

# HEALTHY CHURCH VISION

## Leader Guide



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# How to Use This Guide

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The goal of this **Healthy Church Vision** study is to support you and your ministry team(s) as you assess the health of your congregation. It will support you as you develop imagination and next steps for cultivating Healthy Church vision and practice. We know that your congregation and context are unique. So, this study won't focus on prescribing guidelines, metrics, and next steps. Instead, it will support you as you lead your team through a series of conversations, Scripture studies, and guided activities. These practices will encourage personal and communal insight, thoughtful reflection, and courageous vision. Over the next seven weeks, you and your team will:



Establish a baseline of knowledge and interest around Healthy Church Vision.



Perform a "Checkup" on your congregation to assess current church health.



Evaluate current church practices against examples of church health and church purpose we find in our Scriptures.



Create unique health indicators, habits and practices and metrics for your congregation.



Plan and execute a prayer walk in your community.



Build a more robust imagination for your congregation's participation in the kingdom.

## HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

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As the leader, your role is important. You will facilitate this experience with your team. You will instruct and teach less. You will listen, support, and enable more, and emphasize the participation of your team members. If this approach feels like a stretch for you, here are a few tips to get you started:



Throughout the study, you will organize your team into groups and pairs. You will facilitate brainstorms and compile data. Choose a place to meet, if you can, that has ample wall space and room for movement.

Come prepared for each session. Review the materials ahead of time. You may wish to complete the activities, prayers, and prompts personally ahead of time. And you may wish to take notes as you go. This practice will make you familiar with the material and the facilitation techniques. It will also support you to keep your “facilitator” hat on as you guide your team through the materials.



Pay special attention to the processes outlined in your guide. These outline **the way** (process) you will lead your group to engage into the **what** (content) of their learning.



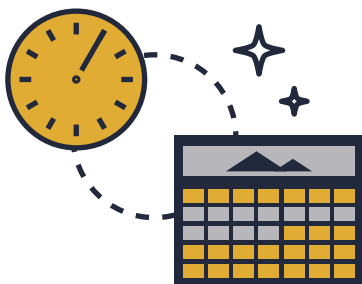
Consider how the material you are covering may need adjusted to fit your unique context, culture, or church type. You may need to choose a different case study or adjust the ones given here. Or you may need to adjust the health measurement systems so they are more appropriate for your situation.



Feel free to tweak the process to make sense for your group. Larger groups may need to be organized into trios instead of pairs. Smaller groups may benefit from having individual time to read and process, and then come together as an entire group for sharing opportunities.



Spend time in prayer seeking humility and openness. A leader who is ready to listen and receive will have an opportunity each week to learn about the dreams, assumptions, concerns, and frustrations of their team. This is what we want for you!



Take as much time as you need to complete this study. Notice if there is a session that has inspired a lot of creativity or curiosity. Give yourself permission to spend more than one week exploring the content and facilitating the activities and conversations. You might be surprised at how deeply your team can engage with the material when given the space and opportunity to do so.



Silence is your friend. Don't rush to fill silences during group sharing time. This is often necessary space in the group processing environment. This gives participants time to reflect and to review the content received so far, which is essential space for the introverts and internal processors on your team.



Some groups work well when they have appropriate music in the background. Ask your group members if they appreciate this kind of support — and if they do, come prepared with a way to provide this learning support for them. (For example, play a playlist of worship music from your phone or device.)



Always tell your groups how much time they will have for each activity. This helps them manage their attention and time as they focus their attention and efforts on this study.

## Virtual Meeting Adaptations

If you are meeting virtually, you'll need to make some adjustments to the facilitation process. Here are some suggestions that may set you up for success:

- You can use the “whiteboard” function of your virtual meeting app/software in the place of physical posters when you meet.



It may be helpful to invite an additional person to the study to function as the scribe/whiteboard facilitator for the group.



Remember to save the work each session. Your team will continue to build their learning and reference the “posters” throughout the study.

- You can use the “breakout room” function to organize your group into pairs or small groups when it’s indicated in the curriculum.



Tell participants how long they will have for their activities before you send them into their breakout rooms.

- When the study calls for private reading or processing time (time to reflect and review the content received so far), invite participants to turn off their video and mic. This creates more of a distraction-free setting.
- When the study calls for Scripture Exploration, you can pull up the passage on your favorite online Bible reading tool and then share your screen (or copy and paste the text into a word processing document). This creates a space for you to mark up the scripture in an interactive way — noticing themes, patterns, and big ideas together.

# Time for Your Checkup

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## Lead the Leader

**In today's session, you will support your team to:**

1. Identify what they already know or think they know about Healthy Church vision.
2. Study the example of the church in Acts, noticing the indicators of health that Luke offers in the text.
3. Define church health indicators specific to your congregation and context.
4. Evaluate broadly your current state of health according to these indicators.

## You will need:

- Markers
- Pens/pencils and highlighters
- Poster prepped for Know, Want to Know, and Learned (KWL) chart activity
- Poster prepped for Church Health Indicators

**TIME FOR YOUR CHECKUP**

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<b>KNOW</b>	<b>WANT TO KNOW</b>	<b>LEARNED</b>	<b>CHURCH HEALTH INDICATORS</b>

**Starting the Session**

The way you begin this study with your team will set the precedent for their active participation throughout the study. As you journey through this Healthy Church visioning process, you will have opportunities to reflect, celebrate, repent, and grow.

You will rely on the Holy Spirit and one another to discover truths about your congregation and the good works God has prepared for you. This courageous work can only be accomplished through prayerful active participation and compassionate listening.

As you set the scene for your team, forecast for them what today's session holds and your heartfelt hopes for this study before inviting them to pray.



## Opening Prayer



Lord Jesus, we are so grateful we are included in what you are doing in this world! Thank you for bringing us together into spiritual community with you and one another. Heavenly Spirit, please open our minds and hearts up to you. Enable us to see and hear what you desire to say to us today, Father. And make us faithful and diligent to do your will, in Jesus' name. Amen.

### Prayer Prompt: (5 min)

Invite your team to pray through 1 Peter 1:13 together. Read the passage aloud two or three times. Prompt each member to listen for a word or phrase that stands out to them.

**"Therefore, preparing your minds for action, and being sober-minded, set your hope fully on the grace that will be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus."**

**1 Peter 1:13 ESV**

Ask each member of the group to share a one sentence response with the group. Close by offering a summary prayer to God on behalf of the group.

### Pre-Session Reflection — Patient History and Concerns (10 min)

After prayer, shift the group's attention to the Know, Want to Know, and Learned (KWL) chart. You can use the following questions to prompt thinking around columns 1 and 2 (Know and Want to Know):

1. Know — what do we know (or think we know) about Healthy Church vision?
2. Want to Know — what would you like to learn through the course of this study?

**TIME FOR YOUR CHECKUP**

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Record your team’s answers as they share. Or recruit a scribe at the beginning of the activity to record in your place. Leave the third column blank for now — you will return to this chart each week to track your team’s learning and shifting interests.

**Your chart should look something like this once you’ve completed the activity.**

<b>KNOW</b>	<b>WANT TO KNOW</b>	<b>LEARNED</b>
<i>Idea 1</i>	<i>Interest</i>	
<i>Idea 2</i>	<i>Question</i>	
<i>Idea 3</i>	<i>?</i>	
<i>Idea 4</i>	<i>Concern</i>	
<i>Idea 5</i>	<i>Concern</i>	
<i>Idea 6</i>	<i>Question</i>	
	<i>Interest</i>	

**Scripture Exploration: Acts 2:42–47 (45 min)**

In Luke’s account of the Church’s birth and expansion, we see a clear, multi-faceted example of church health in its most practical and radical expression. Today, we will search one of these accounts, noticing three different aspects of health over the course of three readings: personal, relational, and communal health. For the purposes of this activity, we can define these areas as:



**Personal Health:** The function of the individual and their contribution to the life of the congregation.



**Relational Health:** The function of relationships in the congregation and how they contribute to a sense of belonging and well-being for the whole.



