include a fellow worker for the purposes of developing your relationship and improving the excellence of your work.

5. Life and leisure

Think of all that you do in life in which you may include others. Working in your garden. Painting a bedroom. Cooking hamburgers. Going to a movie. Watching the Superbowl. Participating in the Susan G. Komen Walk for the Cure.

Whatever you do, pray over your few and ask someone to be with you.



The Defining Practice of Sending

Again Jesus said, "Peace be with you! As the father has sent me, I am sending you." - John 20:21

These Twelve Jesus sent out. - Matthew 10:5a

Sending means we send people **to their ministry** in home, workplace, and in the church and community – to witness, pray, care, impart the Word of God, spend time with people – to pursue the passion for ministry God has given them with the spiritual gifts and resources that God has given them.

This is not simply recruiting people to fill positions in the church organization. While such recruitment is a form of sending people to serve, this Defining Practice is how one person may encourage – send – another person to find a place of fruitful service. Service is one path to spiritual growth as a disciple, which is the purpose of these practices.

Every believer is in ministry on behalf of Jesus Christ. As Greg Ogden says, “You were ordained in your baptism for ministry.” The apostle Paul says that pastors and teachers are to “prepare God’s people for works of ministry, so that the body of Christ may be built up.” Ephesians 4:12

We send one another to serve Christ every moment of every day. This is called the priesthood of every believer.

*To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood, **and has made us to be a kingdom and priests to serve his God and Father**--to him be glory and power for ever and ever! Amen. – Revelation 1:6*

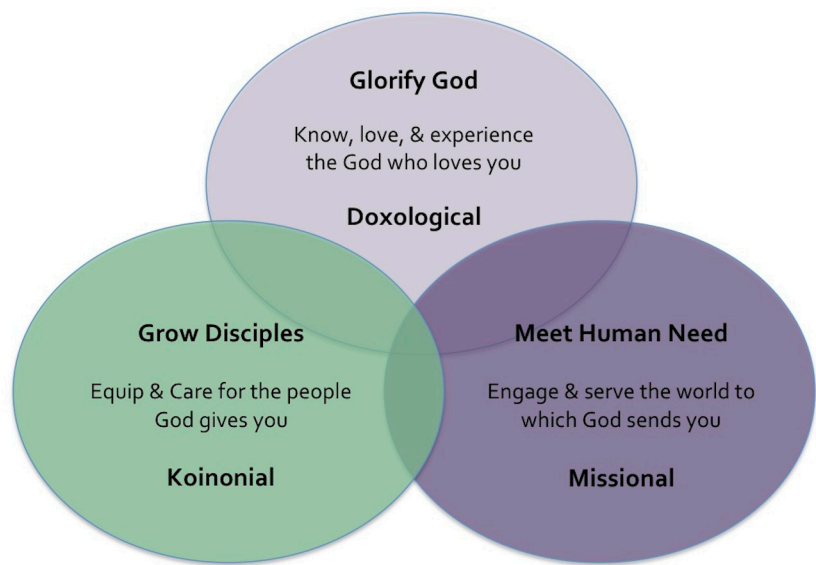
We send people to serve by helping them discover their talents, spiritual gifts, and interests for ministry. This is not simply recruiting to fill slots in our church organization. This is helping each person find the place of service that blesses him/her, and through him/her, blesses others.

*Wherever you go, God is sending you; wherever you are,
God has put you there. He has a purpose in your being there.
Christ who indwells you has something He wants to do through you
where you are. Believe this and go in His grace and love and power.
- Richard C. Halverson*

The Lifecycle of the Defining Practices: *Know-Grow-Sow*

One way to state a Defining Vision, “to glorify God, make disciples, and meet human need.”

3-Dimensions of the Church	Defining Vision	Personal Growth Cycle with the Defining Practices
Doxological - love the Lord who loves us (Spiritual)	Glorify God	Know Prayer Word
Koinonial - equip and care for the people of God (Communal)	Make Disciples	Grow Care With-me
Missional - engagng the world to which God sends us (Missional)	Meet Human Need	Sow Send



What we see is that the six Defining Practices enable us to grow in Christ and enable us to encourage and equip others to grow. We don't live them out in any particular order, because we are to live all of them all of the time.

The individual may say, "My personal vision is to glorify God, make disciples, and meet human need. I will do this as I 'Know, Grow, Sow' in my own life. Likewise, the whole congregation or a ministry program may say, "Our Defining Vision is to glorify God, make disciples, and meet human need. We will do this as we help one another 'Know, Grow, Sow' together.

Of course this means modifying what we do, so we actually do those things!

Comparison with Other Contemporary Visions for Ministry:

Rick Warren (The Purpose Driven Church), Christian Schwartz (Natural Church Development), and John W. Stewart, former Princeton Ashenfelter Associate Professor of Ministry and Evangelism.

Biblical Defining Practices	Domain of Congregational Lifestyle	Schwartz: Eight Quality Characteristics of Growing Churches	Warren: Five Purposes	Stewart: The Fab Five	The Ministry Cycle
Witness	Missional Endeavor	Evangelism	Mission	<i>Marturia</i>	Know
Prayer	Worship	Worship	Worship	<i>Liturgia</i>	Know/ Grow
Care	Fellowship	Small Groups Relationships	Fellowship	<i>Koinonia</i>	Grow
Word	Discipleship	Spirituality	Discipleship	<i>Didache</i>	Grow
With-me	Leadership	Leadership			Grow
Send	Ministry Mobilization	Ministry	Ministry	<i>Diakonia</i>	Sow
		Functional Structures			

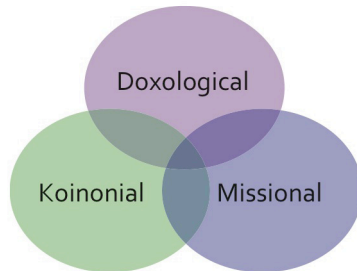
Implementing the Defining Practices Personally

Ministry is, first of all a lifestyle to be lived rather than a program to be run.

Ministry begins with ourselves as we seek to know the Lord who loves us, grow in relationships within Christian fellowship, and serve people. We do this as we seek to reach them with the Good News and compassion of Jesus, grow with them in the faith, and send them to repeat the cycle in their own lives.

1. Therefore it starts with your *“people eyes,”* your eyes of Jesus for the people in your life as you “love the many and focus on a few” and as you bear witness to them, pray for them, care for them, impart the Word to them, invite them to be with you, and send them to ministry.
2. Begin to deliberately practice the Defining Practices as your personal lifestyle.
3. Which of the six practices will you work on in your own life? It’s helpful to choose one or two and really work on making them a part of who you are.
4. Engage in a process of review, discussion, and clarification of your congregation’s or your ministry’s/program’s Defining Vision and Defining Practices.
5. Begin the process of communicating that vision and those practices to those engaged in ministry leadership – showing the way – lifting their hearts – leading out loud.

The Three Dimensional (3-D) Lifestyle



In Ministry Design Module 4 - *Identify Essential Defining Practices* we identified six Defining Practices that enable us to grow as disciples of Jesus and to address human need in fulfillment of our vision to glorify God, make disciples, and meet human need. This module offers ways to help you, and the people with you, actually to begin to live out these practices.

Ministry is a lifestyle to be lived rather than a program to be run.

Align Your Own Life *with the Six Defining Practices*

Align is an interesting verb. It means literally “to line up.” When we have the tires on our vehicles aligned, it means we set them in a straight line. More broadly, to align something is to bring it in line with some frame of reference. You may align yourself with a political party or with a football team or with some point of view.

In transformational ministry, we seek to align our lives as persons and as congregations with our Defining Practices. This is an alignment of our lives with our understanding of what Scripture teaches about how we are to live our lives.

Although the church typically expresses ministry in its most visible form in its various activities and programs, **ministry at its most essential level is a lifestyle to be lived rather than a program to be run.** So, we now consider how to align our own lives with the six Defining Practices.



We may employ these Defining Practices of ministry with the following groups of people:

- Ourselves
- The “few” in our personal lives (inside and outside the church)
Those into whom we consciously invest our lives to encourage their Christian growth (and our own) and to address their human needs
- The individual ministries of the congregation (programs, activities, groups, events)
- The entire congregation

The programs and activities of the congregation are merely particular ways of expressing congregational lifestyle, just as the particular actions of an individual give expression to that person’s lifestyle of ministry.

Learn to distinguish between lifestyle and program. We have become so enamored of programs as a gauge of church vitality that we have lost sight of the significance of lifestyle (of the person and of the Body of Christ) as evidence of the vitality of our congregation and indeed, of our own spiritual lives.

Apply the Defining Practices of ministry in personal lifestyle, and at the same time, integrate them into the organized program of ministry and mission of the church.

A Curriculum for the Six Defining Practices

Small group Bible study is an excellent way to enable people to grow into the six Defining Practices. At the same time, it is also helpful to offer classes and training opportunities to further develop the skill level that helps a person grow in this lifestyle.

This may be as simple as offering Sunday School classes and other teaching venues such as study groups with the appropriate study tools. However, it may be as complex as re-thinking your whole approach to Christian Education as you “layer” training in these practices on top of whatever your groups and classes are currently studying.

Below are curricular resources and suggestions which you may use to begin to help the people in your congregation learn and live the six practices for themselves and as they minister to the people in their own lives.

Witness: Am I bearing witness by the way I am living my life and by speaking of the reality of God’s presence and God’s works in my life?
Am I bearing witness to Jesus Christ and inviting people to faith in Jesus with gentleness and reverence yet with clear intent?

The research of Martha Grace Reese in her series *Unbinding the Gospel* shows the vast majority of mainline denominational Christians do not speak verbally of their faith even when given the most obvious opportunities to do so. We love to quote St. Francis of Assisi as an excuse for not speaking of our faith, “Preach the gospel at all times and if necessary use words.” How many people do you know who have come to faith simply from watching how you live your life? You may have seen it happen; but if so, you are a rare person.

A very fine work on what it takes to share the faith in our post-modern age is *I Once Was Lost* by Don Everts and Doug Schaupp.

Other excellent resources for helping you train others to bear witness verbally and winsomely are:

1. The *Engage* material from the PC(USA) Office of Church Growth in Louisville is very good. They have put together many short on-line training videos and study materials.
<http://gamc.pcusa.org/ministries/evangelism/engage/>

Witness
Prayer
Care
Word
With-me
Send

Am I Praying for those among my few to grow as disciples?

2. The *Unbinding the Gospel* series by Martha Grace Reese is suitable for small groups and classes. Her materials invigorate the personal spiritual vitality of group participants as they learn how to communicate matters of faith clearly and with compassion.
3. <http://www.EvangelismCoach.org> is a website maintained by Chris Walker, a PC(USA) pastor, and offers excellent resources to those who want to become winsome verbal witnesses to the reality of God and to the person of Jesus. Chris specializes in helping us overcome our fears of speaking about faith issues.

Prayer: Am I praying for those among my few to grow as disciple-followers of Jesus? Do I know their needs, and do I name those needs to the Lord as I learn them?

Basic to our 3-D lifestyle is the life of prayer. In our very busy day we know that pastors and church members alike find the demands of life often squeeze out any serious consistent and spiritual invigorating practices of a prayer life. It is remarkable what just a few minutes a day given to prayer can do in your own life and in the lives of those for whom you pray (intercession).

Excellent resources for helping you grow a fulfilling prayer life:

1. *90 Days of Prayer* is a spiritual adventure for ministry groups or whole congregations in which people engage in 90 days of prayer by meeting in prayer trios leading to new holy habits and friendships. People of all levels of involvement are pulled in. Copies are available at www.VitalChurchesInstitute.com/prayer.
2. *An Adventure in Prayer* is a simple booklet by Ben Johnson which introduces people to a four week experiment in prayer. It works well for individuals as well as for groups and classes. Copies are available at www.VitalChurchesInstitute.com/bookstore.
3. The “Grow” Prayer Covenant - guidelines follow:

The “Grow” Prayer Covenant

Consider three ways to use the concept of the prayer covenant as the basis of a prayer partnership:

- Personal Prayer Partners (lifestyle)
- Rotating Prayer Partners in Groups
- Congregational Prayer Partners

Personal Prayer Partners (lifestyle)

Making prayer covenants is an aspect of the Christian lifestyle in which you offer to other individuals the opportunity to pray an agreed upon prayer with you for a period of time such as a week or a month. You may use a prayer found in Scripture such as Ephesians 3:16-19 and include any prayer concerns you and your prayer partner share with each other.

Rotating Prayer Partners in Groups, Boards, Committees, and Ministry Teams

At the conclusion of the meeting of a group, board (such as elders and deacons), committee, or ministry team ask the participants to pair off and to agree to pray for one another until the group meets again. A basis for their prayers could include a prayer found in Scripture such as Ephesians 3:16-19 and personal prayer requests. The next time the group meets ask the participants to rotate their prayer partner by pairing off with another person. If there are an odd number of people, then one partnership will involve three people instead of two. In fact, having people get into prayer trios instead of dyads is another good way to practice the rotating prayer partner concept.

Congregational Prayer Partners

Once or twice a year, invite the entire worshipping congregation to make a thirty-day prayer covenant with one or two others. One way to do this is to put the proposed prayer in the bulletin such as the prayer that follows. During the sermon explain the concept of the prayer covenant. After the sermon and before the closing hymn, ask people to stand, connect with one or two others near them, and agree to pray the prayer for each other for a month. Suggest husbands and wives make prayer covenants with other people to expand their relationships in the church and to be sure no one sitting alone is left out. Tell them to exchange names even if they assume the other person knows their name. It's not unusual for people who have seen each other for years to not know each other's names. Stress that it is perfectly fine to make the prayer covenant with someone they do not know.

