



# REFOCUS

**A church vitality seminar  
to assess and enhance  
the health of your church**



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## Highlights of A Vitality Seminar:

- The Biblical Imperative and The Big Picture.
- The Vitality Process: Five Alignment Phases and the Great Commission Matrix are key for centering and maintaining a church's vision and strategy on the Great Commission, positioning a church to gain vitality by focusing on the priority of designing, developing and deploying a plan of serving the community to develop relationships (service), to share the gospel (evangelism), to equip Jesus-believers to be Jesus-followers (discipleship).
- Balancing Spiritual Renewal with Strategic Initiative.
- Tools of Self-Assessment.
- The Great Commission Matrix.
- Building an Evangelistic Culture: The 3 Circles Evangelistic Model.
- Potential Stumbling Blocks to the Church Health Process.

## Vitality Seminar Outcomes:

1. The Great Commission focus will cause an intentional shift from ministry *to* the congregation to missional ministry *through* the congregation.
2. The Great Commission will become central to both vision and strategy.
3. There will be an increase in the percentage of people actively participating in neighborhood mission and in the number of people actively engaged in both personal and corporate evangelism, creating energy and expectation in the church.
4. There will be an increase in newcomers into the church body and in the rate of conversion growth.
5. There will be renewed vitality in worship and God will be glorified.



## The Biblical Imperative & The Big Picture

*For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost.*

*—Luke 19:10 (ESV).*

The church has six primary functions/disciplines: 1) Worship, 2) Discipleship, 3) Fellowship, 4) Service, 5) Outreach, and 6) Evangelism. Churches often have a strong emphasis on the first three functions, but struggle carrying out the latter three. The purpose of the EPC's National Church Health gospel priority and the "Big Picture" of this Vitality Seminar is to provide a process for churches to enhance their effectiveness in service, outreach, and evangelism. In refocusing our energy on these three disciplines, we believe that churches will become more balanced and healthier.

1. Begin by refocusing on the Great Commission in Matthew 28:18-20. What do these beginning and ending words say to you?

*And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. ... And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."*

2. There are two imperatives: "make disciples" and "surely" (or "behold" or "be sure of this" in the NLT. The word "disciple" is a verb, not a noun. There are three modifiers of these imperatives: "as you are going," "baptizing," and "teaching." This is the Big Picture—the main thing for the life of Christian and the Lord's Church.

*And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."*

3. Discuss Big Picture Questions that Church Leadership Should Ask

- A. In what ways is our church measurably fulfilling the Great Commission?
- B. If our church continues exactly as it is today, what will our church's ministry look like in five years?
- C. To whom is God sending us? How does God want to express Himself through our church in our community at this time?
- D. Do we foster a healthy combination of "spiritual renewal" (seeking out and depending on God) with "strategic initiative" (responding intentionally to God's leading)?

Strategic initiative must include the commitment of a church to put unbelieving ears within reach of gospel proclamation. Churches that choose to preach and teach the Word of God without employing strategies to penetrate their communities will continue to talk to



themselves. Their numbers will continue to decline. Their impact will continue to lessen.

The strategic question is not “What’s being proclaimed?” The strategic question is “Who’s listening?” Discipleship is not about more information but about life transformation. The Great Commission is obedience-based, not information-based.



# Overall Process for Revitalization

## Phase 1: Aligning Perception—Self-Discovery and Analysis

Key Questions:

- What will we discover about ourselves?
- What will we do in light of what we discover?

Tools: *(not all of the tools are in this manual)*

- Refocus Vitality Seminar/Workshop
- Self-Assessments
  - Life Cycle Analysis
  - Missional Posture
  - Ideal Church Leadership for Vitalization
  - SWOT Analysis

## Phase 2: Aligning Vision—Who Are We Going to Be?

Key Questions:

- How does God want to express Himself through this church in this community at this time?
- What did God mean by that? (making adjustments)

Tools: *(not all of the tools are in this manual)*

- 50 Days to Vitality
- Session Study of Nehemiah
- Leadership Training (e.g., Leadership Ladder, EPC Leadership Training Guide, Ruling Elder Exam Handbook)
- Forming a Vision Teams and Prayer Teams
- Coaching

## Phase 3: Aligning Strategy—What Are We Going to Do?

Key Questions:

- How do we make contact with those we are trying to reach?
- How will we develop those we are trying to reach once we've made contact?

Tools: *(not all of the tools are in this manual)*

- Great Commission Matrix
- Review Purpose of Church Ministry (e.g., *Simple Church*)
- Build an Evangelistic Culture: 3 Circles
- Coaching



## **Phase 4: Aligning Structure—Supporting the Strategy**

Key Questions:

- What are the criteria for decision-making and resource allocation?
- How does leadership function?

Tools: *(not all of the tools are in this manual)*

- Establish an Implementation Team
- Great Commission Matrix
- Review Complexity of Church Ministry (e.g., *Simple Church*)
- Coaching

## **Phase 5: Aligning People—Manning the Structure**

Key Questions:

- How will we get people involved?
- On whom does the future depend?

Tools: *(not all of the tools are in this manual)*

- Implementation Team
- Spiritual Gifts Inventory (e.g., *Uniquely You*)
- Coaching



# Vitalization Phase 1: Aligning Perception

## Looking into a Giant Mirror: Two Key Perception Questions

- 1** Key Perception Question #1  
*What will we discover about ourselves?*
- 2** Key Perception Question #2  
*What will we do in light of what we discover?*

### Key Perception Question #1: “What will we discover about ourselves?”

The goal of assessment is self-discovery, aligning perception with reality in a manner that allows church leaders to see and understand what is truly going on in the ministry of the church. The analysis and evaluation of an “expert” is of little value, as most reports of this nature simply gather dust on the bookshelf. The findings of an outsider have far less impact than what we discover for ourselves. Taking a hard look in the mirror is the nature of this assessment process. The tools are provided, but the gathering of responses and the analysis of those responses are up to church leaders themselves. Self-discovery is the key to effecting change. Ultimately, assessment will encourage and assist church leaders in identifying *where* their churches are on the church lifecycle and *why* they are where they are.

### Key Perception Question #2: “What will we do in light of what we discover?”

Self-discovery must lead to action or status quo will continue to prevail. Information and knowledge about the reality of ministry must be analyzed in terms of actions to be taken. It is only through the implementation of strategic action that true change will occur and provoke new and better results.





## S.W.O.T. Analysis

An assessment of the ministry landscape is helpful for self-discovery. A S.W.O.T. Analysis provides perspective and can present strategic insight. The S.W.O.T. analysis is an assessment tool for the pastor and church elders to utilize with the congregation either by one-to-one interviews or by telephone. An introductory letter should be sent beforehand so that participants can prepare. A summary report of the S.W.O.T. interviews or telephone calls should be prepared and presented to the Session.

**Strengths:** A church's strengths are its resources and capabilities that can form the basis of developing effective ministry.

**Weaknesses:** A church's weaknesses are factors that limit a church from developing effective ministry. A weakness can be positive in the sense that it actually exists and is a limiting factor, or a factor can be negative in the sense that its absence is a limiting factor.