**Communal Health:** The function of the congregation within the broader community and how it contributes to the common good of all.

## Reading Prompts and Partnered Sharing (15 min):

Guide your group through reading the scripture like this:

1. Share the prompt
2. Read the passage aloud
3. Pause to allow for additional private processing time (time to reflect and review the content received so far)
4. Repeat with the next prompt.

**Prompt for First Read:**

What evidence of **personal** health do you see in the actions and priorities of the early church? Circle the words or phrases that support your observations in your guide.

**Prompt for Second Read:**

What evidence of **relational** health do you see? How can you tell? Underline the words or phrases that support your observations in your guide.

**Prompt for Third Read:**

What evidence of **communal** health do you see in the actions and priorities of the early church? What are the outcomes of these actions/priorities? Highlight the outcomes in your guide.

### Example of Scripture Markup:

They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Everyone was filled with awe at the many wonders and signs performed by the apostles. All the believers were together and had everything in common. They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need. Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved. Acts 2:42–47 NIV

## TIME FOR YOUR CHECKUP

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After all the readings have been completed and marked up, organize your team into pairs to share their observations and create 3–5 health indicators together. They can use any or all of the following stems or create their own!

### Stems:

Based on the example in Acts, we believe that healthy churches ...

[Complete the sentence.]

- Individuals in healthy churches ... (feel/think/act)
- Relationships in healthy churches ... (feel like, look like)
- Healthy churches create/bring/contribute ... in their broader communities.

**Bring the group back together for an opportunity to share together. (30 min)**

### In today's session, you will support your team to:

1. Invite each pair to share ONE statement with the group without any explanation or crosstalk. Record each statement on your Church Health Indicator poster.
2. Once every pairing has shared one statement, open the conversation to include clarifying questions **(What did you mean when you said ...)**. Members can also share if they had a similar statement in their notes. Statements that appear across more than one pairing should be identified with a tally mark on the poster.
3. Repeat this process until all statements have been shared and repetitions have been noted.
4. Once all statements are recorded, you may choose to condense your findings into 3–5 summary indicators. You may need to work collectively to gather similar statements or vote on the statements that most resonate with your group.



Your group will use these indicators as you progress through the study, so do your best to land on a reasonable number of indicators that are compelling to your team.

## Guided Visioning Activity — Jesus the Great Physician (3 min)

To close this session, guide your team into imaginative prayer using the following script:



Now we are going to invite Jesus into our group reflection process as we lean into his identity as the Great Physician through listening prayer.

I invite you to close your eyes or find a place in the room to rest your gaze. This posture will support you to listen well as we attend to the Spirit of Jesus in our midst.

To begin with, we will imagine that we have entered a doctor's office. You open the door and step into an empty room. What do you see? Smell? What do you taste? What do you notice as you sit down and take in the environment? How do you feel?



**(Pause for a moment and allow the room to explore the sensory aspects of the guided meditation.)**

You hear a knock just before the door opens and Jesus enters the room. What do you notice about him? About his presence? About how you feel in his company? Jesus thanks you for coming in for your checkup and begins to review your congregation's history. Together, you talk about your knowledge of yourself and your church family. Challenges from the past. Potential health risks. What comes to mind for you? Spend a few moments here in conversation with Jesus.



**(Pause for a moment and allow the room to explore the sensory aspects of the guided meditation.)**

## TIME FOR YOUR CHECKUP

Once you've processed your history with Jesus, he invites you to lay back on the examination table. It's time for your checkup. As you lay back, ask Jesus what signs of health that he notices in you and your congregation. You might ask him about the three aspects of health we discussed today: personal, relational, communal. Pay attention to what he shares. Notice how pleased he is with you, your efforts, and your progress.



**(Pause for a moment and allow the room to explore the sensory aspects of the guided meditation.)**

Now, ask Jesus what health risks he notices. Where does he see room for improvement? What concerns does he have about your church's activities, posture, or practice? What does he want you to pay attention to as you engage in this study? Pay attention to any fear or defensiveness that may arise. Notice his compassion and lack of judgment, and offer those feelings to him as you talk.



**(Pause for a moment and allow the room to explore the sensory aspects of the guided meditation.)**

To close your time in prayer, ask Jesus these two questions:



- **Jesus, what do you want me to know?**
- **What do you want me to do?**

When you've listened to his response and have a sense of closure, you can open your eyes and return your gaze to me.



## TIME FOR YOUR CHECKUP

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The members of your group will react to and receive this experience differently. The way that we engage our imagination and express emotions can vary greatly. Create an opportunity to share by asking the group:



- **What was this experience like for you?**
- **What would you like to share?**



After those who are open to sharing have offered their contributions, close your study with a brief prayer that incorporates the experiences and insights offered by the group.

# More Than the Sum of Our Parts

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Church Systems Overview and Assessment | Scripture: 1 Corinthians 12

## Lead the Leader

**In today's session, you will support your team to:**

1. Share what they have learned and integrated so far in this study.
2. Begin thinking about your church as a group of organic (or living) systems.
3. Consider these systems in terms of your unique context and current culture.
4. Evaluate the health of your internal systems according to your church health indicators.

### **You will need:**

- Markers
- Pens/pencils and highlighters
- Your previously populated posters: Know, Want to Know, and Learned (KWL) chart and Church Health Indicators



## Opening Prayer



Lord Jesus, we appreciate how you have enabled us to consider the health of our congregation. Thank you for the insights you have given. As we gather now, may your Spirit enable us to see your Body in a new way, with all its various parts, in the unity of your Spirit. Awaken us to a clearer perception of and appreciation for all your Father had in mind when he brought us together by your Spirit. In your name, Jesus, we pray. Amen.

## Pre-Session Reflection — KWL Chart (10 min)

Before digging into this week's material, take a moment to revisit your KWL Chart as a group. Ask each member of the team to journal their big ideas from last week in their guide or on a piece of paper. Allow 1–2 minutes for this private reflection time. Then invite members to share their insights aloud. Record their insights in the “Learned” column. Allow 5–7 minutes for the share aloud portion of the activity.

## Scripture Exploration: 1 Corinthians 12:12–31 (30 min)

For today's scripture study, divide your team into 4 groups and assign each group one section of the passage to study. (The passage sections are outlined in their guides as well as yours.) Smaller groups can divide into groups of two, each group reading two sections. (One person groups can also work!)

Once groups are established, guide them through the following steps:

1. Read your section(s) of scripture to yourself several times, paying special attention to repeated words or themes. Circle, underline, or make notes about your observations.
2. After everyone has processed the passage on their own, share observations with your group. One person should speak at a time, with no crosstalk.
3. Once everyone has shared, work together as a group to create a “Big Idea Statement” to share with the whole. This statement should be one sentence that summarizes the passage and its meaning.
4. Invite each group, beginning with section one, to share their statements with the group.

Scripture Sections: 1 Corinthians 12:12–31 NIV

**12** Just as a body, though one, has many parts, but all its many parts form one body, so it is with Christ. **13** For we were all baptized by one Spirit so as to form one body—whether Jews or Gentiles, slave or free—and we were all given the one Spirit to drink. **14** Even so the body is not made up of one part but of many.

**15** Now if the foot should say, “Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body,” it would not for that reason stop being part of the body. **16** And if the ear should say, “Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body,” it would not for that reason stop being part of the body. **17** If the whole body were an eye, where would the sense of hearing be? If the whole body were an ear, where would the sense of smell be? **18** But in fact God has placed the parts in the body, every one of them, just as he wanted them to be. **19** If they were all one part, where would the body be? **20** As it is, there are many parts, but one body.