Witness
Prayer
Care
Word
With-me
Send

The Basic Thirty-Day Prayer Covenant

Lord, grant me and _____ the grace today to commit our lives to the Lordship of Jesus Christ, without reservation, and grant us further the grace to know your strength and your guidance this day. Amen
From _____(today) to _____(one month)

The Ephesians 3:16-19 Prayer Covenant

I pray that, according to the riches of God's glory, God may grant that _____ and I may be strengthened in our inner being with power through his Spirit,¹⁷ and that Christ may dwell in our hearts through faith, as we are being rooted and grounded in love.¹⁸ I pray that _____ and I may have the power to comprehend, with all the saints, what is the breadth and length and height and depth,¹⁹ and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, so that we may be filled with all the fullness of God. Amen.

- Adapted from Ephesians 3:16-19 NRSV

Care: Am I caring for my few – physically, emotionally, mentally, socially, and spiritually? Be need-responsive; and in compassion, serve those to whom God has sent you (for as surely as God sends your few to you, God has sent you to them).

Leonard Sweet once said the key to care is “be there.” It’s a reversal of the with-me principle as you invite yourself to be with another person’s life with the care and encouragement of our Lord (rather than asking them to be with you). Instead of saying, “If you need me, please call,” which places the burden on the other person; just call, text, email, touch base, and show up.

“**People Eyes**” is a very useful concept for use in teaching people how to care. “People eyes,” a term coined by Chuck Miller, are the eyes of Jesus Christ for people. People eyes see into the hearts of people. People eyes are the capacity to focus on one person in the midst of many... *Jesus walking into Jericho surrounded by a huge crowd says to a little man up in a tree, “Zacchaeus, come down immediately. I must stay at your house today.”* That’s people eyes. People eyes see a newcomer standing all alone in fellowship hall, see the suffering an old friend keeps hidden, see people in the wider community whose well-being is at risk in some way. People who have people eyes are shepherd-minded. They see persons who are hurting and comfort them, they see those who are eager for spiritual growth and encourage them in their faith.

People eyes make us alert to opportunities for a “spontaneous” one-anothering ministry to persons whom we may chose to offer intentional one-on-one ministry.

People eyes are caught more than taught. Do teach about the idea, mentioning people eyes in countless sermons, teachings, and writings; so the congregation really hears illustrations of what it is to have people eyes. And, model people eyes by asking Christ to help you see the people in your life through his eyes.

Excellent resources for helping you learn to care more effectively:

1. *Don't Sing Songs to a Heavy Heart* by Kenneth Haugk offers a biblical perspective, great how-to's, tremendous encouragement ,and equipping for caring.
2. *Caring Enough to Confront* by David Augsburger.

Word: Am I looking for ways to impart the Word of God into my few? This does not mean (necessarily) quoting the Bible at them, but finding ways to connect them with the power and joy of Scripture – sharing insights from a sermon you heard, a book you read, a Bible verse from your devotional time that has encouraged you, and so on. You may impart the Word informally or by inviting some of your few into a small group Bible study or mission team with you. See that they are in a more organized study of Scripture.

Resources for helping you learn and impart the Word to others:

- Type “teaching the Bible” into Amazon.com – you will find a plethora of books to choose from for kids, youth, and adults.

With-me: Am I inviting those in my few to be with me to grow in faith together and in friendship? Jesus invited the Twelve to be with him on his initiative – to grow as friends and disciples and to send them to ministry and service. Share meals with those in your few, attend Christian growth events with them, involve them with you in Bible study and service. Be a friend to them.

With-me starts with your family! What are you doing in which someone in your family may join you, even if their role isn't to “do” anything but

Witness
Prayer
Care
Word
With-me
Send

just to be with you? It extends co-workers as a means of growing genuine friendships. As a means of growing disciples, it is a way for you to include others with you as you are involved in your own Christian growth experiences such as a small group, a class, a seminar, or some other event.

A resource for helping you learn to use the **with-me principle**:

The Joy of Discipling: Friend with Friend Heart with Heart
by E. Stanley Ott. www.VitalChurchesInstitute.com/bookstore.

Send: Am I sending those among my few to serve Christ in specific ways in their home, church, and community with the spiritual gifts and abilities God has given them?

Pray for those you are focusing on, “Lord, what are John’s or Mary’s spiritual gifts and passion? Please show me specific opportunities for service to which I may connect them.”

The focus of the Defining Practice of “send” is not a task to be done but the person you are sending. While recruitment in church life has its place (and is a form of sending), the goal of this Defining Practice is to start with the person you want to help get connected with service rather than starting with a task and looking for a person to do it.

And why do it? Sending isn’t just about getting a job done. When people serve their Lord, their work is a means by which they grow as disciples of our Lord. So the primary reason for sending is to encourage and enable people to grow spiritually.

Delegation, from the French word *legare* – to send, is about connecting people with responsibility. In other words, it’s about sending. Americans are lousy delegators preferring to do tasks themselves rather than making the effort to ask people to take on an assignment, equipping them to do it, and encouraging them along the way.

Many of us are not skillful in sending others. Why is this so?

- We often think of ministry in terms of what we do, such as caring or teaching, but not in terms of motivating others to do the something.
- Sometimes it feels easier to do the work ourselves. To “send” people, we must call them to work, equip them for the work, and send them to the work. This takes effort, and we may prefer to be lazy.

- We don't think anyone else can do a better job. We must remember that we made mistakes learning and to give other people the opportunity to learn the same way.
- We like to be the center of attention. Sending means letting go, in all humility, of some things for which others have praised you.
- We fear of the loss of control.
- We fear asking.

How to send others to serve:

1. **Pray** "Lord, what work would you have this person do? What does he or she have the gifts and passion for?" or "Lord, who would you have me invite and send to this work?"
2. **Call them to the task** - invite them to undertake the task. Be completely honest about what will be required. Don't be afraid to ask for a big commitment. God's people will respond to significant vision.
3. **Equip them for the task** – give them the training they need for the ministry to which they are being sent.
4. **Send them** - let them go. Be sure to offer lots of guidance and encouragement.

Excellent resources for helping you learn to send people to serve:

- *The Equipping Church* by Sue Mallory.
- *Lifekeys: Discover Who You Are* by Jane A. G. Kise, David Stark, Sandra Krebs Hirsh.
- *Transform Your Church with Ministry Teams* by E. Stanley Ott.
- *Management Time: Who's Got the Monkey?* This is a classic and very helpful article by William Oncken, Jr., and Donald L. Wass on the art of delegation. It is available as a downloadable reprint by going to www.HBR.com.

*The focus of
"send"
is not a task to be
done but the
person
you are sending.*

Practice on Yourself

the Six Defining Practices

The person most responsible for your spiritual growth, your reflection of the image of Jesus, and the character of the life you live is – **you!** Align your own life with the 3-D lifestyle of God's people by applying the six Defining Practices to yourself. Ask yourself:

Am I bearing **witness** to myself to the reality of God and the person of Jesus Christ by taking notice of ways our Lord is working in my life and around me?

Am I **praying** for myself to grow as a disciple-follower of Jesus and for the needs in my life?

Am I **caring** for myself – physically, emotionally, mentally, socially, and spiritually?

Am I taking the **Word** of God into my own life for my own spiritual growth?

Am I spending time **with** those who encourage my faith and my life?

Am I **sending** myself to serve Christ in specific ways in my home, church, and community with the spiritual gifts and abilities God has given me?

Align Your Personal Ministry to Others with the Defining Vision and Defining Practices

To align your personal ministry to others with the Defining Vision of your congregation means that vision is not “for the church” or “for church programs,” but it is for me to adopt as “my personal vision.”

We may say, “My *personal* Defining Vision is to glorify God, make disciples, and meet human need.” Or put another way, “My *personal* Defining Vision is to know, love, and experience the Lord who loves me, equip and care for the people God gives me, and engage and serve the world to which God sends me.”

Identify your “few” as you pray the **Prayer of Selection** :
 “Lord, whom would you have me focus on?” found in **Ministry Design**
 Module 4 - Identify Essential Defining Principles, page 8.

Start and maintain a list of names.

Ask and trust the Spirit of God to lead you to identify a few others whom you will ask the Spirit to enable you in all humility to serve – with the express aim of growing them as disciples and meeting their needs.

The list of your “few” could conceivably be quite long. Jesus’ few included the home of Mary, Martha, Lazarus, the twelve disciples (with extra attention to the “inner three” - Peter, James, and John), the seventy-two he sent out two-by-two, and others. Add them up, and you get over one hundred people!

In a similar way, your “few” might typically include:

- a. Those who live in your home.
- b. Your family members wherever they may be.
- c. Your small group, ministry team, and/or committee.
- d. Other individuals in the congregation you may encourage
- e. Other individuals in whose lives you believe God would have you invest time.

A chart such as the one below may be helpful to you in this process. This is to guide your personal prayers and other actions. Keep it with your private prayer materials at home.

Those who live in my home.	My family members wherever they are.	My small group, ministry team, and/or committee.	Other individuals in the church into whose lives I want to invest myself.	Other individuals in the community into whose lives I want to invest myself.

*Lord,
 Who would
 you have me
 focus on?*

**Lord,
Of those you
have me focus
on, who are
my "few?"**

If Jesus' "few" numbered as many as one hundred people, why did he spend so much time with the Twelve, the apostles, and of those twelve, even more time with Peter, James, and John? It's obvious, isn't it? You cannot give one hundred people the personal attention and encouragement they need to really move forward in the faith. Of all of the people you may have listed in a chart such as the one earlier, narrow the list even further. I suggest dividing it into two short lists: your loved ones (family) and a very few other adults – with whom you will be very deliberate in your practice of witness, prayer, care, Word, with me, and send.

Your "few" are simply those to whom you prayerfully decide to give more of yourself, while remaining open to the possibility that your Lord may add others at any time. There will be a natural flow of people in and out of your "few" over time. Jesus chose twelve to be "with him" in order to "send them." Mark 3:14

Remember, Jesus was every bit as busy as you will ever be (see Mark 6:31); yet, he always invested himself in his "few" while continuing to love the many. Focus on a few no matter how "many" your many may be. This is a basic spiritual discipline for those who would be used by God to encourage growth in discipleship in other people.

Serve your few using the Defining Practices (aligning your life with the Defining Practices)

The vast majority of American Christians are not very productive when it comes to growing disciples of their "few" (their children, friends, fellow believers) merely because they have no goal, no plan, no Defining Vision, no Defining Practices, and no strategy.

Once you have identified your "few" (over the years as people move in and out of your circle, some of the names will change) you may begin the deliberate practice of the Defining Practices with them.

Transformational ministry begins with the ministry of life-on-life – the impact of your life on others and theirs on you. This means that ministry is first of all a lifestyle to be lived before it is a program to be run.

Be Wise as You Focus on a Few While Loving the Many¹

In some cases you will have a formal and mutually agreed upon role as the spiritual mentor in the life of another person, a child, a friend who wants to grow in the faith with you, and people you may teach or encourage in the church family. In other cases, you will be an informal mentor. A person seeking to encourage another person's faith by bearing witness to them, praying for them, caring for them and so on, but not making any big deal about it. You just quietly encourage them in accord with the word of the Apostle Paul: *Therefore encourage one another and build up each other, as indeed you are doing.* I Thessalonians 5:11

Mainline denominational people do not tend to see themselves as called to build one another. We have grown to expect the church to feed us spiritually and send us on our way. We expect the pastor and those involved in Christian Education to be responsible for the spiritual growth of others.

However, that is not the New Testament model where we learn that every believer is called to encourage the faith and life of other believers, without exception. In I Peter 2, we read about the priesthood of all believers. All of us are to reproduce in others what the Spirit of God is producing in us (Chuck Miller).

In that light, the matter of discerning who your “few” are and getting serious about encouraging them in the faith using the six Defining Practices is a next step for all of us. In that light, there are some observations to be made.

- Focus on a few no matter how many your many may be. Whether you are the pastor or a member of a church of 100 or 1000, you cannot focus on everyone as well as those other people God brings into your total sphere of influence. Jesus knew he had to focus on a few to really develop disciples and leaders; yet, he was also called to love the crowds who were “harassed and helpless like sheep without a Shepherd.”
- Do not neglect the many while you focus on the few. For you to invest more of your time and yourself into a few people could lead to claims of favoritism if you make a big deal about it. Certainly in a congregation we want everyone to sense our personal interest and support. We are never free to neglect the “many” in order to serve the few, indeed we must love the many while we invest ourselves in the few. Some guidelines to follow include the following:

¹ Adapted from E. Stanley Ott, *Leadership, Discipling Without Playing Favorites*, Volume VII, Number 3, Summer, 1987.

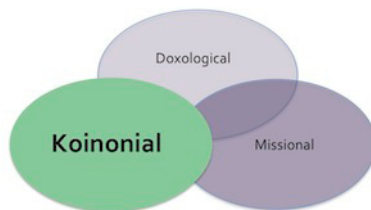
- I do not make public statements about my few, such as even saying I have a “few.” That’s like saying I know a good joke but I’m not telling you. People will naturally feel left out. Simply know who your few are (through prayer and reflection). You don’t need credit for focusing on a few any more than you need it for focusing on your family, your most intimate “few.” You just do it to serve.
- I do not focus on my few in the public setting, spending all of my time standing around talking only with them. A clique is a group you can identify in the public setting because they only talk to each other. Use the motto, “Ministry in public - friendship in private.” In the public setting talk with people who are not in your “few,” or better yet, pull someone you know “with you” and together talk to those you do not know so well. You will have plenty of personal time with those among your few in other settings.
- I minister to the many with my few. Like Jesus going to the masses with the Twelve, when I engage in some act of ministry or service, I want one or more people from my few “with me.” Ministry to people with people is the most powerful means of developing disciples and leaders I know. Those who are “with you” will see how to do it and catch a vision and a passion for ministry that comes no other way.
- I give the whole congregation (or whatever group I am a part of) plenty of opportunity to be with me on a more personal level. By saying, “Come with me,” to various classes, studies, seminars, and other events I lead or am a part of, everyone in the “many” has the opportunity to get near me (and our Lord may well lead me to include such persons in my few).

