

What Healthy Churches Do

*10 Common Qualities of
Healthy Churches*

Volume 2

David O. Dykes

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What Healthy Pastors Do *6 Common Qualities of Healthy Pastors*

GOD IS NOT AS INTERESTED in growing the size of a church as He is in growing the people *inside*. That includes the pastor. A spiritually unhealthy pastor often has an unhealthy effect on the church. Today's pastors are being challenged to model and create a spiritually healthy environment in their churches so that growth can take place. When we shift our focus from an obsession with *church growth* to a passion for *church health*, we will see God grow His churches like never before.

This curriculum outlines 6 basic characteristics of a healthy pastor. The formula is simple when we see how God likes to grow His Church. **A HEALTHY PASTOR = A HEALTHY CHURCH.**

www.WhatHealthyPastorsDo.org

Table of Contents

From the Author.....	1
How Do I Use This Curriculum?.....	3
Introduction.....	5
Why Healthy Churches Matter <i>Churches that focus on spiritual health experience church growth as a natural result of their efforts.</i>	
Lesson One.....	11
Develop a Culture of Generosity <i>The Bible, God’s holy Word, must be the central focus of the ministry of the Church and guide all the other aspects of ministry.</i>	
Lesson Two.....	21
Healthy Churches Offer Excellent Large Group Worship <i>A healthy church inspires, creates and nurtures a sense of true community among its members where they share life together on a number of levels.</i>	
Lesson Three.....	33
Healthy Churches Create Small Group Relationships <i>A healthy church is a praying church.</i>	
Lesson Four.....	43
Healthy Churches Impact Their Community in Positive Ways <i>God’s supernatural power is released when your church attempts the impossible.</i>	
Lesson Five.....	55
Healthy Churches Welcome New People into Their Church Family <i>God creates unity among individual Christians; healthy churches maintain it.</i>	

From the Author

In over 30 years of leading churches of all sizes, and from my study of Scripture, I've discovered some universal principles that apply to all churches everywhere. Although the Church that Jesus established is growing all over the world in every culture, I have identified *10 Common Qualities of Healthy Churches* that can apply in any setting. These are just some of the fundamental principles all healthy churches practice in order to ensure growth.

If a church displays all of these characteristics in increasing measure, the natural by-product is growth. That includes numerical growth. However, more importantly, the church will grow spiritually. Focus first on church *health*—and church *growth* will naturally happen in due time.

David O. Dykes
Pastor, Green Acres Baptist Church
Tyler, Texas
www.WhatHealthyChurchesDo.org

How Do I Use This Curriculum?

There are 12 total lessons in this two-volume curriculum series. Each volume has an Introductory lesson plus five additional lessons. Each volume focuses on five characteristics of healthy churches modeled by the early Church in Acts 2. There is no particular sequence to the list, although it follows the order of the characteristics as they are listed in Acts 2. After you complete the Introductory lesson, you can continue your study at any chapter you wish.

You will notice there is a particular pattern in each of the lessons. Understanding this repeated pattern will help you as you process the material and apply it to your church setting.

Each lesson looks like this:

- Introduction to lesson
 - Truth: Summary of principle
 - Scriptural Context: Summary of main scripture from Acts 2
- Exploring the Principle: examination of key teaching points
 - 5-8 key points followed by questions and fill-in-the-blank answers
 - Additional scriptures
- Applying the Truth:
 - Application-based exercises to apply what you learn to your church setting
 - Summary and conclusion
- Answer Key for fill-in-the-blanks

You can use this material in a variety of settings, including a Master Teacher format. A Master Teacher can lead a large group (25 people or more) through each lesson. It is also suitable for small group use where a group works through the individual lessons together. Additionally, it is also appropriate for individual use by a single pastor or church leader. May God bless you as you begin to learn and apply these principles for identifying the characteristics of a healthy church.

Introduction: Why Healthy Churches Matter

Key Truth: Churches that focus on spiritual health experience church growth as a natural result of their efforts..

Scriptural Context:

Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers. Be shepherds of the church of God, which he bought with his own blood. Acts 20:28

As church leaders, our desire is to see the expansion of the Kingdom of God so that His name can be made famous throughout the entire earth. We do this great work through the New Testament model Christ initiated and left for us—the local Church, Christ’s Body.

Jesus didn’t leave us a stale organization—He left us a living, breathing organism comprised of all kinds of people in His Kingdom. His plan for transforming the world is through the expression of the local Church in every tribe, culture and nation. We have an exciting opportunity to be part of this movement and to create effective means of growth within our churches.

Outcomes:

As a result of this lesson, you will:

- Understand the relationship between church growth and church health
- Learn how God accomplishes church growth
- Apply the principles to your church setting

Exploring the Principle:

All Healthy Organisms _____

Any healthy organism is continually growing. A baby, for example, does not remain a baby long. He or she matures and grows into a toddler, then a child, then a young adult who matures into a grown man or woman. If this continuous growth process is interrupted in any way, it is a sign of sickness and an indication that something is wrong.