**Opportunities:** A church's opportunities are existing elements that present the potential to create or develop effective ministry.

**Threats:** A church's threats are existing elements that present the potential to prevent, hamper, or destroy effective ministry.

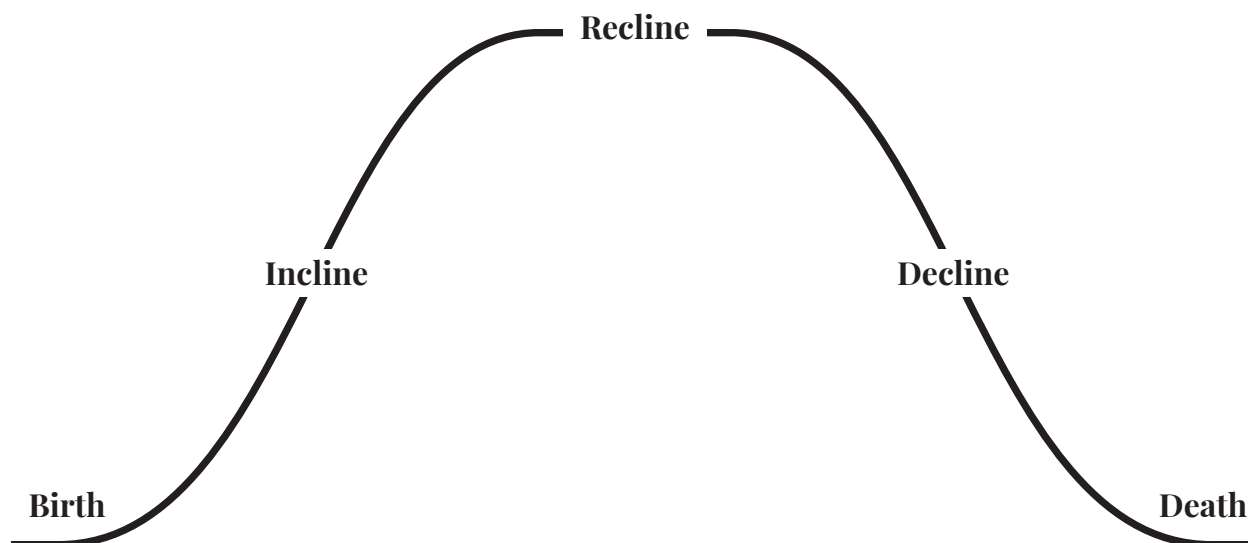
### Brief Narrative Summary:

1. What have we discovered about ourselves that is a **ministry strength**?
2. What have we discovered about ourselves that is a **ministry weakness**?
3. What have we discovered about ourselves that is a **ministry opportunity**?
4. What have we discovered about ourselves that is a **ministry threat**?



# Church Lifecycle Assessment

## Three Macro-Stages



*The Church Lifecycle can be considered in three primary macro-stages:*

**Incline** is the stage of church lifecycle when the ministry capacity of the church is increasing. Over time, the church is doing more and more ministry, and the quality of that ministry is better and better. Incline is a strong stage featuring health, growth, and multiplication.

**Recline** is the stage of church lifecycle when the ministry capacity of the church levels off into plateau. Over time, the church is doing the same ministry over and over at more or less the same levels of quality. Recline is a tepid, tread-water stage featuring ministry management by routine, filling in the blanks.

**Decline** is the stage of church lifecycle when the ministry capacity of the church is decreasing. Over time, the church is doing less and less ministry, and the quality of that ministry is more and more compromised. Decline is a weak stage featuring decreases in membership, attendance, giving, and overall impact in the community.



## Distinctive Characteristics of Churches in Incline, Recline, Decline

In considering Incline, Recline, and Decline, it's helpful to note certain macro-stages of various aspects of church life and ministry.

### Orientation

**Inclining churches are Future-Oriented.** Inclining leaders are always looking ahead, making decisions today based on their implications for tomorrow. Leaders of inclining churches would never trade what is best for the future for what seems best for the present. There is a sense of destination and all energy, resources and focus are fixed on reaching that destination.

**Reclining churches are Present-Oriented.** Reclining leaders are quite satisfied with how things are and would freeze time if they could, preferring an eternal present where all Sundays would be just like this Sunday, characterized by a solid congregation with solid finances, good staff, good programs, and nice facilities.

**Declining churches are Past-Oriented.** Declining leaders desire to go back to some former time in the church, perhaps when Rev. So-and-So was here. Decline has a point of reference, a point from which ministry declined. So the natural tendency is to want to return to the way it used to be, a time that is perceived as better than today and a time that is sugar-coated with nostalgia.

### Drive

**Inclining churches are Vision-Driven.** Inclining leaders have discerned God's vision for their churches and are fully committed to that vision. All decisions are made in light of—and for the benefit of—that vision. The rightly discerned, godly vision is the point of reference from which all else flows.

**Reclining churches are Program-Driven.** Reclining leaders believe that the success of their churches lies in the strength of the programming. All decisions are made in light of—and for the benefit of—the programming. The programming is the point of reference from which all else flows.

**Declining churches are Structure-Driven.** Declining churches are living in a church world that is devoid of vision and devoid of effective programming. In light of this void, these leaders cling to the structure of the church as evidence that the church is still alive. They are preoccupied with elements such as organizational charts, boards and committees, finances, payroll, and building maintenance.



## Focus

**Inclining churches are Community-Focused.** Inclining leaders give priority to the people living in the community, as yet unreached by the church. These community residents are the objects to key Scripture passages such as the Great Commandment and the Great Commission. Who are the neighbors in the Great Commandment to love your neighbor as yourself? They are the people of the community. When the Great Commission commands us to go and make disciples, to whom are we to take the gospel? To the people of the community.

**Reclining churches are Congregation-Focused.** Reclining leaders give priority to the group of people that is inside the church, those already reached. A healthy church will focus on both community and congregation, but the natural inclination for leaders is to focus on the congregation at the expense of the community. Inreach has its own voice, but outreach needs an advocate. Otherwise the focus will be so heavily weighted toward the congregation that the community will be ignored. The church that fails to reach its community ultimately finds itself on the backside of the lifecycle.

**Declining churches are Core-Focused.** Declining leaders focus on a remnant of the declining church whose influence becomes stronger as the church grows smaller. Key influencers in this core often prove to be barriers to growth as they remain entrenched in their authority and hold the congregation hostage through that authority and influence. A key element that is leveraged in this way is money. Often the influencers in the core give significant percentages of the church's budget. Others in the core believe that the church couldn't sustain without that income, so they acquiesce to the influencer's demands.

## Attitude

**Inclining churches are Innovative in their approach to ministry.** They keep abreast of new ideas and developments, and thrive on making good ministry better through creativity and experimentation. Inclining leaders will adjust, modify, and even replace ministries, programs, or systems that are working well if they determine that something new would bring greater benefit. Constantly being in research and development mode and putting new prototypes on the field is labor intensive, but Inclining leaders are willing to pay that price.