**21** The eye cannot say to the hand, “I don’t need you!” And the head cannot say to the feet, “I don’t need you!” **22** On the contrary, those parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, **23** and the parts that we think are less honorable we treat with special honor. And the parts that are unpresentable are treated with special modesty, **24** while our presentable parts need no special treatment. But God has put the body together, giving greater honor to the parts that lacked it, **25** so that there should be no division in the body, but that its parts should have equal concern for each other. **26** If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it.

**27** Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it.

**28** And God has placed in the church first of all apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then miracles, then gifts of healing, of helping, of guidance, and of different kinds of tongues. **29** Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Do all work miracles? **30** Do all have gifts of healing? Do all speak in tongues? Do all interpret?

**31** Now eagerly desire the greater gifts.  
And yet I will show you the most excellent way.

### Potential Big Ideas:

- The human body is a helpful metaphor for the unity and diversity of the Church.
- Each part of the Body is essential and intentionally designed by God.
- Difference within Christ's Body is what allows the Body to function.
- Our "oneness" or unity is not dependent upon our sameness, but upon cooperation amid our differences.
- The Body of Christ is made of different and interdependent parts.
- Each person plays a key role in the functioning of the church.






Close your Scripture Exploration with a discussion of the following summary question: **What might we learn about healthy churches from Paul's teaching on the Body?**



Update your Church Health Indicators poster with any new insights or considerations.

## Guided Visioning Experience: Body Scan Brainstorm (15 min)

You will close your session today by synthesizing your learning from 1 Corinthians with your knowledge of the human body and the “parts” of your congregation. The idea is to get your group to think concretely about the people and teams in your church, and the role they play. Give the group 3–5 minutes to complete the table on their own before opening for discussion. Take the systems one at a time and invite group members to share who/what they said and why. Pay attention to the perspectives and patterns that emerge. It is okay if your group member evaluations are different!

SYSTEM		FUNCTION	CHURCH COUNTERPART (TEAM OR PERSON(S))
Skeletal		Provides structure and protection	
Digestive		Turns food into energy for the body	
Circulatory		Moves vital nutrients throughout the body	
Muscular		Supports the body in movement and action	
Reproductive		Ensures the survival of the species through producing offspring	

## Closing Prayer Prompt (10 min)

Invite the group into a time of prayerful reflection to close your session. Encourage them to seek Christ’s wisdom with the following questions, recording thoughts and questions as they emerge.

- Jesus, what parts of our body might we overlook or undervalue?
- Jesus, where do the parts of our body work well together?
- Jesus, are there parts of our body under stress? Over-functioning?
- Jesus, what is one way I can live in greater alignment within our body?

KNOW	WANT TO KNOW	LEARNED
<p><i>Idea 1</i></p> <p><i>Idea 2</i></p> <p><i>Idea 3</i></p> <p><i>Idea 4</i></p> <p><i>Idea 5</i></p> <p><i>Idea 6</i></p>	<p><u><i>Interest</i></u></p> <p><i>Question</i></p> <p><i>?</i></p> <p><u><i>Concern</i></u></p> <p><i>Concern</i></p> <p><i>Question</i></p> <p><i>Interest</i></p>	<p><i>Insight or summary sentence.</i></p> <p><i>Insight or summary sentence.</i></p> <p><i>Insight or summary sentence.</i></p>

Create an opportunity to share by asking the group:



- **What was this experience like for you?**
- **What would you like to share?**



After those who are open to sharing have offered their contributions, close your study with a brief prayer that incorporates the experiences and insights offered by the group.

# The Picture of Health

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New Testament Vision for Church Purpose | Scripture: Ephesians 3:1–21

## Lead the Leader

**In today's session, you will support your team to:**

1. Continue to integrate their vision for church health into your unique setting and situation.
2. Draw inspiration from how Paul understands the Church's purpose as shared in his letter to the Ephesians.
3. Integrate your learning as you evaluate a case study together. (Keep in mind the case study below may not exactly fit your cultural, economic, and social context, since it is set in the U.S. If this case study does not fit your culture adequately, you will want to adjust it or locate one which is more appropriate for your environment and setting, and the conditions in which your church exists.)

### **You will need:**

- KWL chart and Church Health Indicators posters
- Markers
- Pens/pencils and highlighters

## Opening Prayer



Lord Jesus, thank you for showing us the many parts you have placed into this body. Thank you for our unity in your Spirit. Now that you have brought us together, Lord, awaken us to that purpose for which you have made us a body. Holy Spirit, please open us up to our heavenly Father’s desires. Give us the heart and mind to follow Jesus’ lead as he takes us out into our community in love and service, in Jesus’s name. Amen.

### Pre-Session Reflection — KWL Chart (5 min)

Continue your practice of adding insights to the “Learned” section of your KWL Chart to start off your study together this week. When something your group has learned addresses a question or idea in the “Want to Know” column, mark it off.

Give your group a few minutes to answer their personal reflection prompt in their guide: **How would you describe the purpose of the Church? Our church?**

### Scripture Exploration: Ephesians 3:1–21 (30 min)

Ask for two volunteers to read the passage aloud to the group, one reader per translation/paraphrase. Invite the rest of the group to silently note their questions and observations as they follow along.

NIV	THE MESSAGE PARAPHRASE
<p><b>God’s Marvelous Plan for the Gentiles</b></p> <p><b>For this reason I, Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus for the sake of you Gentiles—</b></p> <p><b>2 Surely you have heard about the administration of God’s grace that was given to me for you, 3 that is,</b></p>	<p><b>1–3</b> This is why I, Paul, am in jail for Christ, having taken up the cause of you outsiders, so-called. I take it that you’re familiar with the part I was given in God’s plan for including everybody. I got the inside story on this from God himself, as I just wrote you in brief.</p>

the mystery made known to me by revelation, as I have already written briefly. **4** In reading this, then, you will be able to understand my insight into the mystery of Christ, **5** which was not made known to people in other generations as it has now been revealed by the Spirit to God's holy apostles and prophets. **6** This mystery is that through the gospel the Gentiles are heirs together with Israel, members together of one body, and sharers together in the promise in Christ Jesus.

**7** I became a servant of this gospel by the gift of God's grace given me through the working of his power.

**8** Although I am less than the least of all the Lord's people, this grace was given me: to preach to the Gentiles the boundless riches of Christ, **9** and to make plain to everyone the administration of this mystery, which for ages past was kept hidden in God, who created all things. **10** His intent was that now, through the church, the manifold wisdom of God should be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms, **11** according to his eternal purpose that he accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord. **12** In him and through faith

**4-6** As you read over what I have written to you, you'll be able to see for yourselves into the mystery of Christ. None of our ancestors understood this. Only in our time has it been made clear by God's Spirit through his holy apostles and prophets of this new order. **The mystery is that people who have never heard of God and those who have heard of him all their lives (what I've been calling outsiders and insiders) stand on the same ground before God. They get the same offer, same help, same promises in Christ Jesus. The Message is accessible and welcoming to everyone, across the board.**

**7-8** This is my life work: helping people understand and respond to this Message. It came as a sheer gift to me, a real surprise, God handling all the details. When it came to presenting the Message to people who had no background in God's way, I was the least qualified of any of the available Christians. God saw to it that I was equipped, but you can be sure that it had nothing to do with my natural abilities.

**8-10** And so here I am, preaching and writing about things that are way over my head, the inexhaustible riches



in him we may approach God with freedom and confidence. **13** I ask you, therefore, not to be discouraged because of my sufferings for you, which are your glory.

**A Prayer for the Ephesians**

**14** For this reason I kneel before the Father, **15** from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name. **16** I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, **17** so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. **And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, 18 may have power, together with all the Lord's holy people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, 19 and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.**

**20** Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, **21** to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen.

and generosity of Christ. My task is to bring out in the open and make plain what God, who created all this in the first place, has been doing in secret and behind the scenes all along.