Did you know the body renews itself every day throughout our lives? In any given day, our bodies renew 300 billion cells! For example, the lining of the intestine renews itself every five days or so. The liver renews itself every two years, and human lungs experience a total turnover of cells every four years. So it is in the Church. It is constantly growing.

1. The Church is a living _____.

God is not growing and maturing the outward stone, bricks and mortar of a church's meeting place—that is not really the Church. That is simply a building or meeting place. Rather, God is constantly growing the people inside. They make up the true church. Believers who are part of healthy churches contribute to their overall growth because they are growing spiritually and maturing in Christ.

2. A healthy will _____.

As church leaders, it's normal to want our churches to grow. It's normal to want to be part of something that is vibrant and healthy with the capacity to change lives for eternity. No one wants to be part of something that lacks momentum.

Is your church growing as much as it can right now? Why or why not?

Principles of a Healthy Church

1. Only _____ can grow a church.

- Jesus said to Peter, "...on this rock I WILL BUILD MY CHURCH." (Matthew 16:18). The Church is His Body and His Bride. Jesus will grow His Church—or healthy growth will not take place.
- When we ask, "How can I make my church grow?" we are essentially subconsciously stating ownership and responsibility for something that is not our own in the first place.

Why is it tempting to think church leaders are primarily responsible for church growth?

2. Leaders should focus on _____, not growth.

- Our primary focus should be on *church health* instead of *church growth*. It's a fundamental shift that must take place in how we approach church.
- If we focus on growth first, we will see people as "numbers," and we will be preoccupied with how the numbers grow or decline. However, if we make the spiritual health of others our priority, the Lord will make sure that church growth comes as a natural result of our efforts.

What does a healthy church look like?

3. When leaders create a healthy _____, God will grow _____ Church.

Programs and activities are necessary—but they must have a well-defined purpose.

- A church may have many activities without necessarily experiencing growth. Their people may be busy, but they may not be growing spiritually.
- Rather than focusing on growing a church through busyness, healthy pastors and church leaders work to create an environment geared toward growth.

Why is being involved in church programs not the same as spiritual growth?

10 Common Qualities of Healthy Churches

Volume 1:

1. Healthy Churches Offer Consistent Bible _____
2. Healthy Churches Offer Loving _____
3. Healthy Churches Make _____ the Priority
4. Healthy Churches Trust God to Do _____

5. Healthy Churches Maintain _____

Volume 2:

1. Healthy Churches Develop a Culture of _____

2. Healthy Churches Offer Excellent _____

3. Healthy Churches Create _____

4. Healthy Churches Impact Their _____ in Positive Ways
5. Healthy Churches Welcome _____ People into Their Church Family

Applying the Truth:

Complete the following assignments and reflect on your response:

1. What did you learn from this lesson that you can put into practice immediately?
2. Look over the list of 10 qualities above. Which ones are areas of strength for your church and which ones represent areas you need to grow?

Strengths	Challenges

3. Spend some time thinking about how your church can become healthier. Journal about what a healthier, more spiritually mature church membership would look like. Envision what your church *could* be for God's glory.

Summary:

In order for a plant to thrive, it must have food, water and sunlight. An animal or human must have water, food and rest. In the same way, there are certain conditions that lead to church health and, consequently, church growth.

Answer Key Introduction

All Healthy Organisms GROW

1. The Church is a living organism.
2. A healthy church will grow.

Principles of a Healthy Church

1. Only God can grow a church.
2. Leaders should focus on health, not growth.
3. When leaders create a healthy environment, God will grow His Church.

Healthy Church Growth Follows a PATTERN

1. Healthy Churches Offer Consistent Bible truth
2. Healthy Churches Offer Loving fellowship
3. Healthy Churches Make prayer the Priority
4. Healthy Churches Trust God to Do supernatural things
5. Healthy Churches Maintain unity

LESSON ONE

Develop a Culture of Generosity

Introduction to lesson

Key Truth: A healthy church is a generous church. Stewardship is a sign of spiritual maturity and results in greater trust in God for our needs.

Scriptural Context:

*They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Everyone was filled with awe, and many wonders and miraculous signs were done by the apostles. All the believers were together and had everything in common. **Selling their possessions and goods, they gave to anyone as he had need...** Acts 2:42-45 (bold emphasis)*

In personal stewardship, we see ourselves as managers of what God entrusts to us. Part of our personal stewardship is tithing. Consequently, church leaders have a responsibility to faithfully handle what others tithe to the church in a responsible way with honesty and integrity. The early Church had an opportunity to receive and disburse money as they saw fit. Likewise, deciding where to spend God's money is a key function of every church. There are certain rules and guidelines you will find helpful to follow so that your church can honor God with its resources.

Outcomes: As a result of this lesson, you will:

- Understand personal stewardship

- Learn practical principles for implementing effective stewardship in the church
- Apply the principles to your church setting

Exploring the Principle: How God's Economy Works

What does God think of money? He actually has a lot to say about it. In fact, the Bible is full of God's instructions about money. The world offers us financial advice. However, God's economy operates on unique, unchanging principles we must understand in order to make the right choices with our resources.