**Reclining churches are Routine in their approach to ministry.** If the machinery of ministry is working, don't mess with it. This approach might best be described as fill-in-the-blanks ministry. Make sure people, curriculum, programming, etc., are in place and let the system run. Templates are developed as much as possible for standardization, such as a Sunday morning template that gets filled in by ministry leaders with song titles, sermon title and text, announcements, etc. Often in this environment, leaders of different ministries or departments rarely communicate but simply make sure the blanks for which they are responsible are filled.



**Declining churches are Complacent in their approach to ministry.** It's not that Declining leaders don't care, it's that they are resigned to the belief that they cannot make the future happen—they can only wait and let it happen. In a sense, they see themselves as victims of circumstances and consequently hope that these external circumstances will change so that they will be less victimized. This is a passive posture that incubates in the wishful thinking that somehow God will do something to better their plight. They believe that God does great things through His church, but struggle to believe that He would do something great in theirs.

## Faith

**Inclining churches exercise High-Risk Faith.** Inclining leaders are committed to following God wherever He leads without contingency. As such, no risk is too high when God's leading is ascertained. Given this proclivity, much time and energy is invested in pursuit of God's leading with an expectation that God will in fact guide these leaders on their journey of faithfulness, a faith journey that is willing to risk all but that faith.

**Reclining churches exercise Low-Risk Faith.** Reclining leaders are surely committed to following God, but are also committed to guarding resources and everything that has been accomplished carefully. These leaders are willing to try new ideas, but within a controlled environment where not much is at stake if the new endeavor fails.

**Declining churches exercise No-Risk Faith.** Declining leaders are committed to protecting whatever limited resources remain and therefore will not put those resources at risk. They see this as prudent, as stretching resources out as long as possible in the hope that God will make some unanticipated move at some point and make ministry better, as if the state of their ministry is God's fault.

## Decisions

**Inclining churches make faith decisions based on their high-risk faith.** Inclining leaders will move forward in faith despite the fact that things might not add up on paper, despite the fact that not all of the needed resources might currently be available, and despite the fact that the outcome is uncertain and there might be much at risk. This is predicated, of course, on the belief that a godly vision has been rightly discerned and that God's leading is clear, compelling leaders to act decisively though there might be holes in the initiative.

**Reclining churches make resource decisions based on their low-risk faith.** Reclining leaders will move forward only when all of the necessary resources are on hand or anticipated, and when those resources need not be diverted from current programming. They see this as wise and prudent and in keeping with counting the cost before undertaking a new initiative.



**Declining churches are paralyzed by indecision, based on their no-risk faith.** Declining leaders are fearful of making mistakes and falling further into Decline, so they hesitate in making decisions or fail to make decisions altogether. Ironically the decision not to make a decision is a decision, usually a wrong decision.

## Servanthood

**Inclining churches place people in serving positions by Identifying their Gifts.** Inclining leaders understand that people are most productive and most fulfilled when they are serving in their areas of giftedness, talent, passion, experience, and calling. Care is taken to deploy people in ministry accordingly in order that they are utilized to their full potential in a manner that is sustainable over long periods of time. When people are integrated into service through this approach, they understand that they are serving as a privilege, not as an obligation or as a means of simply helping out.

**Reclining churches place people in serving positions through Slot-filling.** An inventory is taken to determine how many slots need to be filled to man each program. The congregation is then grabbed by the collar and dragged through the grid of these slots in the hope that a live body will land in each slot. Once this is done, the nominating committee reasons that its work is done since each program has proper coverage. Though all slots might be filled, this approach is not fulfilling for those involved and leads to burnout and ineffective ministry as people are not matched properly to service.

**Declining churches place people in serving positions by Default.** There are typically more slots to be filled than there are people, so those remaining in the church are likely to fill a slot because “someone has to do it.” Usually those willing to serve commit to serving in multiple slots, wearing so many hats that they are spread too thin to be effective.

## Finances

**Inclining churches approach money (and other resources) like an Investor.** Inclining leaders regard the funding that God has provided as money intended to produce the fruit of ministry, so they invest that money in ministry with the expectation that ministry fruit will result thirty-fold, sixty-fold, a hundred-fold.

**Reclining churches approach money as a Provider.** Reclining leaders are driven by the church’s programming and see money as the financial provision to keep those programs running. The focus is on hosting program activities rather than on the fruit of ministry that might be produced.

**Declining churches approach money as a Preserver.** Declining leaders see the church’s money as the financial means of the church’s survival. The focus is on stretching the church’s ability to stay alive as long as possible in the hope that God might unexpectedly move at some point to create more viable ministry that recaptures the past.



## Leadership

**Inclining churches are always seeking the development of New Leadership.** Inclining leaders understand that for the church to continue to grow there is always the need for new leaders to move into existing and newly created ministries. This commitment to new leadership is reflected in aggressive discipling toward leadership and the sending out of existing leaders to create new ministry and open doors for new leadership.

**Reclining churches are led by Established Leadership.** With programming reaching capacity and leveling off, the leadership positions have been identified and filled—leaving little room for the emergence of new leadership. Those who come into such a ministry with leadership giftedness and potential are unable to realize that giftedness and potential, so their growth is stunted or they migrate elsewhere to apply their leadership calling.

**Declining churches are led by Incumbent Leadership.** Declining leaders often have been in place for long stretches of time, perhaps even serving for decades in the same leadership positions. Routine prevails as the same kinds of decisions are made the same way based on the same criteria with little change or progress being seen. The prevailing attitude is to do things the way we always have in the hope of a better result. At its best, this is wishful thinking.

## Growth

**Inclining churches grow by Conversion.** A significant percentage of growth can be attributed to people's coming to Christ and making professions of faith. Inclining leaders commit to the regular presentation of the good news of the gospel and strategically provide opportunities for people to voice those professions.

**Reclining churches grow by Transfer.** The programming emphasis of the Reclining church draws already Christian people, providing programming for all in the family that is appealing to the Christian who might attend a church with less attractive programming. Since transfer growth is adding to the church's growth statistics, reclining leaders sense that they are fostering church growth and miss the fact that significant conversion is not taking place. The church grows by transfer, but the Kingdom of God does not grow when already Christian people church-hop.

**Declining churches by definition experience No Growth.** Or perhaps negative growth would be more accurate. With programming failing through lack of resources, the church offers less and less, losing more and more people in the process.



	<b>Incline</b>	<b>Recline</b>	<b>Decline</b>
<b>Orientation</b>	Future Oriented	Present Oriented	Past Oriented
<b>Driving Force</b>	Vision	Programs	Structure
<b>Focus</b>	Community	Congregation	Core
<b>Attitude</b>	Innovative	Routine	Complacent
<b>Depth of Faith</b>	High Risk	Low Risk	No Risk
<b>Decision Making</b>	Faith	Resources	Indecision
<b>Servanthood Basis</b>	Gifts	Slots	Default
<b>Finances View</b>	Investor	Provider	Preserver
<b>Leadership</b>	New	Established	Incumbent
<b>Growth</b>	Conversion	Transfer	None

Circle the characteristics on the chart the most accurately describe your church.