**Through followers of Jesus like yourselves gathered in churches, this extraordinary plan of God is becoming known and talked about even among the angels!**

**11–13** All this is proceeding along lines planned all along by God and then executed in Christ Jesus. When we trust in him, we're free to say whatever needs to be said, bold to go wherever we need to go. So don't let my present trouble on your behalf get you down. Be proud!

• • •

**14–19** My response is to get down on my knees before the Father, this magnificent Father who parcels out all heaven and earth. I ask him to strengthen you by his Spirit—not a brute strength but a glorious inner strength—that Christ will live in you as you open the door and invite him in. And I ask him that with both feet planted firmly on love, you'll be able to take in with all followers of Jesus the extravagant dimensions of Christ's love. Reach out and experience the breadth!

## THE PICTURE OF HEALTH

	<p>Test its length! Plumb the depths! Rise to the heights! <b>Live full lives, full in the fullness of God.</b></p> <p><b>20–21 God can do anything, you know— far more than you could ever imagine or guess or request in your wildest dreams! He does it not by pushing us around but by working within us, his Spirit deeply and gently within us.</b></p> <p>Glory to God in the church! Glory to God in the Messiah, in Jesus! Glory down all the generations! Glory through all millennia! Oh, yes!</p>
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In the picture Paul paints of the Church, Christ followers gather to participate in God’s plan to bring all people (insiders and outsiders) into His kingdom. In this vision, believers partner with the Holy Spirit and one another to mature into people who extend God’s love to their communities. When Christ followers live into this purpose, the Church reveals God’s good news plan to the world AND to spiritual powers!

Once the readers have finished, present the following prompt questions to the group:



- **Based on this passage, what might Paul understand the purpose of the Church to be?**
- **How is our church making known God’s plan to bring together “insiders” and “outsiders”?**

Offer a few moments for your group members to read the passage again quietly and journal their responses.

If your group is larger than 4 people, organize members into smaller groups of 2–4. Then, give 10–15 minutes for these small groups to reflect and review the content received so far. Encourage the group(s) to:

- Share their answers to the prompt questions, one at a time.
- Share how this passage influences (Challenges? Affirms? Disrupts? Shifts?) their understanding of the Church’s purpose.

### **Case Study (25 min)**

Invite participants to stay in groups as you shift into today’s case study activity. Ask everyone to read the case study quietly to themselves before discussing their observations in their groups.

Offer the following questions as potential conversation prompts:

- How might the challenges in our church resemble the case study?  
How are they different?
- What indicators of church health do you see in the study?



**Holy District — Allentown, PA**

### **Overview:**

Holy District is a bi-lingual, multi-cultural congregation that began as a parachute church plant in the poorest zip code of Allentown, PA. A parachute church plant is a type of church plant done by a church leader previously unknown to the community. In 2019, when the church was planted, approximately 2% of residents in the broader region were considered evangelized. The focus neighborhood of the Holy District plant is primarily Spanish-speaking, and made up of Puerto Rican, Dominican, and Caribbean neighbors — many of whom are unchurched or estranged from the church.

### **Challenges:**

**Personal:** Lack of church participation and/or experiences of church hurt had left most of residents in the neighborhood ill-equipped to engage in a personal relationship with God. Fear of judgment, confusion about the Bible, and a lack of opportunity to practice prayer with others kept our neighbors disconnected from themselves, God, and each other.

**Relational:** Though the target neighborhood was incredibly dense, differences in language and culture fostered a sense of isolation on the block. Residents kept to themselves as they prioritized personal family needs and limited interaction with others.

**Communal:** Generational poverty in the community contributed to high rates of violence, substance use, poor educational outcomes, and other quality of life concerns. Existing nonprofits and churches offered charity (food banks, giveaways, etc.), but very little developmental support was available.

### **Solutions:**

#### **Break down personal barriers through place-based pastoral care**

Holy District leaders began their church planting journey with a bias toward the neighborhood. Rather than launch worship services and attempt to attract neighbors to attend, the planting team focused on being present in the neighborhood. They chose to imagine the entire block as their congregation or parish — even when most of their neighbors did not profess faith or seem interested in attending church.

They saw themselves as missionaries who were being sent to this neighborhood. They had a desire to become fluent in the lives of their people and place.

Practically, they prioritized prayer walks, invited neighbors to dinner, participated in neighborhood activities, and learned about local issues. As the planting team built rapport in their place, residents became curious. Why are these people here? Why do they care about us? About me? They began to share concerns with the planting team members. They showed up to community gatherings hosted by Holy District to share about themselves, ask for prayer, and build relationships with the planting team and one another.

### **Unify the neighborhood through differentiated gatherings**

As they recognized that each of the neighborhood residents had unique spiritual journeys and interest in Jesus, the Holy District team created distinct spaces with specific goals and intentions as a part of their mission to the neighborhood.

The first space to develop was a small worship gathering. This gathering was intended only for those who had made confessions of faith, and who desired to follow Jesus as Lord. The planting team opted for a very simple liturgy.

This liturgy centered on prayer, reading and discussing Scripture, serving and receiving communion, and reflecting on the Spirit's leading to be good news to the neighborhood. As members and leaders of the worship gathering came together, they knew that everyone in participation had a similar set of assumptions and values. The worship gathering could be a unique place for believers to focus on worship and discipleship because there was another space dedicated to sharing and demonstrating the good news of Jesus to those who were not yet a part of the Body.

This was the community gathering space. It took place directly after the worship gathering and was created to be a space of beauty and belonging for the entire neighborhood. It held space for connection, rest, celebration, and fun. Those who were becoming curious about the Holy District could come to community gatherings without fear of being "outsiders." They could build relationships with members of the worship community and have regular contact with believers without being expected to navigate the nuances of Christian worship.

### **Develop local leaders to be good news to the neighborhood**

As the network of relationships deepened, Holy District ministry leaders began to see gifts and strengths within the worship and community gathering participants. They also learned about the issues that were most important to the neighborhood and the ideas that their community had for solving those problems. In response, the planting pastor invited those concerned members to form a local leadership team whose purpose was to discern solutions to neighborhood challenges. They held regular listening meetings, collaborative planning sessions, and took action in their community.

**⇒ Outcomes:**

After several years of experimentation, the Holy District community in Allentown has observed the following outcomes:

- Over 80% of current worship gathering participants were previously unchurched or dechurched.
- The initial worshipping community has grown exponentially (10x growth over three years) as neighbors who attend community gatherings are welcomed into relationships with faithful believers, disciplined in kingdom living, and included in the worship community.
- The local leader team, supported by the pastor, have developed several strategies to address poverty and other issues in the community.

These include:



Development of an internal grant that supports community-building initiatives, educational/training opportunities, and capital improvement projects.



Organizing to advocate for fair funding for the local school district.



Development of the “Neighborhood Trust,” a developmental approach to financial relief that provides incentives for saving in materially-poor neighborhoods through a communal emergency fund with a contribution matching program.

- In five years of ministry, Holy District has multiplied four times, providing the factors needed to promote the development of new faith communities in the Phoenix metro area, State College and Lebanon, Pennsylvania as well as an additional community in Allentown.

After everyone has had the chance to read and discuss, help your group to synthesize their learning as you revisit the opening question for today’s session:

**How would you describe the purpose of the Church? Our church?**

HEALTHY HABITS INVENTORY			
	HOPE	FAITH	LOVE
KEEP DOING			
START DOING			

### Closing Prayer Prompt — Wildest Dreams (5 min)

The Message paraphrase of Ephesians 3:20 says that **“God can do anything, you know — far more than you could ever imagine or guess or request in your wildest dreams! He does it not by pushing us around but by working within us, his Spirit deeply and gently within us.”**

Close today’s session with an opportunity to do some “wild dreaming” in prayer. Invite your team to imagine what your church in a perfect state of health would look like. **How would you be different? Your congregation? Your community?** You might play a worship song in the background to encourage reflection.



