

HEALTHY CHURCH VISION

Participant Guide



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How to Use This Guide



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

Over the course of this study, your leader will invite you to study, pray, imagine, and share. Your thoughts on Scripture, the health of your church, and insights into your broader community are extremely valuable. And your full participation and courageous listening is essential to the fruitfulness of this study. If this feels like a stretch for you, here are a few tips to get you started:



Ask God to give you wisdom, humility, and openness to the Spirit's leading as you prepare for this study.



Come prepared for each session, having reflected on the previous week's content. You'll have multiple opportunities to offer your insights!



Consider that silence is a friend to your team. It is often helpful for silence to be present during a small group discussion, as it allows time for our introverted team members to process (reflect on and review the content received so far) and share.



Don't be afraid to ask questions! If you are unsure about how an activity is supposed to go, ask your leader. Your question will likely support others in your group when you voice it.



Feel free to look ahead in your guide (it isn't cheating!) to get familiar with the scriptures and ideas that you will be processing.



Have fun! This guide is intended to bring you closer to the people with whom you have the honor of doing kingdom ministry. Expect the Spirit to create or deepen the bonds of Christian unity in and among you and your study partners as you focus your attention and efforts to this study .

Time for Your Checkup



What to Expect

In today's session, you will:

1. Share what you know and want to learn about Healthy Church vision.
2. Study the example of the church in Acts.
3. Help your team to define church health indicators specific to your congregation and context.

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.

"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

Journal Space

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

Helpful Definitions:



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.

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

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

 Individuals in healthy churches ... (feel/think/act)

Journal Space

 Relationships in healthy churches ... (feel like, look like)

Journal Space

 Individuals in healthy churches ... (feel/think/act)

Journal Space

Jesus the Great Physician — Prayer Response

Write down any images, words, or phrases that come to you during this guided prayer experience here.

Journal Space

More Than the Sum of Our Parts



Church Systems Overview and Assessment | Scripture: 1 Corinthians 12

In today's session, you will:

1. Offer your insights and reflections from last week's session.
2. Begin thinking about your church as a group of organic (or living) systems.
3. Evaluate the health of your internal systems according to your 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.

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

GROUP 1

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.

Journal Space

GROUP 2

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.

Journal Space

GROUP 3

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.

Journal Space

GROUP 4






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.

Journal Space


What might we learn about healthy churches from Paul's teaching on the Body?

Body Scan Brainstorm

Consider the following systems in the human body and how they contribute to a person’s individual health. What people or teams offer the same function in your congregation?

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	

Listening Prayer

 Jesus, what parts of our body might we overlook or undervalue?


Journal Space

 Jesus, where are the parts of our body working well together?

Journal Space

 Jesus, are there parts of our body that are under stress? Over-functioning?

Journal Space

 Jesus, what is one way I can live in greater alignment within our body?

Journal Space

The Picture of Health



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

What to Expect

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.

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

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

Journal Space

Scripture Exploration:

Ephesians 3:1–21 NIV

God's Marvelous Plan for the Gentiles

3 For this reason I, Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus for the sake of you Gentiles—

2 Surely you have heard about the administration of God's grace that was given to me for you, **3** that is, 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 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.

Journal Space

Ephesians 3:1–21 MSG

3 1–3 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.

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 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! Test its length! Plumb the depths! Rise to the heights! Live full lives, full in the fullness of God.

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.

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!

Journal Space

Based on this passage, what might Paul understand the purpose of the Church to be?

Journal Space

How is our church making known God’s plan to bring together “insiders” and “outsiders”?

Journal Space



Case 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.

⇒ **Outcome:**

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.

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

Journal Space

Closing Prayer — Wildest Dreams

Imagine what your church in a perfect state of health would look like.

How would you be different? Your congregation? Your community?

Journal Space

Habits of Healthy Churches



Hope-Faith-Love Rhythms | Scripture: Romans 12

In today's session, you will:

1. Tap into your creative and artistic talents!
2. Continue deepening your theological understanding of the Church as Christ's Body.
3. Brainstorm healthy habits that will contribute to your congregations health.

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

Reflect on your wildest dream prayer experience last week. What image(s) come to mind when you imagine your church at peak health?

Journal Space

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.

Journal Space

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.

Journal Space

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.

Journal Space

Romans 12:1–21 NIV

12 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 prophesy 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.

Journal Space

Case Study: Small Boat, Big Sea

Keep the following questions in mind as you review the following case study:



- **What healthy habits do you see in the actions of Small Boat, Big Sea?**
- **How does this case study exemplify Paul's exhortation to the Roman church?**



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).

Journal Space

Working (It) Out



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

What to Expect

In today's session, you will:

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.

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.

Praying John 20:21

Jesus said to them again, “Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you.”

Journal Space

Scripture Exploration:

2 Corinthians 5:16–21 NIV

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.

What connections are you making between our prayer passage and 2 Corinthians 5:16–21?

Journal Space

Our People, Our Place Prayer Walk

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.



Parameters of Place



Key Locations



Your People



Walking Routes



My Route

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:

Person or Place You Encountered on Your Walk	Notes/Observations

Healthy Metrics



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

What to Expect

In today’s session, you will:

1. Consider your church’s implicit and explicit metrics or methods of measuring for success.
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.

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

What insights are lingering with you after your prayer walk experience?

Journal Space

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?

Current Metrics/Markers	Markers of Maturity

Scripture Exploration

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?

2 Corinthians 5:16–21 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.

What gifts are listed in this passage?

Journal Space

Who gives them, and why are they given?

Journal Space

Based on this passage, what might Paul mean when he talks about becoming “mature” or “attaining the whole measure of the fullness of Christ”?

Journal Space

What markers of maturity does Paul offer in this passage?
Highlight or underline the words or phrases that support your answers.

Journal Space

Ministry Checkup Rhythms



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

What to Expect

In today's session, you will:

1. Celebrate the work you've done throughout this study.
2. Develop a plan for regular reflection and repentance.
3. Articulate a vision for church health as a group.

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

What takeaways from this study do you want to carry with you into the future?

Journal Space

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.

First Read:

Pay attention to the **verbs** in the passage, highlighting them each time you notice one. [Verbs describe an action, state, or occurrence, e.g., hear, become, happen.]

Second Read:

Pay attention to the **people or pronouns** in the passage, circling them each time they occur. [Pronouns refer to a person/s, e.g., she, him, they.]

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

Third Read:

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

James 1:1–27 NIV

James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ,
To the twelve tribes scattered among the nations:
Greetings.

To the twelve tribes scattered among the nations:

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.

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.

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?"

Journal Space

How often should we engage in this practice(s) of reflecting and making changes (repenting)?

Journal Space

Who else might we involve in this reflection and repentance process (think inside and outside our congregation)?

Journal Space

What is one next step we can commit to before we close this session and our study?

Journal Space

Guided Visioning Experience: Articulating Church Health Vision
We will know we are healthy when...

Journal Space

My clarifying questions:

Journal Space

Our Church Health Vision Statement

Journal Space

Prayer Response — Augustine of Hippo, 354–430

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.

Journal Space