How many circles were placed on Inclining characteristics? \_\_\_\_\_

How many circles were placed on Reclining characteristics? \_\_\_\_\_

How many circles were placed on Declining characteristics? \_\_\_\_\_

Based on this simple analysis, where is your church on the lifecycle?

☐ Incline    ☐ Recline    ☐ Decline

Does your church show evidence of vitality lost over time? Explain.

Will your church's vitalization be moderate, severe, or somewhere in between? Explain.





## Missional Posture Assessment

A tool to assess the attitude of a church as regards its ministry through the congregation to the surrounding community. (The Missional Posture Assessment tool can be provided by the vitality seminar leader, to be completed and scored for later reference.)

### Definitions of Missional Postures Assessed:

**Anti-Missional:** Pastor(s) and/or church leaders are resistant to making a missional commitment, considering such a commitment to be a compromise of biblical and theological integrity, and seeing going missional as a breach of purity that allows the world to influence the church.

**Non-Missional:** Pastor(s) and/or church leaders are ambivalent toward making a missional commitment, considering such a commitment to be irrelevant and trendy. Being or becoming missional is simply not on the radar screen.

**Pre-Missional:** Pastor(s) and/or church leaders are discovering the biblical necessity of making a missional commitment and are open to learning what needs to be done spiritually and strategically in order to go missional.

**Pro-Missional:** Pastor(s) and/or church leaders are fully committed to missional ministry and are actively building missional ministry into the mainstream life of the church.

**Post-Missional:** Pastor(s) and church leaders are drifting or pulling away from a previously held missional commitment, either by design or by loss of energy and focus. This is often seen in church plants that become self-supporting and that have achieved sustainable viability.



# The Ideal Church Leadership for Vitalization Assessment

Vitalization will not take hold in a church unless the Lead Pastor, Session, and key ministry leaders (“Church Leadership”) are totally committed, making vitalization the priority in the church. There are initiatives the Church Leadership should provide, roles the Church Leadership should play, and attributes the Church Leadership should possess. Of course, no individual is the ideal, but a measuring of strengths and weaknesses and a plan to strengthen obvious weaknesses is in order.

## The Ideal Church Leadership for Vitalization Provides:

- **Attitude:** The Church Leadership must consistently present a positive attitude toward the vitalization process. There will be challenges, resistance and naysayers. Church Leadership must always point forward and must always foster confidence.
- **Assurance:** Related to the Church Leadership attitude is a posture of assurance that the process of vitalization will be effective if applied faithfully. Joining in negativity or criticism, or adopting a “wait and see how this turns out” perspective will sabotage the process.
- **Accountability:** The Church Leadership needs to provide accountability for all who participate in the leadership of vitalization. Work must be completed thoroughly and on time or momentum will fail. Though the workforce is typically a volunteer workforce, mediocrity or lack of follow through is not acceptable. Do all things as unto the Lord.

## The Ideal Pastor for Vitalization Serves As:

- **Catalyst:** Someone must provide the spark to get things started. That someone needs to be the Lead Pastor. Initiative must come and continue to come from the top.
- **Captain:** The Vision Team\* is in fact a team and all members must actively participate, but the Lead Pastor is the captain that must keep the team unified and on task.
- **Champion:** Throughout the course of vitalization, momentum will wane from time to time, focus will be lost, and the effort will seem too great. The Lead Pastor must champion the cause of vitalization repeatedly to achieve sustainable results.

\*The Vision Team is a team of leaders that is committed to leading the church through the vitalization process. The recommended number for such a team is six: pastor plus five, though that number might vary for a variety of reasons.



## The Ideal Church Leadership for Vitalization Possesses:

- **Vision:** The ability to translate the Vision Team's discerned vision into reality.
- **Drive:** The focus and discipline to move the church forward at an aggressive pace.
- **Energy:** The stamina to fulfill what ministry as usual requires plus lead vitalization.
- **Experience:** The ministry seasoning to work smart, weather storms, and lead people.
- **Training:** The equipping to lead vitalization.
- **Support:** Strong devotional and family life to strengthen leading without affirmation, a reality faced by most vitalization Church Leadership moving people through change.
- **Capacity:** The ability to be effective while leading multiple initiatives simultaneously.
- **Health:** Given the enormous challenge of leading vitalization, health in other areas of life is essential; e.g., physical, psychological, financial, spiritual, and family. Vitalization should be the only major challenge of the season.
- **People Skills:** Effective vitalization demands working with people in challenging scenarios. Church Leadership will need to say things people don't want to hear, will need to challenge people to give up what they don't want to give up, and lead people to do what they don't want to do. This will require high-level people skills.



Use the chart below to evaluate church leaders and the Lead Pastor on their strengths and weaknesses for church revitalization. Each church leader should do a self-evaluation. All leaders should rate the Lead Pastor as Catalyst, Captain, and Champion.

**Circle the rating that best describes your strength in each area:**

	Poor	Satisfactory	Good	Excellent
Attitude	1	2	3	4
Assurance	1	2	3	4
Accountability	1	2	3	4
Catalyst (Pastor)	1	2	3	4
Captain (Pastor)	1	2	3	4
Champion (Pastor)	1	2	3	4
Vision	1	2	3	4
Drive	1	2	3	4
Energy	1	2	3	4
Experience	1	2	3	4
Training	1	2	3	4
Support	1	2	3	4
Capacity	1	2	3	4
Health	1	2	3	4
People Skills	1	2	3	4
# Circled in Each Column	_____	_____	_____	_____

### **Descriptive Evaluation**

What are your primary strengths?

What are your primary weaknesses?

How could your weaknesses be strengthened?



# Vitalization Phase 2: Aligning Vision

## Two Key Vision Questions

**1** Key Vision Question #1  
*How does God want to express Himself through this church in this community at this time?*

**2** Key Vision Question #2  
*What did God mean by that?*

**Vision:** A defined but growing picture of what will be seen in your church at some future point (in 3, 5, 10 years) as your church reaches the lost in its community; a picture of a reached community.

## Foundations: Who Are We Going to Be?

### 1. The Mandate that Compels Us

- The Great Promise—Matthew 16:13-18.
- The Great Commandment—Matthew 22:34-40.
- The Great Commission—Matthew 20:16-20.
- The Great Witness—Acts 1:8.
- The Great Mission—Luke 19:10.
- The Great Multiplication—Matthew 24:14.

### 2. The Mold that Shapes Us

- Four Disciplines of a Great Commission Church.
- The Characteristics of Incline.

### 3. The Model that Shows Us

- Acts 2:42-47.
- Ephesians 4:1-16.
- The Acts 2 / Ephesians 4 Church.



## 50 Days to Vitality

Your church has entered the ministry of shaping the future by discerning God's vision and taking the spiritual and strategic steps needed to make that future come to pass. REFOCUS is a holistic process that will engage the church's people in many ways over a significant period of time. In fact, this is not an isolated event in the life of the church, but establishing of a culture—a lifestyle—of vitality that will enable your church to begin building a ministry of health, growth, and multiplication. Vitality as a ministry way of life.