Offer a closing prayer that voices your own Spirit-led imagination for your community.

# Habits of Healthy Churches

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Hope-Faith-Love Rhythms | Scripture: Romans 12

## Lead the Leader

**In today's session, you will support your team to:**

1. Engage their creativity and imagination around Healthy Church Vision.
2. Continue developing theological understanding of the Church as Christ's Body.
3. Consider how our theological understanding of the Church as Christ's Body impacts the way we approach our particular context and culture.
4. Brainstorm healthy habits that will contribute to your congregation's health.

### **You will need:**

- KWL chart and Church Health Indicators posters
- Markers and sticky notes
- Posters prepped for Yes/And Art and Healthy Habits Inventory
- Pens/pencils and highlighters



Keep in mind the case study below may not fit your cultural context, since it is set in Australia. If this case study does not fit your culture or situation, you will want to make it appropriate for your environment and setting, and the conditions in which your church exists.

### Opening Prayer



Lord Jesus, thank you for opening our eyes to the new possibilities and opportunities available to us as your people in this neighborhood. As we gather today, Creative Spirit, please spark in us your pictures of our congregation as a Healthy Church in this place and enable us to share these pictures with one another. Free us from unhealthy habits, and ignite those Faith, Hope, and Love Habits that will ensure Healthy Church, in Jesus' name. Amen.

### Pre-Session Reflection — KWL Chart and Yes/And Art (10 min)

#### KWL Chart

Continue your practice of adding insights to the “Learned” section of your KWL Chart to start off your study together this week. When something your group has learned addresses a question or idea in the “Want to Know” column, mark it off.

#### Yes/And Art

Invite your team into creative thinking about your church through a lighthearted, improvisational drawing activity.

1. Place a blank poster on the wall and give every participant a marker.
2. Ask each of them to remember their “wildest dream” imaginative prayer from last week. They should choose one image to share with the group — through art!
3. Once everyone has an image in mind, draw your image on the poster first. Explain what it is to the group and then choose the next person to come to the poster.

4. After you model for the group, each person will:
  - a. Affirm what was drawn by the person before them. (I like this because ...)
  - b. Add their image to the drawing and offer a brief explanation.
  - c. Choose the next person to draw.

Invite the last person to draw to offer a prayer for the group before beginning the day's Scripture Exploration.

### Scripture Exploration (15 min)

In Paul's exhortation to the church in Rome, he urges his disciples to live a life of "true and proper worship." This kind of life is guided by practices and habits that interact in a powerful way to bring about personal and communal transformation. In today's Scripture Exploration, you will reflect on Romans 12:1–21, looking for those practices and habits that are essential to church health.

Here are the three focus areas you will use for your reading exercise:



**Hope Habits** — Practices and habits that connect us to God, deepen our personal faith, and bring us into greater spiritual maturity.



**Faith Habits** — Habits that connect us to others in the Body, giving us an opportunity to imitate Jesus in the context of our imperfect relationships with one another.



**Love Habits** — Habits that connect us to the broader community, enabling us to bear witness to the love of Jesus through acts of mercy, justice, forgiveness, and sacrificial generosity.

### Reading Prompts and Partnered Sharing

#### Prompt for First Read:

Where do you see **Hope Habits** in Paul's exhortation to the Romans? Circle the words or phrases that support your observations in your guide.

#### Prompt for Second Read:

Where do you see **Faith Habits** in the passage? Underline the words or phrases that support your observations in your guide.

#### Prompt for Third Read:

Where do you notice **Love Habits** in the passage? Highlight the words or phrases that support your observations in your guide.

### Example of Scripture Markup:

Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God’s mercy, **to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship.** **2 Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind.** Then you will be able **to test and approve what God’s will is**— his good, pleasing and perfect will.

**3** For by the grace given me I say to every one of you: **Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment,** in accordance with the faith God has distributed to each of you. **4** For just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, **5** so in Christ we, though many, form one body, and each member belongs to all the others. **6** We have different gifts, according to the grace given to each of us. If your gift is prophesying, then prophecy in accordance with your faith; **7** if it is serving, then serve; if it is teaching, then teach; **8** if it is to encourage, then give encouragement; if it is giving, then give generously; if it is to lead do it diligently; if it is to show mercy, do it cheerfully.

**9** Love must be sincere. **Hate what is evil; cling to what is good.** **10** Be devoted to one another in love. Honor one another above yourselves. **11** Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervor, serving the Lord. **12** Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer. **13** Share with the Lord’s people who are in need. Practice hospitality.

**14** Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse. **15** Rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn. **16** Live in harmony with one another. Do not be proud, but be willing to associate with people of low position. Do not be conceited.

**17 Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everyone. 18 If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone. 19 Do not take revenge, my dear friends, but leave room for God's wrath, for it is written: "It is mine to avenge; I will repay," says the Lord. 20 On the contrary:**

**"If your enemy is hungry, feed him;**

**if he is thirsty, give him something to drink.**

**In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head."**

**21 Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.**

**Romans 12:1-21 NIV**

## Healthy Habits Inventory Pt. 1 (5 min)

After the group has had a chance to read and share with their partners, lead your group to begin creating a "Healthy Habits Inventory" for your congregation.

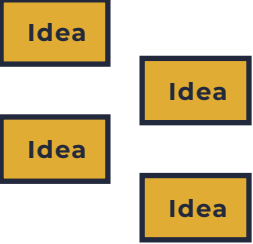
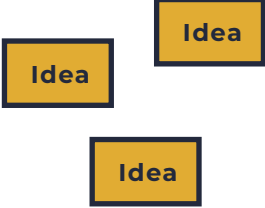

1. Pass out sticky notes to each pair. Ensure they have access to multiple notes.
2. Direct group members to spend one minute responding to the following prompt.

Participants should write one idea per sticky note:

**What healthy habits do we currently have as a congregation?**

3. Once everyone knows the prompt, start a timer for one minute.
4. After one minute, invite each individual to bring their sticky notes to the Healthy Habits Poster, sorting the habits into the appropriate columns (Faith, Hope, Love) in the top half of the organizer.
5. Once everyone has posted their sticky notes, pause the activity, and turn everyone's attention to this week's case study.

Your poster should look something like this:

<b>HEALTHY HABITS INVENTORY</b>			
	<b>HOPE</b>	<b>FAITH</b>	<b>LOVE</b>
<b>KEEP DOING</b>			
<b>START DOING</b>			

### **Case Study and Habit Inventory Pt. 2 (25 min)**

Invite participants to stay in their pairings as you shift into today’s case study activity. Ask everyone to read the case study quietly to themselves before discussing their observations with their partner.

Offer the following questions as potential conversation prompts:



- **What healthy habits do you see in the actions of Small Boat, Big Sea?**
- **What would you like to share?**



## Small Boat, Big Sea — Manly, New South Wales, Australia

Adapted from “To Alter Your World: Partnering with God to Rebirth our Communities”  
by Michael Frost and Christiana Rice (p.92-94)

### Overview:

Small Boat, Big Sea was a creative church expression doing missional ministry in Australia from 1999–2019. They described their mission as “working together in God’s mission to bring peace, hope, and love to the world. We are a church dedicated to both announcing and demonstrating the universal reign of God in Christ” and did ministry in Manly, a popular beach city and tourist destination.