1. **God _____ all the wealth in the universe.**
Some people think they are doing God a favor by giving some of their money to Him now and then. However, God owns all the gold, diamonds, platinum, oil, gas and real estate on this planet. What is God's net worth? We don't have a number large enough to describe it.

The earth is the LORD's, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it. Psalm 24:1

2. **God allows us to _____ a portion of His wealth.**
We don't really own anything in this life. God has simply entrusted a portion of His wealth to us as managers for a short while.

The word "**steward**" means "manager." "Stewardship" addresses how we "manage" the resources that God has given us.

Whoever can be trusted with very little can also be trusted with much... Luke 16:10

How does your perspective on money/possessions change when

you think of yourself as managing it (not owning it)?

**3. God wants His wealth in _____
to support His work.**

The last thing God wants us to do with His wealth is to hoard it for ourselves! Instead, He prompts us to be generous givers as a sign of our dependence on Him to meet our needs. He uses the Church for circulating the money we give to support His work throughout the world.

*Each man should give what he has decided in his heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.
2 Corinthians 9:7*

Stewardship is Twofold

Stewardship has two parts to it:

- 1. Personal** stewardship
- 2. Church** stewardship

Personal Stewardship:

In the Old Testament, people brought offerings to the Temple as a sign of their devotion and love for God. In the New Testament, believers gave to the early Church as a sign of their faith.

Church Stewardship

Acts 2:45 tells how the disciples sold their possessions to meet the needs of the early Church. This was not just a one-time experience. Later, they do the same thing in Acts 4:32, 34: "All the believers were one in heart and mind. No one claimed that any of his possession was his own, but they shared everything they had... There were no needy persons among them. For from time to time those who owned lands or houses sold them, brought the money

from the sales and put it at the apostles feet.”

How well does your church teach personal stewardship? How well does it practice church stewardship? Rate your answer on a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being very well and 5 being not very well. Explain your answer.

Principles of Personal Stewardship

1. We must give to _____ first.

Many people are not tithing because after they pay all their bills they say, “there is nothing left over.” However, God wants to be first on your list. Before you pay your monthly bills and obligations, give your tithe first.

Honor the LORD with your wealth, with the firstfruits of all your crops; then your barns will be filled to overflowing, and your vats will brim over with new wine. Proverbs 3:9-10

“**Firstfruits**” is an agricultural term that means “first check” or “first amount of money” in today’s language.

2. A _____ is the starting point for giving.

The word “tithe” means 10%. The tithe has always been the starting point for personal stewardship when we give 10% of our income to the Church. We should challenge ourselves to give beyond the tithe so we can be generous on every occasion.

‘Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. Test me in this,’ says the LORD Almighty, ‘and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that you will not have room enough for it.’ Malachi 3:10

Read this story of how a fellow pastor challenges his church:

“Every January, I enjoy issuing a challenge to people in our church who aren’t tithing. I tell them to give God 10% of their income for a minimum of six months and see what happens. I say, ‘If your life is not more blessed than before you started tithing, then God is a liar and you can’t trust Him.’ Praise God, no one who has taken this challenge has called God a liar. Christians who have been tithing for years can testify not only that tithing works, but also that God can be trusted.”

What percentage of your church members are giving a tithe?
What could your church do to increase this number?

3. God gives a _____ blessing when we give to His work.

In other words, we can’t out-give God. He will always give us more blessings in return for giving to others in His name. And His blessings are greater than what we give away.

Give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, will be poured into your lap. For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you. Luke 6:38

When was a time God blessed you for being generous to others in His name?

Principles of Church Stewardship

Healthy churches practice _____
and _____ in financial matters.

Without exception, every healthy church displays honesty and integrity in collecting and spending the offerings they receive. In fact, godly church stewardship is one of the top ingredients for the long-term success of a church. Satan desires to dismantle a church's potential by sabotaging its financial practices through temptation and deceit.

Unhealthy Financial Practices in a Church:

- Giving one person ultimate control of the money
- Greediness among church leaders
- Weak organizational structure in leadership
- Not keeping a written record of income and expenditures
- Lack of accountability between leaders
- Lack of accountability between leaders and the rest of the church

What would you add to the list of unhealthy financial practices in a church?

1. A Healthy Church _____ **Accountability.**

It is a bad practice for only one person to have control of the money. Why? There is a greater temptation to be dishonest with the resources—like Judas, who was in charge of the money for Jesus' ministry.

For example, different people should collect and disburse the money in the church for approved expenses. Don't leave these key responsibilities to one person. Make sure to have a group

of at least three trusted leaders who count and disburse the offerings.

2. **A Healthy Church _____ Good**

_____.

This may seem like a simple practice, but it is sadly overlooked in many churches (and many businesses, too). Write down every dollar of income and every dollar that is spent. Be sure you can account for every gift the church receives and every transaction it spends.

- **INCOME:** Who gave the money? How much? When was it given? Did the giver request that it be marked for a certain ministry or item in the church?
- **EXPENSES:** Who spent the money? How much? What for? When was it spent?