The Ministry of Transformational Fellowship

Just as we seek to align our personal lives with the six Defining Practices, so we seek to align our congregation's programs and ministries with the same practices.



This module explores the nature of transformational fellowship which is one of the three dimensions of the 3-D church.



The Koinonial Dimension of the Church and of the Christian Life

We declare to you what we have seen and heard so that you also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ. - I John 1:3

Our English word “fellowship” translates the Greek word *koinonia*. *Koinonia* means relationship, partnership, connectedness, and shared life. It means a much deeper relationship than describing fellowship as talking

with friends in church. *Koinonia* involves deeply committed relationships rooted in God, based in trust, evident in acts of love.

The word, fellowship comes from an Old English word, *fee-lowship*.¹ A *fee* was an ancient term for a cow, a person's wealth. Even today a *fee* is wealth given for a product or a service rendered. English farmers had cattle grazing out in their fields and between their fields were fences of wood or stone to keep the cattle from wandering onto someone else's property where they may perhaps be stolen. When two farmers grew to trust one another and knew they could depend on each other then they'd tear down the fences or open up the gates and let their cattle roam on each other's land looking for the best pasture. They had a sufficiently trusted relationship that they'd put their most precious possessions in one another's hands. So the root of fellowship is this idea of trusted, committed relationships. Fellowship -- *koinonia* -- is about real relationships.

Now the Apostle John writes, *these things we proclaim to you in order that you may have fellowship with us*, and he continues by saying (get this) *our fellowship is with the Father and his Son, Jesus Christ*. Interesting isn't it! Christian fellowship, more than simple human friendship and commitment, includes the loving presence of Jesus Christ. Sometimes people speak of the great fellowship they have experienced in some service club; a game of golf, tennis, or bridge; a gathering in a home; or an evening at the movies. It certainly is fellowship in the contemporary English sense of the word, but it is only *koinonia*, *fee-lowship*, *Christian* fellowship, when the people having fellowship with other are simultaneously in fellowship with Jesus Christ.

Can you have a truly deep relationship with someone if you do not share Jesus? Of course you can! And it can be lifelong and life-sustaining relationship. However, any relationship that includes Jesus can grow to an even deeper level, the experience of *koinonia* fellowship.

Assess the fellowship life of your congregation:

- Where in the life of your congregation can the typically involved people talk regularly with other believers on a face-to-face basis about matters of the Spirit?
- Where can they share the ordinary experiences of their lives with one another in an environment conducive for interpersonal prayer and be most present to one another in times of difficulty?
- What percent of your active adult congregation are involved in some kind of face-to-face fellowship (not including groups, committees or classes that exceed 14 in number)?

¹ Ray and Anne Ortlund, *Lord, Make My Life a Miracle*, (iUniverse: 2010).

Bonding Factors of Transformational Fellowship

Paul's letter to the Ephesian church gave a marvelous picture of the elements of genuine *koinonia*. These elements are the glue that holds and molds the individuals into a Body – that bonds them into the Body of Christ.

But speaking the truth in love, we must grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, from whom the whole body, joined and knitted together by every ligament with which it is equipped, as each part is working properly, promotes the body's growth in building itself up in love.

– Ephesians 4:15-16

Bonding Factors

- **UNITY** – connection to Jesus and to common vision
But speaking the truth in love, we must grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ.
- **PERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS**
...from whom the whole body, joined and knitted together by every ligament...
- **SERVICE**
...as each part is working properly.

With the result that each bonding factor promotes the body's growth in building itself up in love.

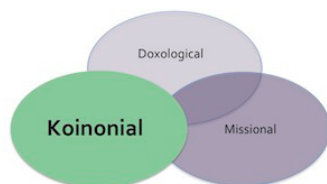
One way to remember the Bonding Factors are with the letters UPS:

Unity – the members grow up into Christ the Head.

Personal Relationships – the members are held together by every supporting ligament.

Service – as each part does it work.

We see that *koinonia* is an expression of the three dimensional, 3-D, church as it connects people with Christ who loves them, with one another, and as they are sent to serve.



Of course, the three bonding factors influencing the spirit of the Body and the spirit of the fellowship of a congregation are: Unity, Personal Relationships, and Service. When there is discord, fracturing the unity, when the personal

relationships are weak or wounded, when people do not know where they fit in serving their congregation, then the “esprit de corps,” the spirit of the Body, is going to be weak.

Bonding Factor: Unity

Growing the “Esprit de Corps” of the Fellowship

When asked how her congregation is doing, she replied, “We’re Bubbling!”

When asked what she meant she said, “There is a wonderful spirit among us. While we appreciate our pastor, I am not referring to our leadership per se but to the sense in every group that something’s happening, that our Lord is working among us, that there is a future coming to us.”

How would you like to think of your congregation as “bubbling” – vibrant – pulsing with life and energy and a positive sense of expectation about the future. You can! It begins with you and those with you who make the shift in expectation – a faith shift – that trusts God for a vital tomorrow among your fellowship.

A formal way to speak of the “bubbling” nature of a vital congregation is the concept of “esprit de corps,” which from the French language means literally “the spirit of the body.” In the case of Christian fellowship, we seek to grow the spirit of the Body of Christ, the morale, the esteem of the people who appreciate the richness and good spirit of their fellowship.

Three of the most significant paths to a positive esprit de corps are:

1. Growing love, dignity and respect using the Four S’s.
2. Resolving conflict.
3. Creating pizzazz and commitment.

Unity through Growing Love, Dignity, and Respect

In their book *Theory R Management*,² Wayne Alderson and Nancy Jean McDonnell teach the concept of the value of the person: love, dignity, and respect. A congregation grows in an healthy esprit de corps as its people demonstrate genuine love, dignity, and respect to one another, even in times of disagreement.

² Wayne T. Alderson and Nancy Alderson McDonnell, *Theory R Management*, (Thomas Nelson, Inc., 1994).

Bill Carl³ is the president of Pittsburgh Theological Seminary, a post he assumed after over twenty years a pastor of First Presbyterian in Dallas.

Carl teaches what he calls “The Four S’s” as a way of helping people in a family or a congregation or any fellowship practice love, dignity and respect with one another, in other words in humility to have the people eyes of Jesus for each other. The Four S’s are No Secrets, No Subversion, No Surprises and Lots of Support.

The first “S,” No Secrets, means talking to each other not about each other. If I have some issue with John, and I talk to Mary about John or I email Phil about John in secret conversation, it is known as triangulation. If you have an issue with John, talk to John. It’s the humility of people eyes that shows dignity to those we have some issue with.

The second “S,” No Surprises means we show each other the dignity not to foist surprise actions or motions or decisions on people without informing them appropriately. When we are surprised, we feel blindsided. This can lead to anger and frustration. Again, people eyes treat people with respect.

The third “S,” No subversion means when those in charge of a group do something we don’t approve of, we don’t work under the table to change it. The church is not the television reality show *Survivor* using deceit and manipulation to get our way. Bill Carl calls this the “parking lot meetings.” After a meeting people plot against those who lead and ignore established means of appeal.

The Fourth “S,” Lots of Support, is a given. People eyes are about serving one another. They are about having the mind of Christ, humbling ourselves, knowing it’s not about us. Lots of support means the cheerleading we discover in the Book of Philippians is for us as well. People are harassed and helpless today, and they need tons of encouragement. No secrets, no surprises, no subversion, and lots of support. All of us have probably violated one or more of the 4 S’s in the past, but by lifting them up they give us a clear way to get going with the people eyes and humility of Jesus.

Unity through Conflict Resolution

Congregation conflict can occur so easily when just two people have a difference of opinion, when someone’s feelings are hurt, or as people begin to take sides around an issue. Depending on the nature of the

³ William Carl III, Best Advice: Wisdom on Ministry from 30 Leading Pastors and Preachers, (Westminster John Knox, 2009).

disagreement and how the parties involved behave, the issue may be a real one to those involved but of little consequence to the esprit de corps, the spirit of the congregation. Or it can be profoundly disruptive and unsettling.

When conflict arises you have to make some prayerfully guided wise assessment of the people and the issue to discern how best to move forward. Whether the best course of action is a simple face-to-face conversation with the parties or a more formal intervention by an outside voice (such as a denominational leader or a consultant) is a matter of considered judgment.

A very helpful resource for congregational health may be found at <http://healthycongregations.com>. The Vital Churches Institute also has consultants who can address a variety of congregational needs <http://vitalchurchesinstitute.com>.

There are many fine books addressing issues of conflict resolution in congregations. A good one for leaders is Peter L. Steinke's *Congregational Leadership in Anxious Times (Being Calm and Courageous No Matter What)*.

Unity through Pizzazz and Commitment

At lunch one pastor asked another pastor, "Are you into pizzazz or commitment?" All the inquiring pastor could see was that at least twice a year the congregation of his friend did things that appeared to be a great deal of fun, but he wondered if the congregation was doing anything to help its people grow in the depth of their Christian commitment.

His friend's answer was, "YES!"

A basic principle of congregational vitality and growth in personal discipleship is "large group—small group balance." The idea is that in the larger group we can experience the affirmation of teaching, of music and worship, the joy of being with a community. In the small group we are personally known and encouraged. We have the opportunity to speak and to converse over the matters of our faith and of our personal lives. Both are essential to Christian growth. If you only attend larger group events, such as worship Sunday morning or if you only attend a face-to-face small group, you may grow. However if you attend large and small group experiences, the high likelihood is that you **will** grow.

Small groups, which foster commitment and depth, are invisible to a congregation. They are meaningful to their participants, but they meet in homes or perhaps at the church. They are private meetings, and so don't create the same sense of "wow, something is happening around here" that the larger group can do.

We suggest two kinds of "pizzazz" experiences for your whole congregation: Reach Events and Grow Events. Both kinds of events are congregational celebrations that are all about inspiring and uplifting the people. Such events may also be employed by sub-groups within the congregation as well such as the ministries to women, men and youth.

Reach Events

These are mega-events sponsored by the congregation. With some imagination congregations of all sizes can do these. They are designed to draw non-churched people while involving church participants. Their goal is simple fun or to address some human need in a way that creates a spirit of "something is happening here. Examples of Reach Events include:

- A Christmas Carnival
- A food event (A barbecue, pig roast, shrimp boil)
- A health fair
- A water festival for children

There is much more about conducting Reach events in the *Acts 16:5 Initiative* module on Misisonal Endeavor.

Grow Events

Create congregational "Celebration" events that capture the imagination, lift the spirit, and draw a great many people together. Such were the role of the many feasts of the people of God we read about in the Old Testament such as the Feast of the Tabernacles. Such Celebration events create the unity that comes of an upbeat esprit de corps and entry points where people can get connected.

Grow Events are designed to encourage the Christian growth of your church participants while being open and inviting to guests from the community. Examples of Grow Events include:

- A Growth Weekend wherein a guest speaker speaks Friday evening, Saturday morning on some aspect of the Christian life (In-depth Bible study, family life, work life, communication skills, and so on) and preaches Sunday morning.

- A “Labor for Your Neighbor” Weekend designed to get most of the active church participants working in a special day of community service.
- A concert.

Set an initial goal of one yearly Pizzazz Grow Event (perhaps in the spring related to Lent) and one yearly Pizzazz Reach Event (perhaps in the fall to generate fresh momentum). As you get this concept going you could add to the number of such events a year for the whole congregation or for some of its sub-groups such as the PW or the youth group.

Begin by asking yourselves, “Given our leaders and resources, what kind of Reach and Grow pizzazz event can we do?” It is remarkable how much can be done that is inspirational and uplifting with a minimum of resources using just a little imagination and will to work.

Bridging From Events to Connectedness

As you plan, consider the matter of “Bridging.” Bridging is what you do to create a bridge from a one-time event into an ongoing group. For a Growth Event you would want bridges for people to move into ongoing small groups in the life of the church. For a Reach Event you would want to offer bridges to upcoming groups or events in the life of the church to which newcomers would be genuinely made to feel welcome.

Bonding Factor: Personal Relationships

The bonding factor of personal relationships is essential to the health of the congregation, its group, and to the Christian growth and well being of every person. When thinking about deepening our relationships, it is helpful to consider two kinds of friends: friends of the road and friends of the heart.⁴

A friend of the road is a friend you make because you walk life’s road together. Perhaps you are neighbors on your street; perhaps you work in the same office, attend the same school, or participate in the same church. For whatever reason that you share the same road, it is the place where you become friends – true friends – supporting one another, encouraging one another, and enjoying one another.

⁴ E. Stanley Ott, *The Joy of Discipling*, Chapter 6.

However, when the road comes to an end, you leave the office; move to a different house, change schools, then the friendship of the road comes to an end. It may remain as a Facebook friend but intimacy fades. Our lives are may be filled with friends of the road.

A friend of the heart, on the other hand, is a friendship that by virtue of some God given chemistry between you, a deep and permanent bond grows between you. It doesn't make any difference if your friend of the heart is in China and you are in Virginia. If you don't see your friend of the heart for five years, it's like no time has gone by when you see each other again.