The process calls for a personal commitment on your part to embrace the process fully and prepare yourself to play a vital role in moving your church forward toward God's future. It is important for you to be connected spiritually and strategically to all that will emerge as the process unfolds. "50 Days to Vitality" (7 x 7 + 1) has been carefully selected to help form the foundation, and spans eight Sundays—a total of seven weeks plus one day.

Each of the seven weeks focuses on a specific emphasis that is seminal to the refocusing process. On Sunday of each week, a "Thought for the Week" is presented to establish that week's emphasis. Monday through Friday feature a "Thought for the Day"—short Scripture readings accompanied by devotional commentary that connect thematically with that same emphasis. On Saturday of each week, directed prayer is offered seeking God's guidance and power as the ministry of the church gains momentum. A "Final Thought" is presented on Day 50 that serves as a climax to "50 Days to Vitality" and as a launch pad to all that follows. An 8-Sunday preaching series throughout would strengthen the effort.

God the Father Almighty and your church deserve your focus and your commitment to "50 Days to Vitality." Commit today to give your 50 days.

**Week 1 Emphasis:** A study of Nehemiah 1. Vitality begins—Nehemiah 1:1-11.

**Week 2 Emphasis:** A study of the Disciplines of Great Commission Churches (selected biblical texts).

**Week 3 Emphasis:** A study of the Great Promise of Matthew 16:13-18.

**Week 4 Emphasis:** A study of the Great Commandment of Matthew 22:34-40.

**Week 5 Emphasis:** A study of the Great Commission of Matthew 28:16-20.

**Week 6 Emphasis:** A study of the Great Witness of Acts 1:8 (6-11).

**Week 7 Emphasis:** A study of the Great Mission of Luke 19:10 (1-10), and the Great Multiplication of Matthew 24:14)

A copy of "50 Days to Vitality" can be secured from the seminar leader. A companion devotional designed for the Session is also available.



## Establishing a Vision Team (VT)

**The Vision Team (VT)** is extremely important in building your church's Great Commission Matrix. It is the Pastor's responsibility to oversee the selection of this team. Others may be included in the selection process as appropriate. The VT is the group of leaders (not the Session) that is responsible for discerning God's Great Commission vision for the church, developing that vision with its strategies, implementing/directing the congregation through the Great Commission process of vitalization, and determining what evaluation and accountability systems must be in place to keep the church healthy, growing, and multiplying.

It is recommended that the VT have six members—large enough for great synergy, yet small enough to avoid bogging down in endless points of view. At the beginning, the VT should meet weekly. After this initial period, the team will then meet twice a month.

## The Vision Team Work: 4 Tasks in 2 Parts

### Part 1: Discernment

**Discerning God's Vision for the Church:** Vision is a function of discernment, not creativity. The process centers that discernment on the Great Commission. The Vision Team (VT) seeks God's leading in discerning His vision for that individual church. This involves prayer, Bible study, personal and team reflection and discussion, and investigative research into the demographics of both congregation and community. Under the guidance and influence of the Holy Spirit, the members of the VT seek to know God, to know the congregation, and to know the community as they discern how God desires to express Himself through their church's commitment to the Great Commission.

**Developing Vision and Strategy:** Having committed to the Great Commission, the VT uses the training content of the process to develop that vision into a cogent strategy. Vision answers the frontline questions of "Who?" and "Why?" To whom is God sending us because of the biblical imperative? The strategy answers the question of "what?" "when?" "where?" and "how?" How are we going to fulfill the vision? The VT paints the broad strokes of strategy and then equips and empowers leaders of particular ministry areas to develop and deploy the tactical initiatives.

### Part 2: Implementation

At this point in the work of the Vision Team, the process begins to turn to preparing strategies to implement God's Great Commission Vision for the church. This is a point at which some members of the VT may step off, and new members with more of a "git-er-done" mindset and giftedness may step on. Keep the total VT membership between 6-8.



**Directing the Church through the Process:** The VT directs all others through the process. This includes staff and leaders not serving on the VT, church members, regular attendees, and even newcomers that might arrive during the revitalization effort. The VT is more fully engaged in the process than all others, and therefore must determine the course and set the pace. The work of the team is a holistic undertaking, not a priming of the pump or simply a launch. The team stays the course until revitalization has firmly taken hold—usually a process that builds over 18-24 months of intentional and consistent effort.

**Determining Evaluation and Accountability:** One of the underlying causes of plateau and decline is the failure of church leaders to hold themselves and the ministries of the church accountable to ministry effectiveness. So often, the hosting of events and activities is seen as the objective. As long as these events and activities take place, leaders view themselves as having met the objective. But hosting is not the issue. The issue is ministry effectiveness, ministry results, ministry outcomes. The VT holds every element of revitalization accountable for being effective in the production of intentional ministry results, and determines the means by which effectiveness and results are evaluated.

## Vision Team (VT) Member Characteristics

Selecting the roster of the VT begins with a consideration of the characteristics that must be collectively reflected by the team. These characteristics need not be strongly evident in each VT member, but must be strongly evident in the team as a group:

1. **The VT Team Must Be Discerning:** It stands to reason that if vision is a function of discernment, the VT must be discerning. They must have the giftedness and patience to seek God and apply the Great Commission. Evidence of discernment in the lives of VT members should be plainly visible prior to their selection to serve on the team. Potential is not enough, but there must be a history of trustworthy discernment that bears witness to this characteristic.
2. **The VT Must Be Visionary:** Though the focal point of discovering God's vision is the Great Commission, the VT needs to be visionary in the sense that the team is able to look into the future and clearly see the Great Commission as it is applied in the life of the church. The VT must have a clear understanding of what the ministry future should look like and the capacity to cast that vision so that others can see the future that God desires as well.
3. **The VT Must Be Spiritually Mature:** Discernment of God's vision and leading a congregation to pursue that vision are to be guided by a team that is spiritually mature. These are high stakes. God's vision for the church is at stake, the future of the congregation's ministry is at stake, and the reaching of men, women, and children with the person, love, and ministry of Jesus Christ is at stake. Therefore, the VT must be spiritually mature. The temptation is to load the team with people who have proven to be entrepreneurial and/or highly successful in their professional lives, but the VT is to be measured by spiritual—not secular—standards.





4. **The VT Must Be Well-Respected:** The Team is very likely to bring issues to the congregation that are challenging and that require change. Congregations are typically negative in their attitudes towards change, so it is important that those bringing the Great Commission message be endowed with great credibility. This respect must already be in place at the start of the vitalization process. The process does not lend itself to the development of respect. Rather, respect is a prerequisite to VT selection.
5. **In Part 2, New Members Must Have a “Git-er-done” Mindset and Giftedness.** These new team members must be able to create strategies and implement the Great Commission ministry vision for the church. An ability to articulate strategies, to encourage, and coach the execution of the strategies is particularly helpful.

## **FAQs about the Vision Team (VT)\*:**

1. **How many should be on the VT?** On average, 6-8 is a good number of members to have, including the Pastor. The Pastor may or may not chair the Vision Team. The number might vary according to the size of the congregation. A small church with a limited number of qualified leaders might go with Pastor plus two or three if necessary. Though a congregation might be large in number, it's recommended that the VT not go far past six. There is certainly nothing magical about having six, but six provides enough people for varied input without the team's being so large that seeking input from everyone becomes overly time consuming, and having too many voices at the table breeds confusion rather than focus. Also, six provides for a critical mass of leaders on those occasions when a team member has to miss a meeting.