Regular written financial reports should be given to the members of the church to increase the sense of accountability and integrity among the leadership.

3. **A Healthy Church _____ a**

_____.

Every healthy family has a budget for how to spend their monthly income. Although their income is by faith, churches must operate on a budget, too. A budget is a written document that anticipates expenses in a variety of categories and records what is actually spent each month.

Which of the above 3 Healthy Church Financial Practices does your church do very well? Give examples. Which principles need the most work? Why?

How to Build a Church Budget

A good budget has four main categories for how the church will spend the money it receives. Your church may have more or less categories depending on your needs.

1. Money to do _____

These funds are set aside to carry out the ministries of the local congregation. For example, you may need money to buy curriculum for your Bible studies. Or, you may need craft supplies for children's activities.

2. Money to _____

The church is responsible to help meet the needs of the pastor and his family. Your church may have other paid leaders who also make ministry their vocation/job. Paying an adequate amount in a timely manner allows the leaders to focus their priorities and energy on the ministry of the church instead of worrying about their family's needs.

The elders who direct the affairs of the church well are worthy of double honor, especially those whose work is preaching and teaching. For the Scripture says, 'Do not muzzle the ox while it is treading out the grain,' and 'The worker deserves his wages.' 1 Timothy 5:17-18

3. Money for the _____

Set aside money to cover the expenses related to the place where your church meets. This may include rent payments for a building or utilities like electricity, water, etc. Also, keep in mind what will be needed for maintaining the furnishings, paint, etc. Set aside money for emergencies, too.

4. Money for _____

This is money used to spread the Gospel in your community and around the world. Some churches use the money to support missionaries in various places. Others may give it to mission organizations that are already at work in an area where people need to hear the Gospel message.

How would you divide your church budget among these four categories? Use percentages (for example: 25% to missions, etc.)

Applying the Truth:

Complete the following assignments and reflect on your response:

1. *What did you learn from this lesson that you can put into practice immediately?*
2. *How would you divide your church budget among the four budget categories? Use percentages (for example: 25% to missions, etc.).*
3. *What unhealthy financial practices have you identified in your church as a result of this lesson? What can you do to address the problem(s)?*

Summary:

What we do with our money says a lot about us as Christians, and it says a lot about the state of our church. Integrity and generosity must be at the center of all our financial dealings. The Bible teaches that one day we will all give account for every decision we've made, and that includes what we did with the money and resources God entrusted to us.

Answer Key Lesson 1: Develop a Culture of Generosity

How God's Economy Works

1. God owns all the wealth in the universe
2. God allows us to manage a portion of His wealth
3. God wants His wealth in circulation to support His work

Principles of Personal Stewardship

- We must give to god first
- A tithe is the starting point for giving
- God gives a greater blessing when we give to His work

Principles of Church Stewardship

Healthy churches practice honesty and integrity in financial matters

1. A Healthy Church Displays Accountability.
2. A Healthy Church Keeps Good Records.
3. A Healthy Church Follows a Budget.

How to Build a Church Budget

1. Money to do ministry
2. Money to pay leaders
3. Money for the meeting place
4. Money for missions

LESSON TWO

Healthy Churches Offer Excellent Large Group Worship

Introduction to lesson

Key Truth: Providing a consistent and biblical corporate worship experience for believers is essential to their faith.

Scriptural Context:

*They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Everyone was filled with awe, and many wonders and miraculous signs were done by the apostles. All the believers were together and had everything in common. Selling their possessions and goods, they gave to anyone as he had need. **Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts...** Acts 2:42-46 (bold emphasis)*

In Acts 2:46, we see the early Church gathered in two different settings. First, they gathered in the “temple courts” (somewhere in the huge courtyards surrounding the Temple). After the Day of Pentecost, there were 3000 believers, so this was a logical place large enough for them to gather for corporate worship. However, they also gathered in small groups to “break bread” together. The New Testament model is that every Christian needs both a large group experience of worship and a small group experience of fellowship. An effective large group worship experience is

comprised of a few common ingredients, which we will study in this lesson.

Outcomes: As a result of this lesson, you will:

- Understand the ingredients of a large group worship experience
- Learn practical principles for designing a large group worship experience
- Apply the principles to your church setting

Exploring the Principle:

Worship is Good for Us

I love the word “together.” It appears three times in this Acts 2 passage, starting in 2:44 (all the believers “were together”). In 2:46, the believers “met together” (large group experience) before they “ate together” (small group experience).

Practice both _____ and _____ worship to be a healthy Christian.

Both kinds of worship are explained in Psalm 34:1-2:

*I will extol the Lord at all times; his praise will always be on my lips. My soul will boast in the Lord [**private worship alone with God**]; let the afflicted hear and rejoice. Glorify the Lord with me; let us exalt his name together [**corporate worship with other believers**].*

Some people ask, “Is corporate worship really necessary?” This is usually because they have prioritized something else as being more important than going to church (for example, traveling or spending time at home). Christians who neglect participating in public worship violate God’s Word.

Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing... Hebrews 10:25

How would you answer someone who thought corporate worship was optional?

You don't have to go to church to become a Christian, but according to Scripture you do have to gather regularly in church to be the kind of Christian God wants you to be. For the early Christians, worshipping together was their main priority. Did you notice they didn't just gather every week? The Bible says they gathered every day!

Every Worship Service Shares Common Ingredients

Every church worship service has unique characteristics depending on the denomination, cultural setting, etc. However, every worship service ought to share some common experiences outlined in the Bible.

1. _____ Songs of _____ Worship is for an audience of _____

We are told to praise the Lord over 300 times in the Old Testament alone. God loves a variety of music when we worship Him. In fact, the Bible identifies at least three types in Colossians 3:16. In your church, one or more of these styles may be emphasized: to Himself describes this sense of shared community.

...as you sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God.

- _____: Singing God's Word to Him
- _____: Composed songs for worship/
teaching about the faith
- _____: _____:
Simple praise choruses

The kind of music doesn't matter—what matters most is raising our voices to praise God, not performing for someone else.

What is your favorite type of worship music?

2. Practicing Corporate _____

Praying together binds our _____

Paul gave Timothy, a young pastor, instructions for designing his large group worship experiences. Notice that prayer is a priority:

I urge, then, first of all, that requests, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for everyone—for kings and all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness. 1 Timothy 2:1-2

Always have a time of corporate prayer to pray for the leaders in your church, your city and your country. It is more than a good habit to pray for our leaders—it is God's command—and it binds our hearts together when we corporately focus on prayer.

3. Collecting an _____

We give to _____ our faith

Because God commands us to give a portion of our resources to Him, the church must provide an opportunity to do so. Many

churches collect an offering every time they meet together as a church by passing a bag down each row for people to place their offering.

*Each man should give what he has decided in his heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.
2 Corinthians 9:7*

Guests are not expected to give, but encourage regular members to give faithfully. You may emphasize a special cause that the offering will go to support (like widows or the homeless), but most often the offering goes to support the regular needs of the church ministries.

How can collecting an offering be done in such a way that it becomes an act of worship?

4. _____ the Word

God's Truth must be _____

Chapter 2 in this curriculum emphasizes the importance of preaching God's Word. It is the climax of any large group worship experience. People expect the pastor to lead them in reading and studying their Bibles together each week as part of the worship service.

5. _____ People to

Respond

The _____ is always at work

Always provide the opportunity for people to respond to what has been presented in the worship service. God may speak to people's hearts anytime during the service: the singing, preaching or reading of Scripture. You may ask people to come to the front

to speak with the pastor or a staff person. Offer to pray with people and listen to their needs. They may wish to become a Christian, be baptized, join your church or talk about a spiritual issue.

How does your church present the opportunity to respond to God's work?

Two Special Observances

The Bible notes two special observances in the worship services of a healthy church:

- The Lord's Supper
- Believers Baptism

Sharing the Lord's Supper

1. Regular observance

_____ a church
family

The Bible does not clearly instruct us how often to share the Lord's Supper together. In my church, we observe the Lord's Supper together every 3 months. Some churches observe it as often as weekly or only twice a year. The importance is on observing it *regularly*. The Lord's Supper is for believers only, although guests in our church who proclaim Jesus as their Savior and Lord are welcome to share the meal with us.

How does sharing the Lord's Supper strengthen a church family?

You may preach a brief message when you do the Lord's Supper. Focus on the following basic truths from Scripture in 1 Corinthians 11:17-34:

2. It is a time of _____.

According to this passage, Jesus instructed us to eat and drink the Lord's Supper in remembrance of Him. In doing so, we are "proclaiming" Jesus' sacrificial death until He returns.

For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes. 1 Corinthians 11:26

3. It is a time of _____.

Paul instructs the Church to make the Lord's Supper meaningful.

Therefore, whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of sinning against the body and blood of the Lord. A man ought to examine himself before he eats of the bread and drinks of the cup. For anyone who eats and drinks without recognizing the body of the Lord eats and drinks judgment on himself. 1 Corinthians 11:27-29

Give people a few moments as you pass out the drink and the bread to quietly meditate on their relationship with Christ, confess their sin and prepare themselves to share this meal before they partake of the elements.

4. It is a time to _____.

The Bible says that after the disciples shared the Lord's Supper with Jesus before He was arrested, they sang a song together and went out to the Mt. of Olives (Mark 14:26). Likewise, lead your church in singing a song together to conclude your time. We celebrate that our Lord is alive and coming again one day soon.

What do you like best about sharing the Lord's Supper?

Believers Baptism

1. Baptism is a powerful _____ to others

The Bible gives three reasons why we are to include baptism as a regular part of our large group experiences.

2. It is a _____ of faith.

Christians in the early Church were baptized as a symbol of their newfound faith in Christ. Their profession was based on Paul's instruction:

That if you confess with your mouth, 'Jesus is Lord,' and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved. As the Scripture says, 'Anyone who trusts in him will never be put to shame.'