### Challenges:

Manly cultural history had rendered it the “Las Vegas of 19th century Sydney” leading to excessive drinking, partying, and shockingly high incidences of alcohol-fueled violence. The violence became so problematic that the mayor of Manly declared a state of disaster and began to organize a campaign to curb it. Local ministers in the community advocated for funds to host alcohol-free, top quality Christian concerts in the area, but their ideas were not met with enthusiasm by other city leaders.

### Solutions:

#### Neighborhood mapping

Prior to the declaration of disaster, members of Small Boat, Big Sea had mapped their community. They sought to better understand the story of their place (history, significant people and places, community assets and challenges). This meant that they were attuned to their neighbors, city leaders, and community issues and that they were actively working to demonstrate the reign of God amid these relationships and challenges.

### Cross-ministry and cross-sector collaboration

Members within Small Boat, Big Sea saw that the mayor's ideas and the Christian concert strategy did not create sustainable change. They along with a group of other local ministers (including the person spearheading the concert idea) worked together to bring pastors, neighbors, the mayor, police chief, the head of the chamber of commerce, and local pub owners together to reimagine Manly and collaborate on a solution to the alcohol-fueled violence in their community. The ministers helped the business owners and city leaders make shifts in business strategies and transportation practices that helped to reduce violence.

### Street pastor response

Most importantly, the ministers came together to recruit hundreds of local people to act as "street pastors" on the weekends. These volunteer street pastors (wearing blue uniforms labeling them as such) patrolled the main street and entertainment precincts from midnight to four in the morning on weekends. Their charge was "to listen, help, and care for the revelers of Manly." Here are some examples of what street pastors did during their shifts:

- Sit with teens in the gutters, comforting upset teenagers.
- Walk inebriated revelers to a taxi or bus stop.
- Pickup broken glass.
- Clean trash and vomit on the street.

### Outcome:

Within a year, the rate of alcohol-fueled violence had decreased by one third in Manly (and continued to decrease in consecutive years).

After everyone has had the chance to read and discuss, help your group to synthesize their learning by returning to the Healthy Habits Inventory poster. Repeat the activity you did before the case study, except this time, populate the bottom half of the poster. Invite each member to write down their ideas for what habits your congregation might **start doing** to operate with greater health.

Encourage the group to think about the case studies and Scriptural insights they've gained as they imagine these potential new habits and practices.

HEALTHY HABITS INVENTORY			
	HOPE	FAITH	LOVE
KEEP DOING			
START DOING			

### Closing Prayer Prompt (5 min)

Take a moment as a group to notice all the discovery and discernment you’ve made in the study so far. Invite every participant to choose a poster that represents the work that is resonating most deeply with them.

- KWL Chart (learning)
- Health Indicators (analysis/evaluation)
- Yes/And Art (imagination/creativity)
- Habits Inventory (planning/practice)



Invite everyone to pray for God’s wisdom and grace as you continue in this work together. Close out with a prayer for your team, noticing their areas of interest as you do.



# Working (It) Out

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Sent Into Whole-Hearted Mission | Scripture: 2 Corinthians 5:16–21

## Lead the Leader

**In today's session, you will support your team to:**

1. Consider their identity as ministers of reconciliation and ambassadors of Christ.
2. Prepare to engage actively in your congregational context through a strategic prayer walk activity.

### **You will need:**

- KWL chart
- Markers
- Map of your city/neighborhood
- Pens and pencils

## Opening Prayer



Lord Jesus, we are grateful you have reconciled us with you and your Father in the Spirit. As we consider what it means for us to be reconciled with you, may we be open to your Spirit. Father, enable us to embrace and participate fully in our calling to be reconciled ambassadors of Christ in this world, in Jesus' name. Amen.

## Pre-Session Reflection — (5 min)

### KWL Chart

Continue your practice of adding insights to the “Learned” section of your KWL Chart to start off your study together this week. When something your group has learned addresses a question or idea in the “Want to Know” column, mark it off.

## Prayer Prompt: (10 min)

Invite your team to pray through John 20:21 together. Read the passage aloud two or three times, prompting each member to listen for a word or phrase that stands out to them.

**Jesus said to them again, “Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you.” John 20:21 NRSVUE**

Ask each member of the group to share a one sentence response with the group. Close by offering a summary prayer to God on behalf of the group.

## Scripture Exploration (15 min)

Read today's scripture passage aloud several times. Invite your group to consider the following question as they listen or follow along: **What connections are you making between our prayer passage and 2 Corinthians 5:16–21?**

**16 So from now on we regard no one from a worldly point of view.**

**Though we once regarded Christ in this way, we do so no longer.**

**17 Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come:**

The old has gone, the new is here!

**18** All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and **gave us the ministry of reconciliation: 19** that God was **reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting people's sins against them.** And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. **20 We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us.**

We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God. **21** God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God. 2 Corinthians 5:16–21 NIV

After you have read the passage aloud 2–3 times, invite each group member to journal their observations in their guides. Allow 2–3 minutes of silent processing time (time to reflect and review the content received so far) before inviting members to share their observations and questions.

## **Guided Experience: Our People, Our Place Prayer Walk (15 min)**

An ambassador, by definition, is an accredited diplomat sent by a country as its official representative to a foreign country. This week, your group will have an opportunity to explore your place through the eyes of an ambassador of your church and the kingdom of God. Lead your group through the following planning activity to prepare them for their prayer walk:

### **1. Parameters of Place**

Discuss with your group how you'd like to define "your place."

You could choose the immediate neighborhood around your church building, the broader neighborhood, a particular section of your town or city, or define a broader region in more rural areas.

Mark the parameters on your community map.

## **2. Identify Key Locations**

Within the parameters that your team selected, identify key locations where people in your place gather. These places could be civic buildings, popular institutions or businesses, parks, green spaces, etc. Mark them on your map.

## **3. Identify Your People**

As you consider these key locations in your community, begin to name the people (or groups of people) who frequent these places. Prioritize the people in your community who aren't yet a part of the Body of Christ for one reason or another. How many groups or people can your team name?

## **4. Create Walking Routes**

Based on the information you gather as a group, outline 2–3 strategic routes within your place. Ensure that the routes you identify prioritize:

- a. Walkability, i.e., accessible on foot or by wheelchair.
- b. Proximity to key locations.
- c. Opportunity to observe key people/people groups.

## **5. Assign Routes**

- a. Divide up into teams or pairs and assign groups to a walking route.
- b. Allow a few moments for each group to make plans for when they will do their prayer walk between now and the next session.
- c. Point out the organizer so that your group members can use it to journal their observations. (It's provided in the group guide for the prayer walk experience.)

Feel free to customize this activity so that it best supports your group!

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Please note: "Prayer Walk" is used because it is a widely understood term. It is meant to represent "moving through the neighborhood," however one might do that. Explain to participants that it is not meant to exclude people who move in their community by wheelchair.

## Closing Prayer Prompt — Christ Before Us (15 min)

Close out today's session by guiding your group through the following imaginative prayer experience:



Now we are going to invite Jesus to go before us on our prayer walk through a guided listening prayer. I invite each of you to find a comfortable sitting position, close your eyes, or focus your attention somewhere in the room.

Once you are settled, begin to envision the starting point for the prayer walk route that you have been assigned for this week.  
**What sights, smells, tastes, sounds do you experience?**

As the scene becomes clearer, ask the Holy Spirit to help you see Jesus. Your job is to watch and follow Jesus as he goes before you on your prayer walk.

And now Jesus is walking. Notice his pace.

**How quickly or slowly does he walk?**

**Does he stop anywhere?**

**Notice anyone?**

**Notice anything?**

Observe others who may be walking, shopping, working, etc. on your prayer walk route.