\*NOTE: This process is not an exact science, so the answers to these often-asked questions need to be understood as recommendations and not as hard-and-fast rules. Again, the process must serve the ministry; ministry should never be asked to serve the process.

2. **Who should select the VT?** The Session is responsible for the selection of the Vision Team from the congregation, pastoral staff, at least two elders of Session, deacons, and other key leaders deemed to be gifted for the vision process. This team will be responsible for leading the church through the Great Commission vitality process and will need to be both qualified and, in particular, trusted.
3. **Should the Session serve as the VT?** The recommendation is “no.” Serving on the VT is a serious commitment, and if the primary governing and direction-setting group (the Session) in the church is truly fulfilling its biblical responsibilities, adding service on the VT will create overload. That said, the relationship between the VT and the Session must be very strong with great communication passing between them. So it would be a good idea to have the Session represented on the VT Team as a liaison.



4. **Should the VT be a “representative” group?** The recommendation is “no.” The goal is not to be democratic or to reach consensus or to have a leader from each ministry lobby for the interests of that ministry. The goal is to set direction and lead – to bring the Great Commission to the forefront of ministry both spiritually and strategically. Members should be selected according to the criteria regarding responsibilities and characteristics already covered in the previous pages.
5. **How often should the VT meet?** At the beginning, the VT should meet weekly. After this initial period, the team then meets twice a month. This is often enough to keep things fresh in the minds of team members so that progress can be made at each meeting, rather than getting bogged down in review of past meetings. More frequent, shorter meetings tend to produce better results than longer meetings that are spread out with a month or more in between.
6. **How long should the VT serve?** The initial commitment should be approximately two years (keeping mind that there are two parts to the work of the VT. These two parts require members with differing gifts, so the mix of the membership may change along the way. However, always strive to maintain continuity in the overall process. Two years should give ample time for revitalization to take hold and begin bearing measurable fruit. Beyond that there are two considerations. First, if the main governing body (the Session) has re-structured and de-structured away from administration and finance and moved to a leadership model that is focused on spiritual leadership with strategic resourcing (Acts 6:1-7), then it might make sense for these leaders to assume the ongoing role of the VT. Second, if the VT needs to continue to serve, members who have the need to step down and be replaced by others should do so.

## Prayer Teams (PTs)

Prayer Teams are at the heart of the process, providing prayer support for both the spiritual and strategic elements of revitalization. Each member of the Vision Team forms a Prayer Team of four to eight people. Prayer Team members are in contact with each other between meetings.

### Prayer Team Responsibilities

1. **Prayer Teams Pray:** The primary responsibility of the Prayer Team is to, well, pray! Pray for the work of the VT. Pray for the Great Commission to be clearly and effectively applied. Pray for the well-being of VT members and their families. Pray. Pray. Pray. The Prayer Teams provide a layer of prayer support that guides and protects the ministry of the VT.
2. **Prayer Teams Communicate:** Prayer Teams also have a communications responsibility. When a VT member connects with their Prayer Teams, the primary activity is prayer, but the Prayer Team also serves as a vehicle for two-way communication.



The VT member is able to share what's going on inside VT meetings with their Prayer Team; e.g., what issues are being discussed, what questions are being answered, what actions are being taken, what challenges are being faced. The Prayer Team becomes informed and prays. Also, Prayer Team members share insights and perspectives that come out of praying with the VT member, and that input makes it back to the entire VT for consideration. In this way, the VT has the benefit of much prayer support, and the community of people in the church who are informed about VT developments is widened. Also, the work of the VT is seen by all those who serve on Prayer Teams, bringing the work of the VT out from behind closed doors.

3. **Prayer Teams Meet Spiritual Resistance:** We know from Scripture that our battle is not against flesh and blood but is against “the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places” (Ephesians 6:12). We need not fear these forces because “he who is in [us] is greater than he who is in the world” (1 John 4:4). However, make no mistake; he is in the world. Whenever a church raises its head by committing to greater emphasis on reaching a lost community, our enemy takes notice and counters with resistance and attacks. Since the VT serves as the point of the revitalization spear, those individuals are likely to be in the center of that spiritual battle. Prayer Teams are there to support, protect and encourage the VT as it undertakes its mission.