Romans 10:9-11

Believers should confess the Lordship of Christ as part of their baptism experience. When you baptize someone, ask: "Who is your Lord?" Then they respond aloud. This is a powerful witness to others about the truth of the Gospel.

3. We _____ with Christ's death, burial and resurrection.

Christ Himself was baptized publicly. Likewise, when we are baptized, we are identifying with Him in His death, burial and resurrection. As you baptize someone, say: "You are buried with Christ (meaning their old life) and raised to walk in newness of life."

4. It is an act of _____.

When Peter preached, he said:

...Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.” Acts 2:38

Baptism is not essential to salvation, but it is an act of obedience outlined in Scripture.

What was memorable about your baptism?

Applying the Truth:

Complete the following assignments and reflect on your response:

1. *What did you learn from this lesson that you can put into practice immediately?*
2. *What elements of worship can your church begin focusing on improving this year?*
3. *What do you think the people in your church would suggest doing to enhance the large group experience?*

Summary:

The large group worship experience is essential to any healthy church. There are a few common ingredients necessary to design an effective worship service. Although there is room for creative expression in each of the elements, Scripture outlines the general guidelines. When we worship together, we experience the power and presence of God.

Answer Key Lesson 2: Healthy Churches Offer Excellent Large Group Worship

Worship is Good for Us

Practice both private and corporate worship to be a healthy Christian

Every Worship Service Shares Common Ingredients:

1. Singing Songs of Praise
Worship is for an audience of one
Psalms: Singing God's Word to Him
Hymns: Composed songs for worship/teaching about the faith
Spiritual songs: Simple praise choruses
2. Practicing Corporate Prayer
Praying together binds our hearts
3. Collecting an Offering
We give to demonstrate our faith
4. Preaching the Word
God's Truth must be proclaimed
5. Inviting People to Respond
The Holy Spirit is always at work

Two Special Observances

Sharing the Lord's Supper

1. Regular observance strengthens a church family.
2. It is a time of remembrance.
3. It is a time of reflection.
4. It is a time to rejoice.

Believers Baptism

1. Baptism is a powerful witness to others.
2. It is a profession of faith.
3. We identify with Christ's death, burial and resurrection.
4. It is an act of obedience.

Notes:

LESSON THREE

Healthy Churches Create Small Group Relationships

Introduction to lesson

Key Truth: Small groups provide the context for learning the Bible (discipleship) and loving one another.

Scriptural Context:

*They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Everyone was filled with awe, and many wonders and miraculous signs were done by the apostles. All the believers were together and had everything in common. Selling their possessions and goods, they gave to anyone as he 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...** Acts 2:42-46 (bold emphasis)*

In this one verse, Acts 2:46, we see the early Church balancing two essential components of discipleship. As we said in a previous lesson, they gathered in corporate worship (Temple courts), and they met in smaller groups (in homes). Once more, we see this two-fold approach to the Church is essential. Without small groups, there can be no personal level of caring or prayer. Also, without small groups, discipleship is almost impossible. Small groups are a key component for a healthy church—and for the

spiritual development of healthy believers.

Outcomes: As a result of this lesson, you will:

- Understand the ingredients of a small group discipleship experience
- Learn practical principles to make the most of your small groups
- Apply the principles to your church setting

Exploring the Principle: Small Group Basics

Small groups may look different depending on the size of each church and the cultural context. However, every small group follows the same basic structure:

1. There must be a _____ .

Someone who is more mature in the faith should be the leader of the group. The leader's responsibilities may include:

- Choosing what the group studies
- Determining where and when the group meets. Once a week is best. The groups can meet in homes, in rooms at the church, etc., depending on the circumstances.
- Facilitating the group meetings (make sure the group begins and ends on time, involve other members by asking questions, etc.)
- Teaching the Bible and explaining the principles

This is the role Paul describes as “teachers” who, in addition to the pastor, explain the Bible.

*It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and **teachers**...*
Ephesians 4:11

How does your church identify and/or train leaders to teach others?

**2. The members must be _____
to the group.**

The size of the groups depends on your church's particular circumstances, but 6-10 members are ideal. The maximum is about 20. Each member commits to the following:

- meeting regularly (once a week is ideal). The time may be a weekend or weekday, morning, afternoon or evening—whatever works!
- preparing for each meeting by studying the material
- praying for the other members
- serving the other members who have a need or concern

Be devoted to one another in brotherly love. Honor one another above yourselves. Romans 12:10

3. The group must have a _____ .

Christian small groups are different from any other gathering of people because their purpose is unique. We'll learn more about that purpose in the next few sections. The purpose is based on what Jesus identified as the two greatest commandments:

Jesus replied: 'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.' Matthew 22:37-40

Why is it important for all members to be committed to the group?

5 Purposes of a Small Group

1. _____:
Know people by _____

The friends here send their greetings. Greet the friends there by name. 3 John 14

No doubt, the early Church was a close group—they knew each other, loved each other and depended on each other. Jesus also taught us to demonstrate our love for one another. Encourage people to be part of a smaller group where they can serve others and receive care in return. It's impossible for someone to feel personally known, loved and cared for in a large group setting like a worship service.

Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. No one has ever seen God; but if we love one another, God lives in us and his love is made complete in us. 1 John 4:11:12

2. _____:
Study the _____

The Bereans were of more noble character...for they received the message with great eagerness and examined the Scriptures every day to see if what Paul said was true. Acts 17:11

Acts 2 says the early Church was devoted to the “apostles’ teaching.” Because the New Testament hadn’t been written yet, the believers studied the Jewish scriptures (the Old

Testament). In addition, they listened to what the other apostles taught about what Jesus had done and said. In a smaller setting like a home, believers were able to ask questions, discuss Jesus' teachings, pray together and share their personal concerns—things that couldn't be done in a large group setting.

In Large Groups =
the Bible's teachings are _____

In Small Groups =
the Bible's teachings are _____

So then, brothers, stand firm and hold to the teachings we passed on to you, whether by word of mouth or by letter. 2 Thessalonians 2:15

Why is it essential to not only learn the Bible but also to apply it to everyday life?

Small groups have a choice when they study the Bible together. They may choose to:

- Study a book of the Bible. (Start with short books in the New Testament or minor prophets.) Assign a chapter each week and come together to talk through what they have learned.
- Study a theme in the Bible (forgiveness, patience, love, etc.)
- Memorize Scripture together.
- Study a Bible character. (For example, the life of Joseph)

Look at the above list. What are other specific books, characters, themes and/or scriptures a small group can use to study the Bible

together?

Small Group Sample Format

Every group is different, but the general “flow” to a small group meeting is as follows (designed for 1 hour):

- Welcome
- Open with prayer
- Study the Bible together
- Discuss and ask questions about the topic
- Ask for prayer requests
- Pray together as a group or in pairs
- Dismiss

3. _____:
Share _____ and _____ together

They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people.
Acts 2:46-47

The goal of fellowship is “breaking bread” (as they did in Acts 2), which literally means sharing meals together. When you eat together, you build a sense of community with others. Small groups may include a meal as part of their regular meetings. Or, they may plan special times to share a meal as part of a celebration.

4. _____: **Receive _____ in times of _____**

It was because of an illness that I first preached the gospel to you. Even though my illness was a trial to you, you did not treat me with contempt or scorn. Instead, you welcomed me as if I were an angel

of God, as if I were Christ Jesus himself. Galatians 4:13-14

How to Respond in a Crisis

When a family crisis arises, the members of the small group should be some of the first people to respond to the need through prayer and acts of kindness. In my church, for example, when a loved one is in the hospital, the leader of the small group is notified. He or she then notifies the other members of the group.

How well do the members of your church respond to a crisis or need?

The group may demonstrate their concern in a crisis by:

- praying for that person
- visiting the hospital
- cooking meals for the family
- offering to babysit children
- going grocery shopping, etc.
- Whatever the need—the small group is there to help

What happens when someone has a crisis and there is no small group to call upon? Sadly, that person may never feel the love and concern they need from their church because no one may know they are struggling. This is why the leadership of the church must constantly encourage church attenders to become part of a small group.

When was a time a group of people from the church ministered to you in a crisis?

5. _____:
Minister to others' _____

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

The most effective small groups care for one another on a consistent basis. Here are some ways to demonstrate care:

- **Care through** _____ – Members share prayer requests with each other, just as the Bible instructs us to do. This helps the group members to grow closer to one another and to grow together spiritually. It's important to practice confidentiality, meaning the requests are not shared outside of the group. Effective small groups develop trust this way.
- **Care through** _____ – If a member expresses a need, the other members of the group are willing to ease their burden. The small group gives believers the opportunity to serve and be served by others. Ministry takes place when believers serve each other in a time of need.

Does your church have a strong reputation for loving its members?

Applying the Truth:

Complete the following assignments and reflect on your response:

1. *What did you learn from this lesson that you can put into practice immediately?*
2. *What improvements need to be made to your small group ministry in the areas of teaching the Bible and/or caring for one another?*
3. *How can you increase the number of people in your small group ministry?*

Summary:

Small groups are where ministry takes place on a regular basis. Without them, the people in your church will feel disconnected from each other and slow their spiritual growth. A vibrant small group provides the energy and spiritual maturity to grow a church beyond the four walls of its corporate meeting location.

Answer Key Lesson 3: Healthy Churches Create Small Group Relationships

Small Group Basics

1. There must be a leader
2. The members must be committed to the group
3. The group must have a purpose

5 Benefits of a Small Group

1. Relationships: Know people by name
2. Interaction: Study the Bible

In Large Groups = the Bible's teachings are Proclaimed

In Small Groups = the Bible's teachings are Applied

3. Fellowship: Share food and fun together
4. Care: Receive support in times of crisis
Care through Prayer
Care through Service
5. Ministry: Minister to others' needs

LESSON FOUR

Healthy Churches Impact Their Community in Positive Ways

Introduction to lesson

Key Truth: Healthy churches actively seek opportunities to bless the community around them.