**Do they notice Jesus?**

**Who is drawn to him?**

**What does Jesus do?**

**Continue following Jesus along your route.**

**What buildings or landmarks do you see?**

**What places capture his attention? Your attention?**

**Continue this way along your entire route. Keep in step with Jesus. Feel free to ask him questions about what you see. Pay attention to what you sense, know, and feel as you follow.**

**Once you've completed your route, ask Jesus these two questions:**

**Jesus, where is my place?**

**Who are my people?**

**When you've listened to his response and have a sense of closure, you can open your eyes and return your gaze to me.**

The members of your group will react to and receive this experience differently. The way that we engage our imagination and express emotions can vary greatly. Create an opportunity to share by asking the group:

**What was this experience like for you? What would you like to share?**



After those who are open to sharing have offered their contributions, close your study with a brief prayer that incorporates the experiences and insights offered by the group.

## **Our People, Our Place Prayer Walk**

Begin your walk with a prayer of openness to King Jesus. Ask Jesus to open your eyes to the kingdom. Then, use the organizer below to record where and how you observe the kingdom in your midst:

<b>Person or Place You Encountered on Your Walk</b>	<b>Notes/Observations</b>

# Healthy Metrics

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Reconsidering “What Counts” | Scripture: Ephesians 4:1–15

## Starting the Session

In today’s session, your group will consider the kinds of metrics or methods of measuring that have been in use to determine your congregation’s success, and then you will reconsider those metrics in the light of your Scripture Exploration. This conversation can feel threatening and difficult — measuring success in ministry is complex and often creates a lot of stress for ministry leaders. The goal for today’s time to reflect and review the content received so far is to 1) affirm those methods of measurement that your congregation uses which are healthy for leaders and members, and 2) rethink those metrics that may be leading to unnecessary tension and anxiety. Let’s jump in!



## Lead the Leader

### In today's session, you will support your team to:

1. Become aware of implicit and explicit metrics for church success. (Implicit metrics are those measurements which are implied rather than expressly stated. Explicit metrics are those measurements which are fully and clearly expressed or demonstrated.)
2. Contemplate how Ephesians 4:1-15 may reshape our assumptions about "what counts" when it comes to ministry success.
3. Identify some "Markers for Maturity" to prioritize in your church metric conversations.

### You will need:

- KWL chart, Church Health Indicators, Yes/And posters
- Blank poster for Church Chart activity
- Markers and sticky notes
- Pens/pencils and highlighters

### Opening Prayer



Lord Jesus, thank you for how you have been and are at work in us and in our community. We are grateful you hear our prayers and are actively at work to draw others into your Body. Now as we consider what it means to be a Healthy Church, open us up by your Spirit to hear what you desire to say to us about this. Keep us humble, open, and responsive, in Jesus' name. Amen.

## **Pre-Session Reflection — Prayer Walk Reflection and KWL Chart (10 min)**

Kick off this week's study with a time of reflection on this week's learning. Your members should have observations from their prayer walks this week. Feel free to include learnings from the walk along with insights from last week's study as you continue adding to the "Learned" column of your KWL Chart.

Ask one of your group members to pray over the people and places that your team noticed this week during the prayer walks before jumping into the next activity.

## **Guided Visioning Experience — Your Church's "Chart" Pt. 1 (5 min)**

Medical doctors and hospitals keep track of patient wellbeing as they track data over time on the patient's "chart". This chart includes important information about the patient's height, weight, heart rate, blood pressure, labs, etc. Doctors use this information to get an accurate picture of the patient's overall health. Churches do the same thing by tracking certain metrics or methods of measurement and assessing church success based on the data over time. But are the metrics or methods of measuring success we use helping us to be healthier?

For this portion of today's study, you will help your group identify the metrics that are currently being used to assess your church's health. Each participant will complete the first column in their guide and then complete the second column after a time of Scripture Exploration.

Allow 1–2 minutes for the group to record their thoughts in their guides. Then, invite each person to share one metric, careful not to repeat a metric that was already shared. By the end of the activity, each participant will have a table like this in their guides (metrics will vary by congregation):

Current Metrics/Markers	Markers of Maturity
<p><i>Tithes and donations</i></p> <p><i>Sunday morning attendance</i></p> <p><i>Participation in outreach events</i></p> <p><i>VBS attendance</i></p> <p><i>Number of missionaries supported</i></p> <p><i>Bible study attendance</i></p>	

**Don't feel the need to correct or address potential misunderstandings of your church's metrics during this opportunity. Think of this activity as a window into the current assumptions about success that are at work in your team — and in yourself!**

### Scripture Exploration (20 min)

In this week's passage, we return to the concept of the Church as Christ's Body. In his letter to the Ephesians, Paul urges believers to live worthy lives — lives that represent well the calling they have received from Jesus. He offers a list of gifts that are at work in the Church, but to what end?

Organize your participants into smaller groups or pairs. Then invite each person to read the passage quietly to themselves and respond in their guides to the prompts. Allow around 5–10 minutes for this task.



- **What gifts are listed in this passage?**
- **Who gives them, and why are they given?**



- Based on this passage, what might Paul mean when he talks about becoming “mature” or “attaining the whole measure of the fullness of Christ”?
- What markers of maturity does Paul offer in this passage? Highlight or underline the words or phrases that support your answers.

### Ephesians 4:1–15 NIV

As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received. **2 Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love.** **3** Make every effort to keep the **unity of the Spirit** through the bond of peace. **4** There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to one hope when you were called; **5** one Lord, one faith, one baptism; **6** one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.

**7** But to each one of us grace has been given as Christ apportioned it.

**8** This is why it says:

“When he ascended on high,  
he took many captives  
and gave gifts to his people.”

**9** (What does “he ascended” mean except that he also descended to the lower, earthly regions? **10** He who descended is the very one who ascended higher than all the heavens, in order to fill the whole universe.)

**11** So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, **12 to equip his people for works of service,** so that the **body of Christ may be built up** **13 until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.**

**14** Then we will **no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of people in their deceitful scheming.** **15** **Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will grow to become in every respect the mature body of him who is the head, that is, Christ.** **16** From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, **grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.**

Allow groups 1–2 minutes to process or reflect and review their learning together before shifting their attention back to the Church Chart.

## Your Church’s “Chart” Pt. 2 (10 min)

Invite participants to return to their Church Chart table. Ask them to:

1. Fill in column two with their observations about markers of maturity from Ephesians.
2. Compare and contrast the church’s current metrics with these scriptural markers of maturity. How compatible are they?
3. Revise any church metrics that seem to be incompatible with Paul’s markers for maturity with new metrics that reflect a more scriptural understanding for “success” in ministry.

Allow 5 minutes for each group to complete this work in their groups. Then, invite each group to share their revised or new metrics with the larger group.

Record these revised metrics on your blank Church Chart poster for future reference.



**Example Activity Outcomes:**

<b>Current Metrics/Markers</b>	<b>Markers of Maturity</b>
<i>Tithes and donations</i>	<i>Every part of the Body doing its work (giving their gifts)</i>
<i>Sunday morning attendance</i>	<i>Believers becoming mature in every respect (emotional, spiritual, intellectual)</i>
<i>Participation in outreach events</i>	<i>Believers building one another up Fruit of the Spirit produced in believers</i>
<i>VBS attendance</i>	<i>Believers are secure and stable in their faith</i>
<i>Number of missionaries supported</i>	<i>Everyone submitted to Christ, the head</i>
<i>Bible study attendance</i>	<i>Everyone submitted to Christ, the head</i>

<b>Revised Metrics/Markers</b>
<i># of ministries and churches that we are partnering with to love our community</i>
<i># of members actively using their gifts in ministry inside the church</i>
<i># of members actively using their gifts in ministry in the community</i>
<i>% of new members unchurched or dechurched Attendance of members at City Hall meetings/School Board meetings/etc.</i>

**Closing Prayer Prompt (5 min)**

Invite participants to return to their groups for a final prayer. Encourage them to “speak the truth in love” as they pray aloud for a fellow member. This could mean sharing words of encouragement, offering observations about their partner’s character or maturity, and seeking God’s blessing or wisdom for them in a particular area.