Think of the friends of the heart our Lord has given you here and in distant places and be glad for them. Pray a simple prayer, "Lord, give me lots and lots of friends of the road and please move many of them as possible off of the road and into the heart."

Sometimes people only spend time with small number of friends of the road or of the heart. It has been suggested that we are like the toy, Legos. A Lego brick has eight prongs to connect with other Legos. It was suggested that people have a limited number of "connectors" with which to make friends, so if you were like a Lego you could make eight friends and that's it. I think a much better way of thinking about the number of dear friends you may have are pieces of Velcro which have countless "connectors." Jesus had a great many very wonderful friends of the heart during his three years of ministry and you and the people in your congregation can too!

There are many ways to grow new friendships of the heart and move as many as possible into the heart. In our day of extreme busyness people often hang out with ever-smaller circles of close friends. We need practical ways to help people open their lives to new friendships while valuing the ones they have, moving from the Lego model of limited friendships to the Velcro model of many friendships.

Two very effective ways to do this are:

1. The practice of hospitality
2. The Emmaus Meal

 **Make Vision Shift Number 4:** Shift from an emphasis on friendliness to a ministry of friendliness and hospitality (to insiders and outsiders).

Personal Relationships through Hospitality

Church people often think of hospitality as a church program or group that is open to new people, welcoming and inviting, which surely it is. However, it is most truly hospitable when people who are less well known in the church or who are guests new to the church find themselves welcome into the private lives of the people of the congregation. And this is a challenge because most adults operate with a fairly closed circle of close friends.

If friendliness asks the question, “How are you?” Friendly is when you bump into Marty at Target and say, “Hi Marty, how are you? How’s life? How’s your family, your car, your cat? See ya!”

As Glenda Hoffman says, “Hospitality is making room for love.”

Hospitality a very different question than, “How are you?”

It asks, “Would you come into my life?”

You may imagine hospitality means opening your home, but it’s more about opening your life and not just your home. It means including people in what you are doing and where you are going. “Will you come into my life?” “We are having a bit to eat at home, do join us!” “I am grabbing a cup of coffee at Starbucks. Why don’t you join me?” “We’re going to the movies. Do come!”

Personal Relationships through The Emmaus Meal

A key pattern by which Jesus spent time with people and developed friendships of the heart was the shared meal. He often reclined at table with people and enjoyed eating dinner and sharing in lengthy conversations with them. The big meal of Jesus’ day was called the *deipnon* (dape-non). The *deipnon* is well translated “a lingering meal.” It is the opposite of “fast food.” Our meals are often hurried as we dash from activity to activity. The *deipnon* means food. It means conversation. It means lingering with no rushing off after eating but sitting and talking for a while.

This leads us to a wider issue in the use of the *deipnon*, the lingering meal is wonderful for the deepening of our relationships and the Christian practice of hospitality. It is hospitality that opens your life to new friends of the road and grows them into new friends of the heart.

Girl Scouts get it right when they say, “Make new friends and keep the old, one is silver and the other gold!” People are so busy today that they tend to spend all of their *deipnon*, lingering mealtime with “gold” friends – those who are already friends of the heart. But you may grow many new friendships of the road, which move off the road and into the heart, when you also share in lingering meals with “silver”, those who are a bit newer to you.

Now if you want the people in your congregation to enjoy their gold friends and connect with silver friends that they may one day also be gold, we need a simple, do-able strategy. This is the Emmaus Meal.

After the resurrection, Jesus walks with two friends on their way to Emmaus. They represent “gold friends” and Jesus, who was unknown to them, was a “silver” friend. As they come to the village of the two friends, Jesus made as if he were going to keep going. Luke reports, *But they urged him strongly, saying, “Stay with us, because it is almost evening and the day is now nearly over.” So he went in to stay with them.*

- Luke 24:29

You practice the Emmaus Meal when you get with a gold friend who you know well and the two of you invite a silver friend, someone less well known to you, to share a meal together. You may eat in one of your homes or out in a restaurant or simply have a cup of coffee together.

If we ask everyone in a congregation to share an Emmaus meal, a *deipnon*, just once a month with someone in the congregation they do not know so well, most people will not do it. They feel a bit uncomfortable about it and will just continue to hang out with old gold friends.

But suppose you invite a person to have a meal with a gold friend, with whom there is comfort and security and that the two of you (or two couples of you) invite a third person or couple once a month for a meal – a silver friend. Many more people will do it.

In fact, as we considered with the Everett Rogers *Diffusions of Innovations* work in Leadership Module 1 – *Leadership Matters*, if you invite the twenty percent of your congregation who would be “innovators and early adopters” and would be most open to this idea of “gold with gold invite silver,” you will find the idea begins to spread.

Get that twenty percent together for an Emmaus Meal launch meeting. Ask them to practice the gold with gold invite silver” Emmaus Meal once a month for three months. Ask them to get together to share their experiences. Then asking their willingness to go another

three months, ask them to help encourage another twenty percent of your active membership to a launch meeting and do it again.

Your goal is simple! Encouraging one another to enjoy the friendships of the heart you have while growing new friendships of the road that will move off of the road and into the heart.

For more information go to:

www.VitalChurchesInstitute.com/members/login

Username: emmaus

Password: hospitality

Bonding Factor: Service

A third bonding factor is “service.” The sixth of the defining practices is “send” (witness, prayer, care, Word, with-me, send) and refers to the work of service, which each Christian and each congregation is sent to accomplish.

The practices of “send” suggests that when one person enables another person to find her or his place of service that we are “sending” one another to serve.

When a congregation establishes a ministry team and ministry to help its entire willing people to discover their spiritual gifts and heart for service and then help those people deploy in actual service and ministry; we call that ministry mobilization. We devote specific modules later in the *Acts 16:5 Initiative* process to the topic of launching the work of ministry mobilization in your congregation.

The Structure of Transformational Fellowship

Large Group—Small Group Balance

Make Vision Shift 8: Shift from primarily audience-oriented programming to a balance of audience-oriented ministry and face-to-face ministry.⁵

⁵ E. Stanley Ott *Twelve Dynamic Shifts for Transforming Your Church*

We call this “large group—small group balance” meaning we participate in larger gatherings of God’s people (15 and higher) and in smaller face-to-face groups (less than 15 in number).

Remember the early church as described in the Book of Acts Chapter 2 gathered in the temple for worship (large group) and in one another’s homes (small groups) for prayer and fellowship.

In the audience-oriented format, one person speaks to many. This format includes most worship services, women’s circles, men’s breakfasts, and Sunday school classes. In the mainline church, we have taught our members to be receivers of other people’s insights and to value the teaching ministry of the church. Indeed, we value the teaching ministry of the church because listening to teachers and preachers can enable spiritual growth.

However, tremendous spiritual growth also takes place when a person shifts from being a “hearer” to becoming a “talker” with the opportunity to speak with others on a face-to-face basis about matters of faith, personal questions, and experiences.

Small groups are an intense expression of the bonding factors with a deep sense of unity, personal relationships, and service. This is especially significant in this day in which people look for new, deeper, and more genuine friendships and not merely the opportunity to attend meetings. In the face-to-face small group of three-to-ten people, we are most fully known and deeply loved within the church. Real relationships grow and blossom.

Strengths of Large and Small Groups⁶

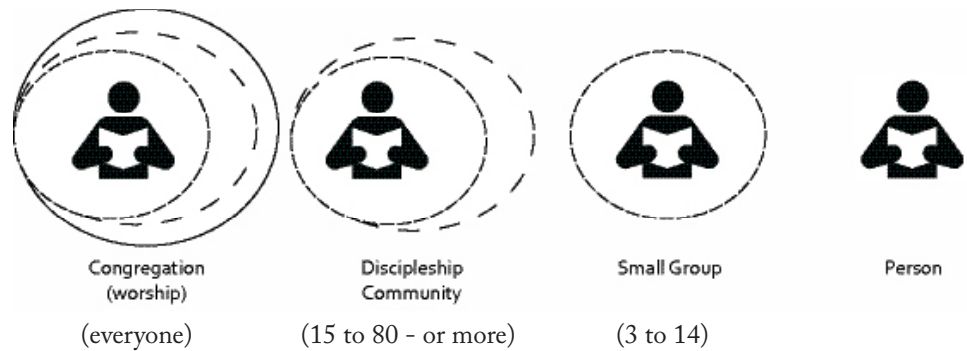
A larger group can excel in:	A smaller group can excel in:
Audience-oriented.	Interpersonal (face to face).
High inspiration (teaching, worship, music) and celebration: major events.	Deep support.
Anonymity (free to be anonymous).	Intimacy (free to be known deeply).
Many acquaintance relationships.	Quality relationships with a few.
Expectation (“see what God is doing among us”).	Introspection (“see what God is doing in me and you”).
Teaching/preaching.	Discussion.
Generating center of new small groups.	Providing a “safe place.”

6 E. Stanley Ott *The Vibrant Church* (Ventura: Regal, 1989), p. 166.



The most vital transformational congregations of all sizes today are working to center themselves in dynamic worship and in the small group experience. In such “large group – small group balance” people may best be enabled and encouraged to grow in their relationship with God and with one another.

The Spectrum of Ministry: Practicing Large Group—Small Group Balance



The Discipleship Community⁷

The Discipleship Community is a mid-sized group in congregational life. It is too large for effective face-to-face fellowship where everyone feels free to speak. Once a group gets larger than 14 people someone will remain silent, because they feel uncomfortable speaking in a group that large, even though they are happy to be there. This is in contrast with the small group of 14 or less where everyone feels free to speak.

While a Discipleship Community is not a “small group,” it can have small groups within it, which offer people a face-to-face opportunity. Examples of Discipleship Communities include:

- A ministry to women
- A ministry to men
- A ministry to youth
- A ministry to singles, marrieds, mixed adults, and so on

Some Discipleship Communities meet primarily for social fellowship reasons, others primarily for teaching, some for outreach (a Soup Kitchen, Habitat for Humanity, and so on).

⁷ For an extensive treatment of the Discipleship Community, see E. Stanley Ott *The Vibrant Church* (Pittsburgh: www.vitalfaithresources.com, 1989)

A Discipleship Community is an especially fruitful way to practice “Large Group – Small Group Balance.”


- The large group provides a source of inspiration, teaching, worship and enthusiasm (and for some, a helpful anonymity).
- The small group provides a source of personal encouragement and friendships.

When a Discipleship Community operates as a single cell, as one big group with no sub-groups, the group does offer a place to belong and to serve. It will be more effective in encouraging the growth of discipleship and the meeting of human needs if it also provides small group opportunities for its people.

Therefore, when possible, take a Discipleship Community that meets as a “single cell” (larger than 14) and work to develop a small group structure within the group. In that way, the people enjoy large group-small group balance, receiving far more personal incentive to grow in discipleship and making it easier for new people to enter the community.

Discipleship Communities can have a tendency in older congregations to be large cliques. Such groups frequently believe themselves to be open to new people and advertise their meetings publicly, yet in practice few people actually visit and return. Insiders think the group is open to new people but in reality it feels closed to outsiders who find it difficult to penetrate the web of relationships in the group.

In such a case, it may be far easier to generate new small groups and new discipleship communities than to get long existing groups to “get more members.” Bless the closed groups that do exist, be grateful for them, honor them for their ministries and start new ones alongside. This is the principle of “Bless and Add.”

 **Make Vision Shift Number 9:** Shift from getting established groups to add new people to adding new groups.

When a Discipleship Community practices the principle of small group-large group balance offering both small groups and gatherings of the whole group then the development of new personal relationships and the overall Christian growth of the people may be significantly enhanced.

Small Groups

Small Groups are groups that number from three to fourteen in number. Jesus said, “For where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them,” (Matthew 18:20). Three people in a small group allows for wonderful in-depth study and mutual encouragement. When a group exceeds fourteen it is by definition no longer “small,” because not everyone will feel free to speak which is the hallmark of small group life.

Small groups have the marvelous capacity to generate deeply loving friends of the road, people you love as you walk life’s road together, and to move some of those friends off of the road and into the heart as life-long friends.


Mainline congregations tend to center their programming on groups larger than fourteen when possible. While such groups are variations on the “Discipleship Community” pole of large group—small group balance, they cannot offer the interpersonal facet of the Christian experience that is so essential to growth in the faith.

The *Acts 16:5 Initiative* Ministry Design Modules 7 and 8 *Small Group Life* and *Multiplying Small Groups* offer extensive treatment of the why, what, and how of the small group pole of large group—small group balance.

Small Group Life: Face to Face Ministry

Lord, you made a small group the very center of your ministry. Those were the people you called friends. Those were the people with whom you shared the Word and prayed. They saw you in your grief over Lazarus and John the Baptist, they saw God's hand with you on the Mount of Transfiguration.

Lord, if you considered a small group essential to your lifestyle, then so must I consider it essential to my lifestyle. I ask you to lead me to the people you want me to share life with in a small group. More than that, I pray that you develop a movement of small group fellowships in my congregation. Amen.

 **Make Vision Shift 8** from primarily audience-oriented programming (e.g. worship services, classes) to a balance of audience-oriented ministry and face-to-face ministry (small groups) - From *Twelve Dynamic Shifts for Transforming Your Church* by E. Stanley Ott.

The Small Group: a Basic Defining Practice

Read: John 18:2 NIV

Now Judas, who betrayed him, knew the place, because Jesus had often met there with his disciples.

Reflect: What does this text suggest about Jesus' gathering pattern with his disciples?

Respond: Does your pattern of life include such a regular gathering with a few other disciples for the purpose of talking about God, about life, and praying for each other?

Small Groups Grow Disciples and Meet Needs

The small group directly addresses the 3-D Defining Vision: “Glorify God, Make Disciples and Meet Human Need.”