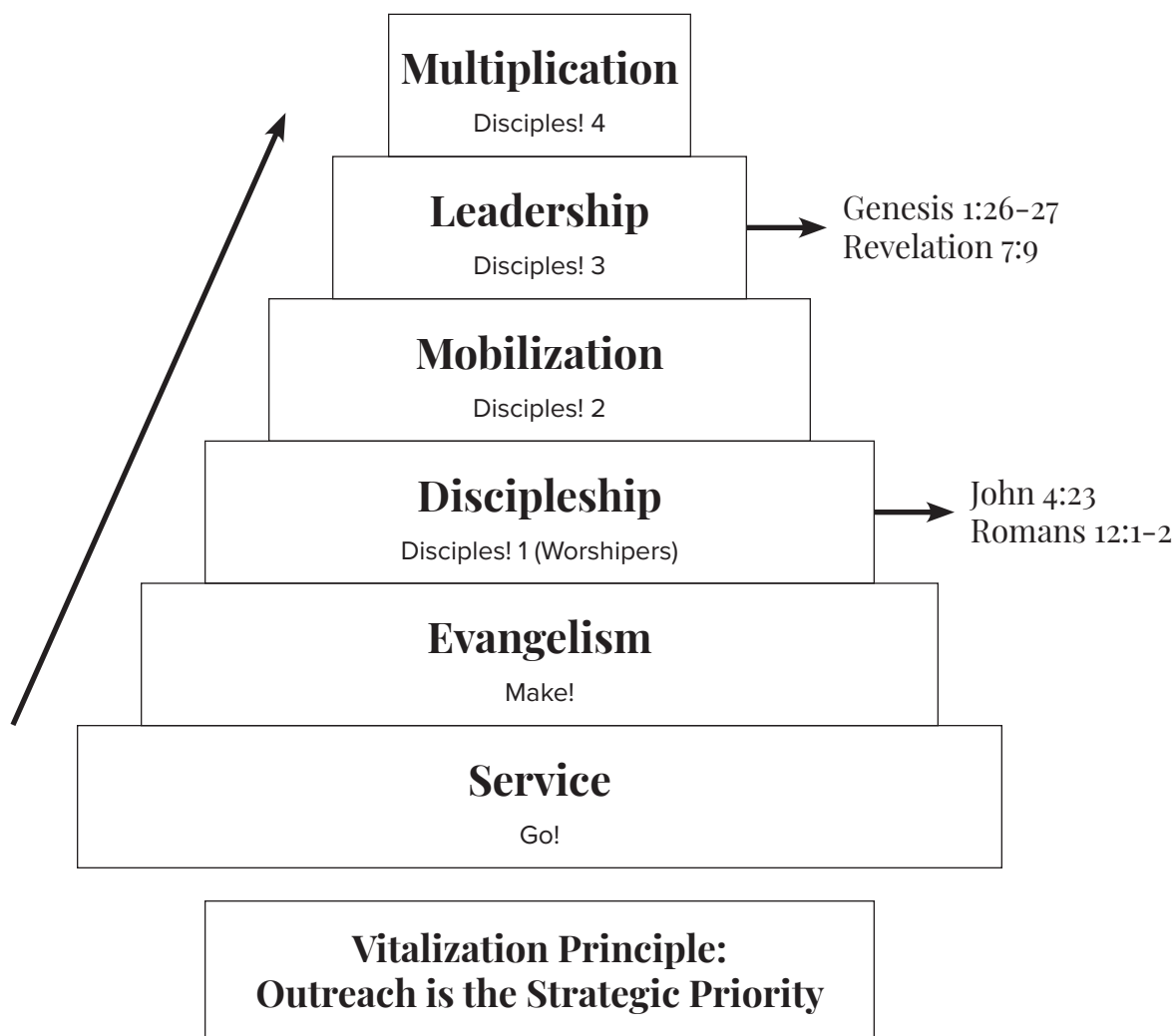


## Vitalization Phase 3: Aligning Strategy

### Two Key Strategy Questions

- 1** Key Strategy Question #1  
*How do we make contact with those we are trying to reach?*
- 2** Key Strategy Question #2  
*How will we develop those we reach once we've made contact?*

### The Great Commission Matrix movement





# The Great Commission Matrix

## Introduction

God's big picture vision stretches from Genesis to Revelation, the timeline of redemptive history that provides the stage for God's unfolding plan of redemption. A multitude of men, women, and children from all peoples of all times will be gathered into the harvest that is God's eternal family. The question is, "Will our church commit to playing its part in the unfolding of that redemptive history?"

If the answer to this question for any given church is, "Yes," then a second question takes center stage. That question is, "How?" The How will be driven by that church's commitment to the Great Commission, and by its development of Great Commission vision and strategy. With the commitment to Great Commission ministry made, the stage is set for moving into the nuts and bolts of strategic design, development and implementation. This can be accomplished through the application of a dynamic strategic tool, the Great Commission Matrix.

The Great Commission Matrix creates multiple front doors through which lost people can find their way to Christ and into the ministry of the church. Typically, churches position Sunday morning as the primary, or only, front door to the ministry—expecting newcomers to visit on Sunday and then trickle down to other ministries of the church. In contrast, the Great Commission Matrix model positions every ministry area of the church as a front door, greatly multiplying access to the gospel and to subsequent discipleship and worship opportunities. The Great Commission Matrix strategically defines and shapes the Great Commission commitment of a church and positions that church for dynamic missional multiplication.



## Using the Great Commission Matrix in Your Church

All ministries of the church (Ministry 1, Ministry 2, etc.) should complete the Great Commission Matrix, developing and executing one to three strategies over a year's time that support and advance the church's ministry vision in Service, Evangelism, and Discipleship.

	Min 1	Min 2	Min 3	Min 4	Min 5
<b>SERVICE</b> Serving our community to develop relationships	Strategy 1 Strategy 2 Strategy 3	Strategy 1 Strategy 2 Strategy 3	Strategy 1 Strategy 2 Strategy 3	Strategy 1 Strategy 2 Strategy 3	Strategy 1 Strategy 2 Strategy 3
<b>EVANGELISM</b> Sharing the gospel through developed relationships	Strategy 1 Strategy 2 Strategy 3	Strategy 1 Strategy 2 Strategy 3	Strategy 1 Strategy 2 Strategy 3	Strategy 1 Strategy 2 Strategy 3	Strategy 1 Strategy 2 Strategy 3
<b>DISCIPLESHIP</b> Equipping Jesus believers to be Jesus followers	Strategy 1 Strategy 2 Strategy 3	Strategy 1 Strategy 2 Strategy 3	Strategy 1 Strategy 2 Strategy 3	Strategy 1 Strategy 2 Strategy 3	Strategy 1 Strategy 2 Strategy 3

Matthew  
28:16-20  
Luke 19:10  
John 4:23  
Romans  
12:1-2

Seeking the Lost and Seeking True Worshipers  
**Matthew 9:35-38**  
The *Gathering* of the Saints (noun and verb)

Every ministry of the church has the capacity to do Service, Evangelism, and Discipleship. The key to leveraging the Great Commission Matrix effectively is the principle of ministry *through* the congregation rather than *to* the congregation. This may give the appearance of shortchanging the congregation. But the truth is that people in the congregation will grow much further in their faith when they are giving ministry, rather than when they are receiving ministry—an active rather than passive posture. Most of us learn far more as teachers or leaders or servants than as students or “receivers,” because the added responsibility pushes us toward more thorough study and preparation.

### Remember: Multiple Front Doors!

Typically, churches position Sunday morning as the primary—or only—front door. The Great Commission Matrix positions every ministry area of the church as a front door. Every ministry develops the capacity to do Service, Evangelism, and Discipleship. In this way, there is a constant flow of newcomers into the church, or into the sphere of the church's ministry, where they can find faith and develop as true worshipers. At the same time, mobilized followers of Christ find their spiritual growth accelerating as a result of their proactive engagement in meaningful ministry. The Great Commission Matrix strategically defines and shapes the Great Commission commitment of a church, to the glory of God! The congregation is now in a position to execute specific tactics in all of the church's validated ministry strategies.



# How to Build an Evangelistic Culture in Your Church

For too many churches, there is no focus on creating a churchwide environment for training and mobilizing all congregants to share the gospel. A church should consider these ten steps to make sharing the gospel an integral part of all activities and ministries of the church body—both collectively and individually.

## 1. Focused Prayer

- Opening hearts of individuals and communities.
- Watchful of the Holy Spirit's leading.

## 2. Choose a Gospeling Tool (Use the *EPC 3 Circles*, see page 33).

- Pick one that you are comfortable with.
- Pick one that can be used by all people in your church.
- Pick just one—creates useful synergy.

## 3. Train Your People to Use the Tool

- Practice, practice, practice.

## 4. Help Your People Engage with “far from God” People

- Build ways for ministries to engage in the community (e.g., mentoring at a school, volunteering at a community organization, church teams in a community sports league).
- Eliminate ineffective ministries that occupy time away from the community.

## 5. Emphasize Rapid Obedience

- New Christians are often the most excited to share with others.
- New Christians are more likely to have close connections with non-Christians.
- Keeping the gospel message accurate yet simple is key.

## 6. Coordinate the Air War with the Ground War

- Emphasis is on evangelism in all areas of church life.
- Culture develops when people connect what they hear with what they do.



## **7. Create “Bottleneck Conversations”**

- There are passages (“bottlenecks”) of church life that everyone goes through (e.g., new member classes, weddings, funerals, baptisms, etc.). Present *The 3 Circles* at all of these.

## **8. Involve *All* Ministries of the Church—especially Student and Children**

- Children and teens often have more relationships with non-Christians than adults.
- Children and teens are still forming their spiritual identity and are frequently more open to discuss spiritual matters.
- Engaging children and teens provides an opening to parents.