# Ministry Checkup Rhythms

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Rhythm of Reflection and Repentance | Scripture: James 1:22–25

## Lead the Leader

This final session will give you an opportunity to reflect on the good work you have engaged in through the course of this study and create a plan for reflection and repentance with your team. In your study of James 1:22–25, consider for yourself how reflection (giving serious thought or consideration) and repentance (sincere turning away in both heart and behavior from sin) can be more deeply integrated into your congregation’s systems and practices. Be prepared to elaborate on the meaning of these two practices, according to your team’s understanding of the terms. (But don’t be too quick to explain — you may be surprised what the Spirit illuminates during your Scripture Exploration today.)

## In today’s session, you will support your team to:

1. Organize and integrate their learning from the entire study.
2. Develop a plan for regular reflection and repentance.
3. Articulate a culminating vision for church health as a group.

## You will need:

- Whiteboard or chalkboard
- Sticky notes, pens, or pencils
- All your posters\*

\*Display the posters in your learning environment or assemble into one document and provide to each member ahead of time for a virtual study.

## Opening Prayer



Lord Jesus, we celebrate all you have done in and through us as we gathered to consider our church's health. Heavenly Spirit, open us up to you, and enable us to see and articulate your vision for our church to be and remain healthy.

Enable us to see how our Father would have us continue to grow and change that we may faithfully love and serve this community, in Jesus' name. Amen.

## Pre-Session Reflection — (20 min)

Spend the first portion of your session today 1) continuing your KWL chart update and 2) reflecting on all the work you have done as a group over the course of the study. You will do this by facilitating a “museum tour” of the posters you've created along the way.

1. Supply each member with a stack of sticky notes and a writing utensil.
2. Ask them to write down at least one big idea or takeaway per group poster:
  - a. KWL Chart
  - b. Church Health Indicators
  - c. Healthy Church Habits Inventory
  - d. Yes/And Art
  - e. Church Chart Metrics
3. As each member finishes their sticky notes, they should move around the room, adding their sticky note observations to each poster.



4. Once all sticky notes have been posted, invite all members to take a tour of your group's Learning Exhibit.
5. Instruct them to share one of their personal takeaways with 2–3 people as they take their tour.

This activity will help to prime your group members to participate in the closing activity.

## Scripture Exploration and Next Steps (15 min):

In today's Scripture Exploration, you will reflect on James 1:22–25, looking for insight about the value of reflection and repentance for church health.

### Reading Prompts and Partnered Sharing:

#### Prompt for First Read:

Pay attention to the **verbs** in the passage, highlighting them each time you notice one. (This may be a good time to remind participants what verbs and pronouns are.)

#### Prompt for Second Read:

Pay attention to the **people or pronouns** in the passage, circling them each time they occur.

#### Prompt for Third Read:

For this final read, invite each participant to read the entirety of James 1 quietly to themselves, underlining any ideas in the broader **context** that seem meaningful to them.

### Readings 1 and 2

22 Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says. 23 Anyone who listens to the word but does not do what it says is like someone who looks at his face in a mirror 24 and, after looking at himself, goes away and immediately forgets what he looks like. 25 But whoever looks intently into the perfect law that gives freedom, and continues in it—not forgetting what they have heard, but doing it—they will be blessed in what they do. James 1:22–25 NIV

## Reading 3

James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ,

To the twelve tribes scattered among the nations:

Greetings.

### Trials and Temptations

**2** Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds, **3** because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance. **4** Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything. **5** If any of you lacks wisdom, you should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to you. **6** But when you ask, you must believe and not doubt, because the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind. **7** That person should not expect to receive anything from the Lord. **8** Such a person is double-minded and unstable in all they do.

**9** Believers in humble circumstances ought to take pride in their high position. **10** But the rich should take pride in their humiliation—since they will pass away like a wild flower. **11** For the sun rises with scorching heat and withers the plant; its blossom falls and its beauty is destroyed. In the same way, the rich will fade away even while they go about their business.

**12** Blessed is the one who perseveres under trial because, having stood the test, that person will receive the crown of life that the Lord has promised to those who love him.

**13** When tempted, no one should say, “God is tempting me.” For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone; **14** but each person is tempted when they are dragged away by their own evil desire and enticed. **15** Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death.

**16** Don't be deceived, my dear brothers and sisters. **17** Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows. **18** He chose to give us birth through the word of truth, that we might be a kind of firstfruits of all he created.

**Listening and Doing**

**19** My dear brothers and sisters, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry, **20** because human anger does not produce the righteousness that God desires.

**21** Therefore, get rid of all moral filth and the evil that is so prevalent and humbly accept the word planted in you, which can save you.

**22** Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says. **23** Anyone who listens to the word but does not do what it says is like someone who looks at his face in a mirror **24** and, after looking at himself, goes away and immediately forgets what he looks like. **25** But whoever looks intently into the perfect law that gives freedom, and continues in it—not forgetting what they have heard, but doing it—they will be blessed in what they do.

**26** Those who consider themselves religious and yet do not keep a tight rein on their tongues deceive themselves, and their religion is worthless.

**27** Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world. James 1:1-27 NIV

After the group and private reading opportunities, invite each member to journal their observations in their guides. Allow 2–3 minutes of silent time to process before inviting members to share their observations and questions. Offer these questions to wrap up the conversation with some concrete next steps as a group:



- **What practical step(s) might we take as a team to ensure that we don't end up like the one who "goes away and immediately forgets what he looks like?"**



- **How often should we engage in this practice(s) of reflecting and making changes (repenting)?**
- **Who else might we involve in this reflection and repentance process (think inside and outside our congregation)?**
- **What is one next step we can commit to before we close this session and our study?**

Once you've worked through this process, your group will be ready for the culminating activity of this study.

### **Guided Visioning Experience: Articulating Church Health Vision (30 min)**

- Invite your group to orient toward your whiteboard or chalkboard where you have written the following prompt:
  - **We will know we are healthy when ...**
- Give 2–3 minutes for the group to answer the question silently. Participants should record as many distinct ideas during this time as possible.
- Invite group members back and invite each member to share one idea at a time, recording the ideas on the whiteboard as you go. Do not allow cross-talk during this session.
- Continue in round-robin fashion until all ideas have been shared.
- Give another 2–3 minutes for your team to silently record any clarifying questions they have for their team members' ideas.
- After 2–3 minutes, ask participants to share their clarifying questions, one at a time, allowing the author of each idea to respond.
- After all contributions or ideas are clarified, invite the group to help you sort the answers into sets or themes according to similarities. Then give each set or theme a name or label.

- Once the ideas have been labeled, invite each team member to vote on which theme(s) or set(s) is most important to them. You can use tally marks, shapes, etc., to indicate each vote.
  - **A good rule of thumb is to give each member votes equal to 1/3 of the total items brainstormed. (e.g., Your team came up with 7 themes or sets. Each member gets 2 or 3 votes.)**
- Consolidate the high priority themes or sets into one vision statement.
- Team members indicate approval by signing the statement (on poster or printed later for all members).

### **Closing Prayer Prompt (5 min)**

Consider closing your time with the following prayer, offered to us by the early church father, Augustine of Hippo.

**Look upon us, O Lord,  
and let all the darkness of our souls  
vanish before the beams of thy brightness.  
Fill us with holy love,  
and open to us the treasures of thy wisdom.  
All our desire is known unto thee,  
therefore perfect what thou hast begun,  
and what thy Spirit has awakened us to ask in prayer.  
We seek thy face,  
turn thy face unto us and show us thy glory.  
Then shall our longing be satisfied,  
and our peace shall be perfect.  
(Augustine, 354–430)**

**Amen.**