Small group life is a *disciple-growing* fellowship. Think of Jesus and his twelve disciple-apostles or of the team of Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy (I Thessalonians 1:1). In the context of the small group, people grow in all three dimensions of the church (3-D).

- They grow in their knowledge of the Lord who loves them.
- They grow in their relationships with each other.
- They grow in their service in the world.

Why and how does this happen? Small group life incorporates all six of the Defining Practices of ministry: Witness, Prayer, Care, Word, With-me, Send.

The participants:

1. Bear **witness** to one another of the reality of God in their own lives. One benefit of this is that they as they learn to speak openly about spiritual matters inside the group they grow in their confidence to bear witness to their Lord outside the group.
2. **Pray** for one another personally.
3. **Care** for one another offering sustained care (whereas as “official care-givers from the congregation may only be able to offer a visit or two).
4. Study and impart the **Word** to one another in their Bible study.
5. Are “**with**” each other in growing friendship.
6. **Send** each other to serve in home, workplace, and community.

The wonderful thing about small group life is these six practices happen even if the participants have never heard of them as long as they practice the basic format of small group life: Word-Share-Prayer (ending with a sending to serve).

As a matter of fact, perhaps the most fruitful way to enable people to grow in these six practices of the Christian faith is the experience of the face-to-face small group.

For Reflection:

🔥 From a congregational standpoint, do you have a team whose only role is getting more small groups going and supporting the ones already meeting?

From a personal standpoint, are you personally in a small group Bible study? If not, it's time to make it happen!

One beauty of the body of Christ is that in its small group life together, people will grow. If you don't feel adequate or prepared to develop another person as a disciple, it's okay! Ask for God's help in starting a small group, and by God's grace you will grow each other!

The small group is the ultimate place of need-responsive ministry in the church. It is intimate enough to share real concerns openly, and the loving base is big enough to for the people to bear one another's burdens (Galatians 6:2).

Small Group Basics

Group Size

For where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them.
- Matthew 18:20

For intensity of growth, in-depth of friendship, and personal discipleship, trios (three people) have proven to work very well. They offer deep encouragement and a warm accountability to study and to grow in faith and service.

For general small group life in congregations, groups of seven to ten people work well – the number who can sit around a table. While it isn't necessary that groups sit around a table, the intensity of good “table talk” is what we see with the smaller group. Such a group is large enough to permit people to be silent if they choose, yet small enough for all to talk (even the “quiet ones”).

A small group can grow as large as fourteen and continue to function as a “small” group. When a group grows larger than fourteen, there is almost always someone, who by reason of personality and temperament, will no longer feel comfortable talking. The feeling of freedom to speak defines a “small group” (though they are never required to speak), so we want to limit its size to fourteen.

Meeting Frequency

The greater the frequency of group meetings, the deeper the relationships that form. Small group life flourishes with weekly meetings.

Every other week works; but if someone misses a meeting, it's a month between group gatherings.

Once a month meetings can sustain a given level of acquaintance-ship or friendship but do little really to develop depth of friendship or of discipleship. Groups with monthly meetings tend to be simply social gatherings.

Two kinds of small groups:

1. **Covenant Groups.** Covenant groups are closed groups. They are open to new people by invitation only and whether they have three or ten people, they tend to remain the same size. This is the most typical kind of small group in the mainline church. They promote relationships and a steady growth in discipleship. They may continue for fixed study series lasting from six weeks to a year or may be ongoing groups in the life of the church.
2. **Cell Groups.** Cell groups are open groups. They feature the concept of the "open chair" in which the participants seek new people to join the group and fill the chair. Cell groups have a formal understanding that when they grow to twelve to fourteen people, the group leader and two or three others will be "sent" to begin a new cell group. The apprentice leader of the original group becomes its new leader.

How to Start One Small Group

Step 1- Gain the support of your pastor or congregation's ruling board if appropriate.

Step 2 - Invite 7 to 10 people, using either the private approach or the public approach. For greater intensity of growth invite two others using the private approach. Begin praying the **Prayer of Selection** (Ministry Design Module 4, page 8): "Lord, who do you want to meet with me/us?"

Using the private approach, you ask people individually to join your group.

Using the public approach, you make a public announcement inviting people to join your group (and you may still invite them privately too) by means of pulpit announcements, the bulletin, and newsletter.

Use the public approach if you want everyone in your church to feel welcome. In some cases, people in smaller and or older congregations may feel excluded if they're not asked.

When you invite someone personally or speak with someone who has responded to a public invitation explain:

- The purpose of the group (Glorify God, grow as disciples and meet human need)
- The meeting schedule (Word—Share—Prayer)
- The expected group commitments

If more than 7-10 people respond, start more than one group!

Step 3 - The first meeting.

Begin to get to know each other...various methods may be used.

Lyman Coleman offers a marvelous method of getting to know one another called the Time Line Drawing.

Give each person a piece of paper. Ask them to draw a line across the paper and space 4 dots on the line across the page.

• _____ • • • •

Explain this line represents their life from birth to present. Ask them to think of four important events in their life and put one by each dot. Ask people to share their sheets with the group.¹

During this first meeting, agree on the group covenantal agreements. Group unity requires that all members submit to agreed upon ground rules or commitments. Discuss group commitments the first or second meeting of your group. Discuss them again at least once every six months thereafter.

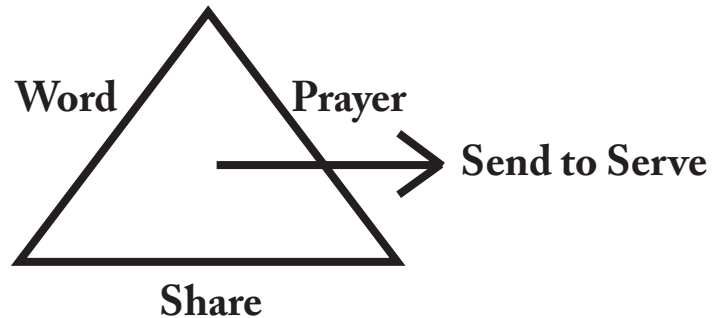
Small Group Commitments [See the inside cover of *Small Group Life* by E. Stanley Ott]

- Priority.** I will make every effort to attend.
- Prayer.** I will pray regularly for the group and for each person in the group by name.
- Confidentiality.** I will not pass along to persons outside the group any personal concerns we share within it, even after the group ends.

¹ Lyman Coleman, *Encyclopedia of Serendipity* (Littleton, CO: Serendipity House, 1980), p. 78.

- d. **Punctuality.** The group meeting begins and ends on time.
- e. **Personal Quiet Time.** I will engage in regular Bible study and prayer between group meetings.
- f. **No advice giving unless counsel is requested.** I will pray for and encourage persons who share needs. I will refrain from giving advice unless counsel is specifically requested.
- g. **No argument.** I agree to disagree agreeably.
- h. **Confess personal needs and not those of others in the group.**
- i. **Affirmation and Vulnerability.** I will seek to provide an atmosphere of affirmation so that persons in the group may be vulnerable in sharing personal thoughts, feelings, and experiences. I understand that a person who shares something personal and is met with laughter, ridicule, or criticism may never share deeply again.

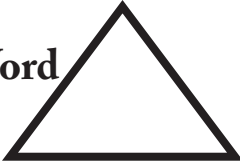
Step 4 - Pattern ongoing meetings with The Discipleship Triangle.



For Reflection:

Do you see all three dimensions of the church in the discipleship triangle?

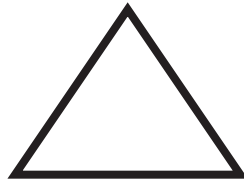
Word



1. Our goal is *relationships*, not only knowledge. Therefore small group life involves a great deal of **discussion**. Even if the leader has intentionally gathered the small group for the purposes of teaching and discipleship requiring some formal teaching time, significant time for discussion is also involved.
2. However, the leader of a small group does not necessarily have to be a teacher or a scholar. During the meeting, the leader is a facilitator of discussion and a people-developer.
3. Allow seven to ten minutes of silence at the beginning of the study during which time everyone personally digs into the biblical passage for the meeting or the study guide being used. High commitment groups may agree to come to the group with a completed chapter of a study guide.
4. Discuss what the Biblical passage *means*, the *implications* of the text and, if appropriate, how to *experience* or *apply it* to daily life.
5. Those with significant biblical knowledge must guard against the temptation to be the “know it all” authority. When such a person is asked a question, it is wise to first respond by asking, “What do you all think?” In this way the “expert” doesn’t short-circuit the group conversation yet may offer input as appropriate.
6. If there are people in the group with significant biblical knowledge who dominate the conversation, then establish the ground rule that only insights gleaned from the passage **in the previous week** may be shared. In that way everyone in the group is in on the same footing, seeking new insight in Scripture.

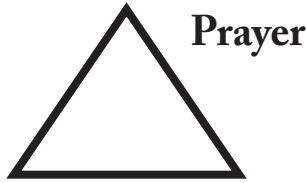
People who have a need to share their in-depth understanding of the Bible may impart that information in a more formal teaching context.

7. For study material you may use the “Read, Reflect, Respond” format of the Word-Share-Prayer sheets. Examples may be found at the end of this module or on the website:
<http://www.vitalchurchesinstitute.com/pages/word-share-prayer>.



Share

1. Continuing with our goal of developing *relationships*, this part of small group life is devoted to sharing our personal lives with one another.
2. The leader must shift the group from “Bible study” to “sharing” or else the study will consume all the meeting time. It is easy for Bible study to become a “head trip” focusing more on ideas than experiencing the Christian faith. Sharing helps us talk about what God is doing in our lives today.
3. Share *blessings* and *needs*.
4. Blessings are where you have seen *God at work* in your own life and in the lives of others or elsewhere in the world during the past week - answered prayer, a joyful event, a person who blesses you, and so forth.
5. Needs are concerns you have in which you *want* to see God at work in your life, in the lives of others, or in the world.
6. *A good question to help people share needs is to ask: “What one thing do you want us to pray for you in the coming week?”*
7. As the group grows in intimacy and trust, you may share areas of needed *accountability* with one another. For example, you may ask your group to help you be consistent with the discipline of Quiet Time, update your will, balance your budget, and so on.
8. Mutual accountability is not to be a heavy-handed thing. The group is not a disciplinarian seeking to enforce its views of the Christian life on a participant. However, when a group member asks his or her group to offer loving encouragement concerning the accomplishment of some specific matter, then the group has permission to check up on the person and ask, “how is it going with that commitment of yours?”



1. We continue to reach our goals of developing our relationship with God as we pray. Further, when we pray conversationally, out loud, we continue to develop our relationships with each other.
2. A marvelous guide to conversational prayer is the “S’s of Prayer.” They are offered by Evelyn Christensen in her book, *What Happens When Women Pray* (Scripture Press, pp. 38-51).

Subject by subject or person by person

Specific

Simple

Short sentences

Silence is OK

A sixth “S” is Speak Up. Don’t drop your voice when you pray aloud - make it possible for others to hear you.

3. Don’t pray around the circle of the group. That puts people on the spot to pray. If you pray around the circle and tell those who do not wish to pray to say “amen” or “pass,” it still puts them on the spot. Allow those who wish to pray aloud to do so, and invite everyone to be in silent prayer when no one is speaking. Sometimes this is known as “popcorn prayer” with people taking turns in no particular order offering brief sentence prayers.

Be sure and pray for *every* person in your group *every* time you meet, whether they are present at that meeting or not.



Send to serve:
ministry and missional endeavor

The effective Christian pattern is always a base and a field. The base -- whether it be in a private house or in a church building -- is the center to which the soldiers of Christ repair, periodically, for new strength. The field is the world, and this is where Christians are supposed to operate... The society of a little group of fellow believers can be so pleasant that the

poverty and the sorrow of the outside world are forgotten, at least for the time of meeting. But the poverty and the sorrow must never be forgotten, not even for a little while. A prayer group which does not make its members more effective apostles in their jobs and homes, and more sensitive participators in the fellowship of those who bear the mark of frustration, is essentially a failure. The test of the vitality of a group does not occur primarily while the group is meeting; it occurs after the meeting is over. - Elton Trueblood²

- **Send** one another to ministry. Do this in your prayers, sending one another to be Christ's person in situations in home, marketplace, and community.
- Consider group service projects to church or community [Habitat for Humanity, house projects for shut-in's, and so on]. Your small group will grow much more deeply in relationships and in your experience of discipleship if you engage in some form of ministry together.
- Other issues:
 - a. Meet every week, every two weeks, minimally.
 - b. Plan *fun* events separate from your regular meeting.
 - c. Involve children when you eat together or participate in a fun event or a work project.

What Every Small Group Member Should Know

What kinds of people should we include?

Small groups work well with all sorts of different mixes of people.

When should we meet?

Ideally, meet every week, every two weeks minimally.

Where should we meet?

Homes can be a warm place to meet although any quiet place in an office, dorm, restaurant, even a city park will do.

How can we build community?

Plan fun events separate from your regular meeting. Involve children, eat together, do a work project, have a family get-together.

² Elton Trueblood, *The Company of the Committed* (New York: Harper & Row Publisher, 1961), pp. 74-75.

What kind of schedule should we keep? Here are some typical small group schedules. Adapt them to fit your situation or create a new one!

An evening small group	An evening small group- after a Bible class or a worship service	A morning small group
7:30 p.m. Word 8:15 p.m. Share 9:10 p.m. Prayer	8:15 p.m. Word 8:45 p.m. Share 9:15 p.m. Prayer	9:30 a.m. Word 10:15 a.m. Share 10:45 a.m. Prayer or 6:00 a.m. Word 6:30 a.m. Share 7:00 a.m. Prayer

What about food? Keep it simple. Popcorn and something to drink is plenty. Avoid desserts if some are dieting. Offer nothing that requires a member of the group to leave the group once it is meeting to prepare the food. The host may want to jump up during the prayer time to prepare food when the prayer time is the food!