## **9. Collect Stories**

## **10. Celebrate God Stories—make it a big deal!**

- Involve everyone involved with the new Christian.
- Celebrate during the main worship service.





# Turning Everyday Conversations into Gospel Conversations

By Jimmy Scroggins and Steve Wright

We live in a broken world. **And the gospel is how God puts broken people back together again.** Once we repent and believe in Jesus, God's Spirit helps us recover and pursue His design. God is the one who created the world and every human being in it.

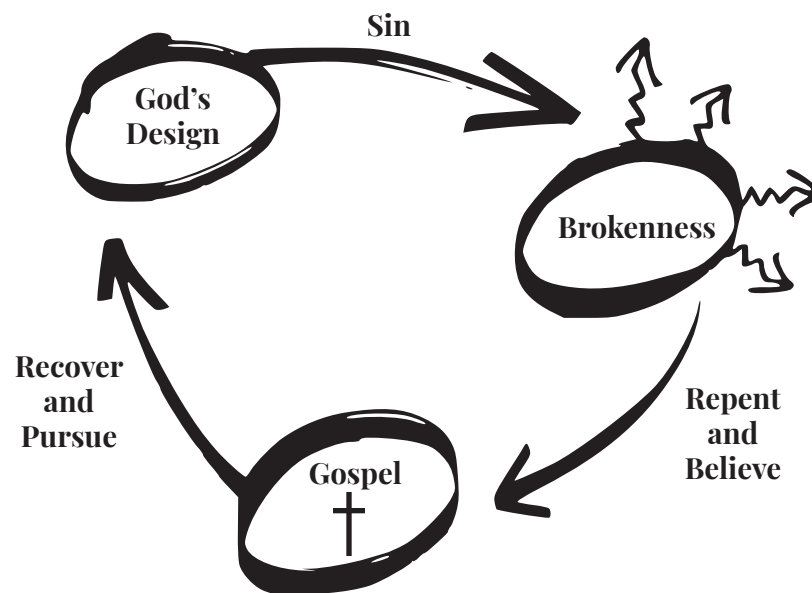
*Turning Everyday Conversations into Gospel Conversations* is a simple, real-world-tested strategy to train new and seasoned believers to join God in His reconciliation work. This resource equips believers to use the innovative “3 Circles,” a user-friendly evangelistic tool for a new generation. Learn how to incorporate the biblical metanarrative—as well as your own personal story—to tell the good news that Jesus has made a way out of the broken places we find ourselves.

Churches around the world are training people to share the gospel using this method. It has a proven appeal across generations and cultures. An 8-year-old boy led his 26-year-old cousin to repent and believe in Jesus. A 70-year-old church member—who had never before shared his faith—led his Spanish-speaking neighbor to Christ. It's been used to train the Mixtec in Mexico, Maasai Warriors in Kenya, and prisoners in America. Its been presented on napkins, in concrete, in the sand, and using tortillas. The 3 Circles works!

It doesn't matter if you have been a Christian for decades or days, you can learn to do what God asks us to do—to make His appeal to others through us (2 Corinthians 5:20).

## It's Simple

The 3 Circles is really simple. It involves three circles connected by three arrows.





# Vitalization Phase 4: Aligning Structure

## Two Key Structure Questions

- 1** Key Structure Question #1  
*What are the criteria for decision-making and resource allocation?*
- 2** Key Structure Question #2  
*How does leadership function?*

**Definition:** Structure is the behind-the-scenes support of ministry, and includes such things as personnel, policies, procedures, polity, organization, boards, staff, committees, payroll, finances, buildings, grounds, etc. Structural alignment is the deliberate and consistent practice of designing and deploying structure in light of vision and strategy, providing the spiritual leadership and strategic resourcing required to support the strategies that fulfill the vision.

### The Acts 6 Structure Model: Acts 6:1-7

*<sup>6</sup>Now in these days when the disciples were increasing in number, a complaint by the Hellenists arose against the Hebrews because their widows were being neglected in the daily distribution. <sup>2</sup>And the twelve summoned the full number of the disciples and said, "It is not right that we should give up preaching the word of God to serve tables. <sup>3</sup>Therefore, brothers, pick out from among you seven men of good repute, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we will appoint to this duty. <sup>4</sup>But we will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word." <sup>5</sup>And what they said pleased the whole gathering, and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit, and Philip, and Prochorus, and Nicanor, and Timon, and Parmenas, and Nicolaus, a proselyte of Antioch. <sup>6</sup>These they set before the apostles, and they prayed and laid their hands on them. <sup>7</sup>And the word of God continued to increase, and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests became obedient to the faith.*

**NO!**

**Administration and Finance**

**YES!**

**Spiritual Leadership and Strategic Resourcing**



# Vitalization Phase 5: Aligning People

## Two Key People Questions

- 1** Key People Question #1  
*How will we get people involved?*
- 2** Key People Question #2  
*On whom does the future depend?*

## Four Dimensions of Change

- **Dimension 1:** The Willingness to Change (see Ready, Fire, Aim).
- **Dimension 2:** The Ability to Change.
- **Dimension 3:** The Substance of Change.
- **Dimension 4:** The Pace of Change.

## The People of Great Commission Vitalization

- Pastor/Leader.
- Other Leaders: Lay/Staff.
- The Vision Team/Prayer Teams.
- The Congregation.
- The Community.
- The Launch Team.
- The Third Party.

## Vitalization Principle:

**Change as Choice**  
**vs.**  
**Change as Crisis**



## **12 Potential Stumbling Blocks to Church Vitality**

1. Lack of committed leadership.
2. No intentionality in ongoing leadership development.
3. Being impatient and not recognizing that church vitality is an ongoing process.
4. Not intentionally analyzing the community (including speaking with community leaders).
5. Resistance to integrating all ministries around the outreach focus (rather than creating a separate outreach ministry).
6. Not involving all ministry leaders in the early stages to assure understanding and buy-in. Not dealing with ministry leaders who won't embrace vision and process.
7. Unwillingness to focus outreach on the development of relationships (and not just service).
8. Not looking at making adjustments to all aspects of the church (worship, Sunday school, student ministries, etc.).
9. Lack of Focus—looking at all ministries and changing/eliminating activities that aren't helpful in reaching the lost.
10. Not having constant, concise, and consistent communication.
11. Not developing a discipleship “process” (rather than “programs”) that assures people are actually maturing in their faith.
12. Not able to tolerate some in the congregation who are not on board.



## **“We Can Do This!”**

### **A concluding/sending exercise**

1. As the Vitality Seminar concludes, take 20 minutes around your table or with two or three others, and identify three places in the community where the congregation could go and serve well—to build relationships with people far from God—to eventually share the gospel and disciple believers.
2. Choose one of the three places, and begin to talk around your table about what it might look like if the congregation was to begin to serve in that place.
3. Have someone share your one idea with the whole group.
4. Leave with prayer and the wonderful assurance of Jesus, the Lord of the Church, that “we can do this in the strength and power of His presence and might!”



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