What about child care? Many different solutions can work.

- The best for young children during an evening meeting is for a standing arrangement for a sitter to come to the home.
- A sitter may watch kids in a church nursery while a group meets somewhere else in the building (we don't recommend leaving a sitter and kids at the church building alone while the group meets elsewhere).
- Parents in a small group of parents may take turns volunteering to sit all of the children while the rest meet elsewhere or somewhere else in a home.
- Older adults may volunteer to come to a home to babysit as their ministry by allowing the parents to attend a small group.

Small Group Leadership

The Leader

The leader of a small group seeks to encourage each person in the group and the group as a whole. This is the “double focus of ministry” with attention given to each person and on the group.

During the meeting, the leader:

- Keeps the group on schedule.
- Is sensitive to the needs of people.
- Facilitates discussion.
- Speaks no more than twenty percent of the time.

Between meetings, the leader:

- Ensures follow-up occurs, doing it personally, or better yet working through other caring members of the group.
- Phones missing members.
- Encourages members facing difficult situations.
- Meets with members to encourage each other in their walk with Christ (lunch, coffee, etc.).
- Makes prayer covenants.

The leader should establish the discipleship triangle pattern of meeting for a few weeks. Then, the apprentice leader or others in the group may be asked to lead a given meeting using the same threefold pattern of the Discipleship Triangle (Word-Share-Prayer).

Once the Word-Share-Prayer pattern is established, the leadership for any given meeting may rotate among the members of the group. However, the original small group leader retains overall responsibility for the well-being of the group.

The Apprentice Leader

The leader of the group invites another group member to serve alongside as an apprentice leader. The apprentice is one who grows and eventually may be a group leader. You can say that assistant leaders “help out.” Apprentice leaders grow up.

The apprentice will grow in ministry, heart, and skill with the leader, be available to guide the group in the leader’s absence, and ultimately lead the group. This is essential if the group is a cell group in nature which will need a new leader when it gives birth to a new group.

Getting Going in Small Group Life

For Jesus Christ, the small group was not simply an extra activity inserted into life. It was basic to his lifestyle. It was the heart of his people-developing ministry. It was one of his main sources of personal support.

No matter what life demands of you, make every effort to begin or get into a small group. You will develop them. They will develop you. We must “focus on a few - no matter how many our ‘many’ may be.”

There are two related issues here:

Priority - what will you accomplish in ministry no matter what else happens?

Time - what weekly schedule will set your ministry priorities in place?

The typical pastor and typical church member today is over-busy - with lives full of good things crowding each other out.

Determine to be in a small group.

You must model what you want others to do - a basic principle of ministry.

For those who are pastors, one of the most fruitful ways to grow disciples and personal friends in a congregation is to be a part of one or more small groups made up of participants in the life of the congregation.

A detailed guide for leaders and members of small groups may be found in: *Small Group Life* by E. Stanley Ott,
Vital Faith Resources, P.O. Box 18378 Pittsburgh, PA 15236.

***Determine to
be in a
small group!***

Word-Share-Prayer

Bible Study Sheets for Devotional and Small Group Use

To Write Your Own:

1. Choose a text for the “Read” section.
2. Ask one to three questions in the “Reflect” section to help people think about the implications of the text.

or

simply ask them to “jot down one or two key insights from the passage.”

3. In the “Respond” section, ask them to apply the text to their own life.
4. In the “Request” section, ask them to jot down any prayer requests.

Word-Share-Prayer

For personal and small group study

READ: II Timothy 1:7-10 NIV

Enjoy the following passage, underlining key ideas you see and making notes in the margins.

For God did not give us a spirit of timidity, but a spirit of power, of love and of self-discipline. 8] So do not be ashamed to testify about our Lord, or ashamed of me his prisoner. But join with me in suffering for the gospel, by the power of God. 9] who has saved us and called us to a holy life -- not because of anything we have done but because of his own purpose and grace. This grace was given us in Christ Jesus before the beginning of time, 10] but it has now been revealed through the appearing of our Savior, Christ Jesus, who has destroyed death and has brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.

REFLECT: Focus on one great truth you learn from this passage and record it.

Why is it significant to you?

RESPOND: In what way can you apply the great truth you have focused on to your own life?

REQUEST: (Your greatest need for this day.)

Word-Share-Prayer

For personal and small group study

Proverbs is a collection of God given and highly practical instructions for daily living and growth in Godliness. Allow these truths to mold your thinking and your lifestyle.

READ: Proverbs 14:2-9 NIV

- 2] The wise woman builds her house, but with her own hands the foolish one tears hers down.
- 3] A fool's talk brings a rod to his back, but the lips of the wise protect them.
- 4] Where there are no oxen, the manger is empty, but from the strength of an ox comes an abundant harvest.
- 5] A truthful witness does not deceive, but a false witness pours out lies.
- 6] The mocker seeks wisdom and finds none, but knowledge comes easily to the discerning.
- 7] Stay away from a foolish man, for you will not find knowledge on his lips.
- 8] The wisdom of the prudent is to give thought to their ways, but the folly of fools is deception.
- 9] Fools mock at making amends for sin, but goodwill is found among the upright.

Choose one verse and copy it below:

REFLECT: What is the Proverb telling you to do?

RESPOND: How can this Proverb impact your spiritual, family, or work life?

Suggestion: Before bed each night, read the chapter of Proverbs that coincides with the date. (Example-on June 18, read Proverbs 18).

REQUEST: (My greatest need for the day.)

Word-Share-Prayer

For personal and small group study

READ: Psalm 34:1-7 NIV

I will extol the Lord at all times; his praise will always be on my lips. 2] My soul will boast in the Lord; let the afflicted hear and rejoice. 3] Glorify the Lord with me; let us exalt his name together. 4] I sought the Lord, and he answered me; he delivered me from all my fears. 5] Those who look to him are radiant; their faces are never covered with shame. 6] This poor man called, and the Lord heard him; he saved him out of all his troubles. 7] The angel of the Lord encamps around those who fear him, and he delivers them.

REFLECT: What is one key insight you draw from this passage?

RESPOND: How can you apply that insight to your life today? You may have to struggle with this. Try to write one specific act you intend to take, an attitude to change, a person to see, or a prayer to pray.

REQUEST: (My greatest need for the day.)

Word-Share-Prayer

For personal and small group study

READ: Psalm 146:1-2 NIV

Praise the Lord. Praise the Lord, O my soul 2] I will praise the Lord all my life; I will sing praise to my God as long as I live. Psalm 147:1 NIV

Praise the Lord! How good it is to sing praises to our God, how pleasant and fitting to praise him?

REFLECT:

1. If you were Webster's Dictionary, how would you define praise?
2. What does it mean to praise God?
3. Why should we praise God?

RESPOND: Begin to think about building the praise of God into your daily life. For the next week sing the Doxology in your car on the way to and from work.

REQUEST: (My greatest need for this day.)

Multiplying Small Groups

Word-Share-Prayer

For personal and small group study

READ: John 1:40-51 NIV

Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, was one of the two who heard what John had said and who had followed Jesus. 41] The first thing Andrew did was to find his brother Simon and tell him, "We have found the Messiah" (that is, the Christ). 42] And he brought him to Jesus. Jesus looked at him and said, "You are Simon son of John. You will be called Cephas" (which, when translated, is Peter). 43] The next day Jesus decided to leave for Galilee. Finding Philip, he said to him, "Follow me." 44] Philip, like Andrew and Peter, was from the town of Bethsaida. 45] Philip found Nathanael and told him, "We have found the one Moses wrote about in the Law, and about whom the prophets also wrote -- Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph." 46] "Nazareth! Can anything good come from there?" Nathanael asked. "Come and see," said Philip. 47] When Jesus saw Nathanael approaching, he said of him, "Here is a true Israelite, in whom there is nothing false." 48] "How do you know me?" Nathanael asked. Jesus answered, "I saw you while you were still under the fig tree before Philip called you." 49] Then Nathanael declared, "Rabbi, you are the Son of God; you are the King of Israel." 50] Jesus said, "You believe because I told you I saw you under the fig tree. You shall see greater things than that." 51] He then added, "I tell you the truth, you shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man."

**Small groups
are essential
to a
transformational
church.**

REFLECT:

- How does Andrew build Peter and Philip build Nathanael?
- What is required of us if we want to build people in the way Andrew and Philip did?
- Name three people to whom you could say "come and see" regarding church, this group, or some other Christian fellowship.

RESPOND: How can you apply that insight to your life today? Try to write one specific act you intend to take, an attitude to change, a person to see, or a prayer to pray.

REQUEST: (My greatest need for the day.)

The Small Group Movement: Organizing a Multiplication of Small Groups

One small group can enable three to fourteen people to grow in Christ. A growing number of small groups in a church or fellowship means a growing number of people are being significantly challenged to grow in Christ. Furthermore, a growing number of groups facilitates overall church growth, because people like to join newer forming groups.

In a small group movement there is an intentional and consistent means of multiplying the number of small groups.

No matter what approach or approaches you use to start a small group movement, to sustaining that movement takes tremendous push and constant leadership. Small group movements are very hard work. People don't sit around their homes thinking, "Oh, if there was only a small group at church I could join!" Their lives are furiously busy and to win them into a small group means we will have to compete with the other demands on their time. The resulting discipleship and caring in the lives of the participants makes it fully worth it.

Convincing busy people to give up time for a small group, helping groups to send out people to start new groups, training leaders and involving them in ongoing leadership meetings, and generating a growing number of people in groups will require a significant investment of time and leadership energy.

Small groups are so effective in growing disciples, because they automatically incorporate the six Defining Practices of growing disciples: witness, prayer, care, Word, with-me and send. They witness to each other of the reality of God in their own lives, they offer prayer for one another, they care for one another, they impart the Word to each other, they spend time "with" each other and they send each other to serve.

Small groups are so effective in caring for people because they are the ultimate need-responsive fellowship -- where people will share genuine and deep need openly and where there is a caring group to offer true help. Furthermore, it is in the small group alone that most adults find the freedom to talk openly about Scripture and spirituality and so begin to actively explore their own growth in discipleship.

Small groups are essential to a transformational church. The effort is worth it. The decision to make small groups a major emphasis of your ministry (forever) will require a deliberate ordering of your ministry priorities.

Many new books and materials are being written for small groups on various topics: becoming an expert on small groups, how to multiply them, how to win people into them.

Two facets of multiplying the number of small groups in your congregation include:

- Leadership - The Small Groups Ministry Team
- Birthing Strategies for New Small Groups

Leadership - The Small Groups Ministry Team

The Small Groups Ministry Team Vision: To pursue the Defining Vision of the congregation and to develop the congregation into a “small groups church.” This includes:

- Giving people a vision for small group fellowship
- Connecting people to groups and groups to people
- Developing small group leaders and coaches

Vision Team Organization

- Team member qualifications:
 1. People who seek a growing relationship with God and who enjoy the small group experience
 2. True leaders who have the people skills and “oomph” to get people into groups and groups to take in people
- A Small Groups Ministry Team Leader - leads and is liaison to elders
- Coaches – five to seven small groups per coach
- Assembly & Referrals Coordinator - gathers and receives names of new members, visitors, and others interested in small groups
- Training and Logistics Coordinator – researches books, materials, and training

Vision Team Responsibilities

- Lead small group leaders to recruit an apprentice
- Lead the groups to agree on their “ultimate” size (up to 14)
- Lead the groups to fill the empty chair until that size is reached for covenant groups or on an ongoing basis for cell groups
- Lead the groups to lend or send a member to lead a new group
- Lead the development of new groups through topics, events, and series
- Lead small group leader training

How do you get people into small groups????

Invite, Cajole, Encourage, & Lead Them!

Vision Team Intensity

Meet every other week minimally and preferably three times a month. Once a month is not sufficient to process all of the issues involved in launching and sustaining a small group movement.

Birthing Strategies for New Small Groups

What do you have to do to Get Fifty Percent of Your People into Small Group Life?

First, you have to compete!

A major challenge to any serious endeavor to connect people with small group life is the crazy busyness of their lives in general. Rare is the person who happens to be at home on a weeknight and sighs deeply while muttering, “If *only* there was a small group meeting at church that I could attend!”

Add to that the tendency of many people to offer “maybe commitments” meaning “I will be there unless something better arises.”

So what are we to do if we want to introduce people to the deeply satisfying and enriching experience of small group life? Compete! Get in there and show a little grit. Invite people, cajole people, encourage, and above all lead them. They have many choices with their time and your persuasion will be key. Thinking that a bulletin announcement or an article in a newsletter will get people is 1950’s thinking. You have to get inside their lives and win them.

Second, you may offer options to people that are tailored to their level of availability and spiritual interest.

For those who are very busy and just cannot see surrendering themselves to a weekly or twice-a-month meeting for a full school year you can offer six to thirteen week (plus or minus) lower commitment groups. Long enough for people to bond and for life-change to begin to happen but short enough that people would be willing to give it a try. An excellent ten-week study designed for small group life is *One Another-ing, Vol 1: Building Blocks for Small Groups* by Richard C. Meyer.

For those who are hungry to grow deeply in their relationship with God, their study of Scripture, and what it means to grow and serve in the Chris-

tian life, you may offer higher commitment group studies that are meatier and require more of the participants.

A good illustration of this is *Discipleship Essentials* by Greg Ogden. It is a nine-month, workbook guided study through the disciplines of the Christian life. Designed for small group trios, it also works well in groups of around seven to ten participants.

Launch a 90-Day Adventure in Prayer to give the whole congregation a brief but wonderful taste of the small group experience without using the words “small groups.”

Sometimes people shy away from the words “small groups,” because they have some image or previous experience that does not draw them to give small groups a try today. The following is an approach that gives people the experience of Word-Share-Prayer in trios. They can experience face-to-face small group life without any baggage they may attach to the words “small group.”

A 90-day congregational experience centered on small group life is known as *Pray Daily: Igniting Our Passion for God*. This gets lots of people involved, creates new friendships across the congregation, gives people a short-term (ninety days) small group experience, and develops their daily devotional life of Bible reading and prayer.

This 90-day adventure launches in *three simple steps* whether your aim is to involve 10 or 100 or 1000!

Step One: Invite everyone to gather for a one-hour “Affirmation of Prayer” on a Sunday evening.

Step Two: During the “Affirmation of Prayer” give every participant a “Pray Daily” guide to 90 days of prayer which is based on the Lord’s Prayer.

- Invite participants to form trios with others in the room they don’t know well.
- Ask them to exchange prayer requests and pray for each other on the spot.
- Finally, ask them to agree to meet weekly for one hour in person preferably (or by phone or online) to discuss the passages read in the previous week and share and pray for one another (Word-Share-Prayer format).

Step Three: After the ninety days, host a “Celebration of Prayer” during which people may speak of what our Lord accomplished among



them.

For more information go to:

<http://vitalchurchesinstitute.com/pages/pray-daily>.

Additional Birthing Strategies for New Small Groups

Birthing a New Group Using the “Six Weeks a Semester” Format

Developed at the Trinity Presbyterian Church of Anchorage, this is a variation of the 5+2 Format that follows. The pastor working with other leaders and the Small Groups Ministry Team selects a book for the fall and another book for the winter. The six weeks preaching series is based on Scripture and explores concepts from the book.

Every existing small group is asked to set aside their own material and to study this book during the six weeks. Everyone in the congregation who is not a part of a small group is encouraged to join a six-week long small group to study the book.

At the four week mark (4+2), the group leader uses the final two weeks to seek the commitment of the group members to keep on meeting. Anyone who wishes to stop after the six weeks is blessed to do so with warmth and love as that was the original commitment. At the same time, when group life has gelled and people have begun to form bonds, they will often continue to meet. This adds new ongoing groups to the life of the congregation.

Birthing new groups using the 5+2 Format

A useful protocol with which to birth new covenant groups is by means of the 5+2 Format. The initial participants agree to a seven week series (5+2), although obviously you can expand and contract this into an 8-week series (6+2) or a 5- week series (3+2) and so on – as fits the situation.

The group may be initially organized in a number of ways:

1. A coach pulls a number of interested participants together.
2. The participants may sign up for a study group or course or sermon series study group.
3. The participants may sign up during a growth weekend, retreat, or seminar.

The coach asks one person to be the start-up leader. Perhaps this person

will come from an existing group “lending” one of its members to lead the new group.

The new group meets using the Word-Share-Prayer format.

During the first five weeks, the coach and the start-up leader work to discern who the ongoing leader will be. It could be the start-up leader himself or herself (although clearly if a coach is the start-up leader, he or she can only be the on-going leader for a group or two. The pressure is on to raise up new leaders and not to do it yourself).

The start-up leader and the ongoing leader contact the members of the group at the fifth week – after the group has had enough time to “gel” and love one another. “Are you enjoying the group? We are inviting the group to continue for another series and pray that you will join us?”

At the end of the seven weeks (5+2), those who will not be continuing with the group are loved and blessed. They fulfilled what they originally signed up for. The ongoing group determines to resume meeting and sets the date... the very next week if possible.

During the second series, the coach works with the ongoing leader to encourage the group to continue meeting when the current series is over so that instead of the group being organized by a 7-week series, the group is organized around its own loving life and when a series ends, the group continues.

The work of the coach changes over the 2 weeks or so of the group’s launching period... from identifying the initial participants and the start-up leader to transitioning the group to the ongoing leader with ongoing participants and finally shepherding them into a permanent covenant group.

This means the coach is constantly pulling together participants for a new group while simultaneously leading groups already underway – according to their level of development. Some form of charting/tracking system will be necessary to keep track of the launch status of each group as well as an ongoing list of people who are potential start-up and ongoing leaders.

Once the participants of a small group have had the opportunity to grow to love one another, the group has a life of its own. The coach’s primary role is to keep it together until that moment arrives. Once a covenant group is successfully meeting, it may be overseen by a coach who simply touches base every six months (unlike cell group coaches who must offer a much higher level of ongoing leadership to every cell group).

Birthing new groups by “Lending”: The Covenant Group Birthing Method

Since the tendency of a small group experience is for the members to fall in love with one another, it is easy for a group to hesitate to send its members to begin new groups. Every parent feels this when a child is finally sent to college or to begin a career. Maturity requires us to do what we do not feel like doing. When a small group hesitates to send its leader and a few others to start a new group or when it is unwilling to invite new people into the group, it automatically becomes a covenant group.

Nevertheless, a covenant group can give birth to new groups. The group lends one of its members for a “contract period” of seven weeks to offer leadership to a new group.

During that period, the loaned leader may continue to participate in his or her original small group if time permits. The leader uses the seven weeks to get the group going with the Word-Share-Prayer pattern and determines who will be the ongoing leader and apprentice leader. After the start-up period, the borrowed leader returns to his or her home group and the new group continues with its own leader.

Birthing a New Group Around a Leader

An experienced small group leader or participant can begin a new group. Such a new group can come from people who have registered an interest in the small group experience (event, new member class, etc) or from people the new leader has the initiative to recruit (perhaps with the help of a coach).

The coach may identify new leaders to come from existing covenant groups that “lend” a person or two to lead a new group and once it is up and running, return to their home group (or perhaps do both groups at once). Such a format would usually follow a 5+2 = 7 format. The new group meets for five weeks at which point the leader works to encourage those who are willing to meet beyond the original seven weeks and the leader then identifies who will be the ongoing leader when he/she returns to the lending group after the seven weeks are up. (People who signed up for the new group for seven weeks and do not wish to continue must not be pressured to do so, their original commitment honored with joy).

The coach may identify new leaders who will come from existing groups that “send” two to four of their members to begin a new group. Such a

sending group is large enough that people left remain a viable and open group.

The coach may also identify prospective leaders for new small groups right out of the general congregation - finding them among former small group participants, new members and visitors with small group experience, and others who obviously could lead a small group. Note, when looking for leadership out of the church, be careful not to take small group leaders being groomed for leadership in another ministry.

Coaches may occasionally visit their small groups as a way of identifying prospective leaders and seeking other strengths and concerns of the groups and to encourage their leaders.

Birthing a New Group Around a Topic or a Curriculum

Like the new group built around a leader, the group built around a topic still needs a leader to show initiative to gather prospective members and get things moving. In the case of a group built around a topic, there may also be advertising - "a new group is forming to study the fruits of the Spirit," "a new group is forming to study parenting teenagers," "a new small group is forming to study active listening skills." Ideally, the coach would work with the new group leader (recruited from one of the three sources above) to both advertise the group and to personally recruit members into the group.

Birthing a New Group Around an Event

Many events lend themselves to spawning small groups with a little bit of organizational effort. For example, early in a men's or women's retreat on some subject, say "Boundaries that Shape Our Lives," an announcement would be made that at the end of the retreat those interested in continuing to talk about the subject material of the retreat and how to do it will meet in discussion groups for seven weeks. The coach assigned to the event (or who volunteered for it) will have prepared potential leaders so that the signees can get into groups that launch the very next week after the retreat or event.

A new group can also be birthed around a special series - New Members Class, ALPHA, Renovare, The Great Banquet, Lent. An assigned coach works with prospective leaders to get ready to lead the small groups meeting during the 4 to 10 weeks of the series. At the end of the series, the leader, who has the trust by now of his or her group, invites the members of the group to keep on meeting after the series ends, perhaps for another seven weeks. At week five ($5+2=7$) establish who will keep meeting and who the ongoing leader will be if different from the series group leader.

Birth of a New Group by “Sending”: The Cell Multiplication Method

The cell model of small group multiplication features certain key elements which keep a loving pressure on a small group to maintain an “empty chair” and as it grows to send a few to start a new group with the assistant leader. Those key elements are:

- The vision – To send a few people to birth a new group when the group grows to around twelve to fourteen people. This has to be instilled from the beginning or the group members out of love will refuse to send a few to begin a new group. If that happens the original group can become a discipleship community that continues to grow by meeting as large group for singing and Bible study and finishing in groups of four for sharing and prayer.
- The empty chair - New people welcomed and invited.
- The apprentice leader - Prepares to lead the group when the leader is sent with a few others to begin a new group.
- The coach (oversees five small groups)³

When the group reaches 12 to 14 people in number, 2 to 4 are sent from the group to start a new group (working with the small group coordinator for training and help in getting more people for the group).

Use the language of sending and not the language of division. Cell multiplication is not dividing or splitting a group. That feels like the death of the group and since the group members love one another, they will not allow this to happen. When a cell group grows to 12 to 14 members, it sends 2 to 4 members to begin a group. That is enough to birth a viable new group without creating the feeling of splitting the old group.

When people are sent to begin a new group, send them during the sharing of a common meal. Read Acts 13:1-4. Ask those being sent to sit with the rest of the group around them. Lay hands on their heads and shoulders and pray for them.

Key to the success of the cell multiplication method is leadership development. Leaders and apprentice leaders meet regularly for training and support. Coaches (one for every five small groups) visit their groups to offer encouragement and help them through the rough edges of cell multiplication when a few leave to start a new group.

³ Carl George, *Prepare Your Church For The Future* (Revell, 1991).

Birthing a New Group Around a Model Cell Group

This is a variation of the sending means of birthing groups.

A model cell is comprised of 4 or 5 leader-caliber couples or singles (from same three sources of leaders). The model cell meets for ten weeks in order to 1) model Word-Share-Prayer, 2) teach the theory of cell group ministry, and 3) recruit the members for the coming small groups to be led by the members of the model cell group. After the ten weeks, the model cell group sends its members in groups of two (two couples, a couple and a single, two singles) to lead new cell groups with one of the two designated “leader” and the other “apprentice leader.”

The model cell group may be led by the coach him or herself or by a highly capable small group leader committed to the dynamics of cell group life.

Birthing a New Group Around a “Growth Weekend”

An effective way to launch several new groups is after a congregational “Christian Growth Weekend.” Friday evening and Saturday morning (or Sunday morning through Monday night), the congregation is invited to a seminar on some aspect of the Christian life (prayer, Bible study, parenting, etc.) taught by the pastor or a visiting speaker.

Throughout the seminar, small groups are offered as a way to continue to study the topic. The people are given the opportunity to sign up for a small group to meet weekly for the seven weeks following the seminar.

Before the Growth Weekend, small group leaders for the new groups are recruited and trained so they may begin meeting the very first week after the Growth Weekend.

During the fifth meeting, invite the whole group to consider going on another seven weeks -- permit anyone who wants to stop to do so with full blessing since that was the initial agreement. Talk to group members individually about continuing. Typically, a high percentage of the group will indeed want to keep meeting.

Leaders from contract groups may be “borrowed” from other ongoing groups. When the new group moves into the second series, the original leader returns to his or her home group.

However, when a discipleship community practices the principle of small group-large group balance by offering both small groups and gatherings of the whole group then the development of new personal relationships and the overall Christian growth of the people may be significantly enhanced.

For a discipleship community such as a women's ministry or an evening fellowship group to become a generating center of small groups, it will need its own internal Small Group Ministry Team.

Small group resources

A tremendous amount of resource material is available today.

- Do an internet search on “small groups” (Yahoo, Google).
- Check out www.smallgroups.com.
- “Disciple” is a program available through Cokesbury that is an excellent small group-based discipleship ministry: <http://cokesburychurch.org/Connecting/BibleStudies.cfm>.
- ALPHA has a well-conceived small groups component: www.alphana.org.
- Serendipity Publishers: www.serendipityhouse.com.
- Vital Churches Institute: www.vitalchurchesinstitute.com.
- Zondervan's ChurchSource excels in small group materials: www.ZondervanChurchSource.com.
- The Stephen Ministry organization offers ChristCare, a small groups caring system: www.christcare.com.
- An excellent workbook/study guide for small groups focusing on discipleship is *Discipleship Essentials* by Greg Ogden: www.ivpress.com.
- In *The Church and the Crisis of Community* Theresa Latini lays out both a theoretical foundation and a practical guideline for successful small group ministry. Eerdmans 2011.
- *Sticky Church (Leadership Network Innovation Series)* by Larry Osborne, Zondervan Publishing, 2008.

Next Steps:

The Adventure of the Acts 16:5 Initiative

The seventh vital sign of the foundation for transformational ministry discussed in Module 3 is “Reflectively-Practiced.” Ministry is very much the “doing” of the concepts we have been learning in utter dependence upon the Holy Spirit.



The Foundation of a Vision for Ministry

The role of the Pastor, Session, Vision Team, and others is leading the application of transformational concepts in the life of your congregation – to the extent and at the pace that best fits your particular congregation. It is easy for leadership groups to get into a purely discussion mode wherein there are lots of meetings and talking and little is actually done.

It's as if we take the ready-aim-fire paradigm and get stuck in ready-aim-ready-aim and never get around to “fire” and getting going. In our day ready-FIRE-aim makes a lot more sense. Consider the concepts, figure out some “next steps,” and get going – assuming that you will “aim” and improve what you are doing as you move along and learn from the experience of doing.

Now in the science of training, equipping, and teaching, the word “transfer” is a technical word that has to do with the “transfer” of what is learned in the seminar-teaching setting into actual life. Transfer is the application of what we learn to how we live.

If you only attend an *Acts 16:5 Initiative* seminar and talk about it, or read these modules and reflect upon them, but don't DO anything; then “transfer” has not happened!

In this module, we consider the potential “next steps” from the material we have covered – next steps for you personally and for your leadership. Begin to make the vision shifts from traditional to transformational ministry.

MAKE VISION SHIFT 5:

Shift from assuming discipleship to developing discipleship.

MAKE VISION SHIFT 8:

Shift from primarily audience-oriented programming (such as worship services, classes) to a balance of audience-oriented ministry and face-to-face ministry (such as small groups and one-on-one spiritual direction).

Next Steps in the Adventure

In the notebook you received for the Launch Seminar of the *Acts 16:5 Initiative* there were a number of possible next steps for you take as you applied the seminar to your lives and your congregation. In Application Module 1 - *Application: applying what you already know, have learned, will learn* explains next steps for every participant, for the pastor, for the Session, and for the Vision Team.

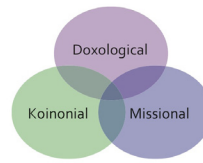
We know every congregation faces its own unique challenges and has its particular leaders, people, and resources with which to work. This means that you are encouraged to apply what fits you – without concern about what other congregations are doing.

As we move through three years of seminars, each will add new possible action steps for you to take. So a major part of this process is staying on top of the total of the potential next steps for you – and doing what your passion, time, energy, and resources will sustain.

This is a nice way of saying you can’t “get behind” in the *Acts 16:5 Initiative*. It means that as your Vision Team meets with the pastor and with the Session it is constantly considering “Where are we as a congregation?” and “Which of these *Acts 16:5 Initiative* next steps is the next step for us?” – and then doing it!

Grow in the Three Dimensional Lifestyle

The Christian faith is first of all a lifestyle to be lived. A life of faith, hope, and love. A 3-D lifestyle that knows and experiences the Lord who loves us, cares for the people God gives us, and serves the world to which God sends us.



This has personal and programmatic implications for you and your congregation. For you, personally, and those leading with you, it means making a conscious commitment to grow in your practice of Christian lifestyle. It means shaping church programs to equip and encourage people to grow in their practices of that lifestyle.

Study the six defining practices in Ministry Design Module 4: witness, prayer, care, Word, with-me, and send. They are basic spiritual disciplines of the Christian faith whose focus is on you and those you focus on.

You bear **witness** to yourself of the reality of God. You bear **witness** to others of the reality of God.

You **pray** for yourself. You **pray** for others.

You **care** for yourself. You **care** for others and so on.

And so on.

In your own life, in which of the six practices will you specifically work to develop in your own life in the next six months? Ministry Design Module 5: *Growing in the 3-D Lifestyle* offers a number of study options for each of the six practices.

If your Vision Team agreed to one of the study options for one of the six practices, you could reinforce each other in growing in the Christian lifestyle. In such a case, you would devote the “Word” portion of your Word-Share-Prayer time to the study material.

Witness
Prayer
Care
Word
With-me
Send

Next Step:

Which of the six
Defining Practices
will you develop in
your own life?

Next Step:

Use Word-Share-Prayer before team and committee meetings.

Help Existing Groups Grow as the People of God with Word-Share-Prayer

Many of the groups and committees in your church (Session, Deacons, Nominating Committee, Presbyterian Women's Board, Mission Committee, and so on) meet to accomplish some common task or responsibility. This is the work of the people of God.

Transformation in a congregation begins as God's people connect with their Lord and with one another as well as when they pursue the work they are called to accomplish. The Word-Share-Prayer process is a good way to help your people "Be the People of God before doing the Work of the People of God."

Remember, while the Word-Share-Prayer process may be captured on a sheet of paper (<http://www.vitalchurchesinstitute.com/pages/word-share-prayer>), it is the **process** of time in Scripture, time sharing blessings and concerns of daily life, and time in prayer for one another that is significant. For the "Word" portion of the process, you may use the Word-Share-Prayer sheet, published Bible studies, or special approaches to Bible study such as *lectio divina*, the slow reflective, prayerful reading of Scripture. Then you would move to sharing and praying for one another.

Consider which of the leaders of your church groups, committees, and boards who would be most open to Word-Share-Prayer and invite them to experience the process with you. Ask them to begin their meetings with 21 minutes of Word-Share-Prayer using the 7-7-7 formula: 7 minutes for individual Bible Study, 7 minutes to share one insight per person and 7 minutes to pray for one another.

If the group is larger than 12 to 14, you may find it easier to break into groups of three, at least for the sharing of prayer requests and praying for one another.

1. Give every person 5-7 minutes to work on the Word-Share-Prayer sheet or other study material or a passage from the Bible in silence.
2. Spend another 7 minutes or so asking people to briefly share one insight. If the group is larger than 14, break into groups of 4 to save time.
3. For the final 7 minutes, in each group of 4, ask for one or two prayer requests. While people may ask for prayer for people suffering from some natural disaster around the world, ask what you

may pray for them, personally. Spend more time on this if someone in the group is in real distress about something. Take turns praying for each other out loud by name, giving everyone the complete freedom to pray in silence if they prefer.

Work to make the practices of Word-Share-Prayer a widespread understanding that this is “what we do in the life of as many groups as possible in our congregation.”

Become a Church of Small Groups

What is the difference between a “church *with* small groups” and a “church *of* small groups?”

A church *with* small groups views small groups as “just one of the many things we do” with the companion thought that “some of us ‘do’ small groups and a lot of us do other things.” A church *of* small groups is a congregation that makes participation in small groups part of the core DNA of life in the congregation. “It’s what we do.”

While mainline congregations have some small groups in the form of circles for women, committees, and various work groups, the majority does not have a large percentage of their membership in face-to-face Bible studies. The small group Bible study that practices the Word-Share-Prayer format for an hour or more once a week automatically incorporates the six defining practices of witness, prayer, care, Word, with-me, and send. It means the small group is extremely fruitful in growing disciples of its participants and giving them the confidence and the competence to practice witness, prayer, care, Word, with-me, and send in their private lives.

So, set a goal such as, “Fifty percent of our active membership will be in small groups in three years,” and organize it to make it happen.

Ideally a team will lead this aspect of your congregation’s life. It just takes two to make a team. Who among you would have the heart for this? Who would have the organizational gifts and good “people sense” to work with people according to their very diverse needs?

Consider beginning two types of small groups: lower and higher commitment groups.

A lower commitment group may meet for a limited number of time, typically between six and thirteen weeks. A higher commitment group is

Next Step:

Become a church of small groups.

designed for those who want to grow deeply in their faith and who will meet weekly for full school year.

Lower commitment groups offer a way for people who are new or uncertain about the small group concept or who are extremely busy to participate without the anxiety that this will be “too much for me.”

Three tools to launch lower commitment groups:

- The use of Richard Meyer’s book *One Anothering* (Vol. 1: Biblical Building Blocks for Small Groups) for an eleven week study for small groups of about seven to ten members.
- The use of *Pray Daily: A 90-Day Adventure in Prayer* for a thirteen week experience of small group life in groups of three.
- The use of a six week series twice-a-year in which the congregation is asked to read a book (chosen by the pastor in consultation with others), hear sermons on the topics in the book, and get into small groups for the six weeks to discuss the book in the Word (book) – Share – Prayer format.

Higher commitment groups offer those who want to really dig into Scripture and grow in their faith to do so.

An excellent resource for this is Greg Ogden’s *Discipleship Essentials: A Guide to Building Your Life in Christ*. This is an intensive (homework) twenty-five week study designed for groups as small as three people.

For small groups to take root in your congregation and for you to move from a church *with* small groups to a church *of* small groups means you will have to compete with all of the other activities in the lives of your often very busy people. Yet, small groups are such a marvelous way to inspire growth in faith and to build new friendships, they are very much worth the effort.

Cultivate the Esprit de Corps of Your Congregation

A major facet of a healthy congregation is its “esprit de corps” which from the French language means literally “the spirit of the body.” In the case of Christian fellowship we seek to grow the spirit of the Body of Christ, the morale, the esteem of the people who appreciate the richness and good spirit of their fellowship. Three of the most significant paths to a positive esprit de corps:

- Growing love, dignity and respect using the Four S’s.
- Resolving conflict.
- Creating pizzazz and commitment.

Grow Love, Dignity and Respect using “The Four S’s:”

(No) Secrets
 (No) Surprises
 (No) Subversion
 (Lots of) Support

- Preach a sermon speaking of the Four S’s annually.
- Teach the Four S’s to every new member class.
- Review the Four S’s with the Session, Deacons, and all committees in January.
- Model the Four S’s as a pastor and Vision Team to the congregation.

Conflict Resolution

Ask yourselves what conflict, if any, is present in the life of your congregation and if it is distracting to the esprit de corps of the congregation. If it is, then who and by what means might it be addressed in a redemptive and healing way from simple conversation to the intervention of an outside consultant.

A very helpful resource for congregational health may be found at <http://healthycongregations.com>. The Vital Churches Institute also has consultants who can address a variety of congregational needs <http://vitalchurchesinstitute.com>.

There are many fine books addressing issues of conflict resolution in congregations. A good one for leaders is Peter L. Steinke’s *Congregational Leadership in Anxious Times: Being Calm and Courageous No Matter What*.

Next Step:

Grow a positive spirit of the body in your congregation.

Next Step:

Plan yearly Pizzazz Grow and Pizzazz Reach Events

Pizzazz and Commitment

If small groups lend themselves to developing commitment, large group pizzazz events can nurture the spirit of each person and enhance the esprit de corps of the congregation. This fosters the power of “large group-small group balance” to transform the congregation.

We suggest two kinds of “pizzazz” experiences for your whole congregation: Reach Events and Grow Events. They can be employed by sub-groups within the congregation as well by the ministries to women, men and youth.

Set an initial goal of one yearly Pizzazz Grow Event (perhaps in the spring related to Lent) and one yearly Pizzazz Reach Event (perhaps in the fall to generate fresh momentum). See Ministry Design Module 6: *The Ministry of Transformational Fellowship* for ideas. As you get this concept going you could add to the number of these yearly events for the whole congregation or for some of its sub-groups such as the PW or the youth group.

Begin by asking yourselves, “Given our leaders and resources, what kind of Reach and Grow pizzazz event can we do?” It is remarkable how much can be done that is inspirational and uplifting with a minimum of resources and just a little imagination and the will to work.

As you plan, consider the matter of “Bridging.” Bridging is what you do to create a bridge from a one-time event into an ongoing group. For a Grow Event you would want bridges for people to move into ongoing small groups in the life of the church. For a Reach Event you would want to offer bridges to upcoming groups or events in the life of the church to which newcomers would be genuinely made to feel welcome.

In Summary: Move Forward with Transformational Fellowship

- Developing a strong fellowship life is essential to the life of a transformational congregation.
- Join or begin a small group yourself. In our busy lives much crowds out the means of spiritual growth. The small group was not an option for Jesus. How about you?
- Introduce small group life to your on-going committees and boards by using the Word-Share-Prayer method at the beginning of every meeting.
- Become a church of small groups by developing a small group movement in your congregation working to get as many people as possible in face-to-face small groups – using one of the “birthing strategies” for small groups described in Ministry Design Module 8 - *Multiplying Small Groups*.

Congregations of all sizes may bless the fellowship groups that it presently has while setting the goal of beginning a minimum of one new group a year. Mid-size and larger congregations may have much larger goals.

At the opposite end from small groups is the spirit of fellowship of the whole congregation – growth of the “esprit de corps” – the spirit of the body. Use the 4 S’s to enhance love, dignity and respect among your people. Attend to matters of conflict resolution as appropriate. Create a twice annually (or more frequently) major congregational “pizzazz” celebration (a “Grow” and a “Reach” event) that captures the imagination, lifts the spirit, and draws a great many people together.

Word-Share-Prayer

For personal and small group study

READ: John 1:40-51 NIV

Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, was one of the two who heard what John had said and who had followed Jesus. 41] The first thing Andrew did was to find his brother Simon and tell him, "We have found the Messiah" (that is, the Christ). 42] And he brought him to Jesus. Jesus looked at him and said, "You are Simon son of John. You will be called Cephas" (which, when translated, is Peter). 43] The next day Jesus decided to leave for Galilee. Finding Philip, he said to him, "Follow me." 44] Philip, like Andrew and Peter, was from the town of Bethsaida. 45] Philip found Nathanael and told him, "We have found the one Moses wrote about in the Law, and about whom the prophets also wrote -- Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph." 46] "Nazareth! Can anything good come from there?" Nathanael asked. "Come and see," said Philip. 47] When Jesus saw Nathanael approaching, he said of him, "Here is a true Israelite, in whom there is nothing false." 48] "How do you know me?" Nathanael asked. Jesus answered, "I saw you while you were still under the fig tree before Philip called you." 49] Then Nathanael declared, "Rabbi, you are the Son of God; you are the King of Israel." 50] Jesus said, "You believe because I told you I saw you under the fig tree. You shall see greater things than that." 51] He then added, "I tell you the truth, you shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man."

REFLECT:

- How does Andrew build Peter and Philip build Nathanael?
- What is required of us if we want to build people in the way Andrew and Philip did?
- Name three people to whom you could say "come and see" regarding church, this group, or some other Christian fellowship.

RESPOND: How can you apply that insight to your life today? Try to write one specific act you intend to take, an attitude to change, a person to see, or a prayer to pray.

REQUEST: (My greatest need for the day.)