Scriptural Context:

*They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Everyone was filled with awe, and many wonders and miraculous signs were done by the apostles. All the believers were together and had everything in common. Selling their possessions and goods, they gave to anyone as he 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...** Acts 2:42-47 (bold emphasis)*

The early Church was a phenomenon that captured the attention of everyone around them. Never before had anyone seen a group of people so loving, committed to each other and willing to serve others. Although their enemies persecuted them, the Bible

says they enjoyed “favor” with the majority of people. Likewise, a healthy church looks for ways to impact the community in favorable ways in hopes of drawing others to the love of Christ.

Outcomes: As a result of this lesson, you will:

- Understand how to bless the community in positive ways as a means of evangelism
- Learn practical principles of sharing your faith and blessing your community
- Apply the principles to your church setting

Exploring the Principle: Relationships are Central to the Gospel

We live in a high-tech world with impersonal computers and devices that create a false sense of community apart from real human interaction. One of the most important things the Church can do is to bridge the gap of human interaction in kind, loving ways.

1. The message of the Gospel is communicated through

People were being added to the early Church every day according to Acts 2:47. How did that happen? The individual members were sharing the Truth of the Gospel with people one-on-one through relationships.

Imagine a room filled with 500 empty plastic bottles. One man could use a fire hose to spray the bottles and hopefully fill up some of them. However, if a few dozen people individually filled a few bottles each, the job would be done much more efficiently. The individual members of the church can “fill” people’s lives with the Living Water of Christ much more efficiently than one person/pastor can.

Why do you think the Gospel is effectively communicated through relationships?

- **People come to _____ because of their friends**

Studies show the number one reason why people come to church is because a neighbor or co-worker invited them.

- **People come to _____ through their friends**

A friend who lovingly explains the Gospel is often more effective than someone hearing a pastor's sermon. Why? God can use an existing relationship for His purposes.

2. **Healthy churches practice**

In many places in the world, it is unwise and even illegal to openly share the Gospel in the streets or in public places. However, relational evangelism is merely two or more friends sharing the truth about how God has changed their lives.

What challenges do Christians encounter in your community regarding sharing the Gospel?

Two Parts to Reaching the Community for Christ

1. My Part is to _____ Lost People and _____ the Good News.

There are opportunities all around us every day to reach lost people for Christ. We need to be aware of these opportunities and see them as divine appointments for us to show God's love.

An American evangelist traveled to Australia several years ago to conduct evangelistic services in several small churches. However, after six nights in six different churches, not a single person had been saved. The evangelist was discouraged as he boarded a small plane to return to Sydney and connect for his return home. Only one other passenger was on the flight, seated several rows ahead of him. The evangelist saw he was intently reading something. Suddenly, the passenger walked back to him carrying a copy of the Gospel of John. He said, "Excuse me, but somebody in the airport gave me this booklet and told me to read it. It's about Jesus. Here on this page, Jesus told a man he must be born again. Do you know anything about that?" The evangelist grinned at God's sense of humor. He gladly told the man about Jesus, and the man prayed to receive Christ before they landed. Later, that man on the airplane became the pastor of one of the largest churches in Australia.

Remember this: Whoever turns a sinner away from his error will save him from death and cover over a multitude of sins. James 5:20

When was a time God used you to share God's love with someone else?

2. **God's Part is to _____ the Lost and
_____ His Church.**

God is far more interested in saving lost people than even the most zealous Christian. We do not “save” anyone—only He can bring someone salvation. Sometimes people are not yet ready to accept Christ, but that’s not our concern. We only plant a seed of truth. God makes it grow.

For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. John 3:16-17

Why is it important to remember the distinction between our role and God’s role in salvation?

God’s Mathematics

In Acts, we see how God adds to and multiplies the number in the early Church.

120 people prayed at Pentecost (Acts 1)
+
3000 came to Christ after Peter’s message (Acts 2)
+
The Lord added to their number daily (Acts 2:47)
+
The Church grew to 5000 men, not counting wives and children
(Acts 4:4)
+
The Church grew to many thousands of members (Acts 21:20).
The word “thousands” is translated as tens of thousands.

Not only is the Lord adding to the number of believers; He is

multiplying it exponentially because He wants everyone to be saved.

The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance. 2 Peter 3:9

Sharing Your Testimony

Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect... 1 Peter 3:15-16

Here's a simple way to teach others to share their testimony. A testimony is the story of how you came to know Christ and what a difference He has made in your life. Your testimony can be shared in 2 minutes or less. There are 3 parts to a testimony:

- My life _____ Christ (fill in your key word: _____)
- _____ I came to know Christ (fill in your key word: _____)
- What _____ He has made in my life since: (fill in your key word: _____)

Think of one word that helps you remember each of these three parts. For example:

My life BEFORE I came to know Christ was really “boring” (key word). I did not have a sense of purpose and life seemed meaningless. When I was a teenager at a camp for kids at my church, someone told me HOW to know Jesus and I “prayed” (key word) to accept Him as Lord and Savior of my life. He has now made a DIFFERENCE by giving my life “meaning” (key word). I am much happier as a person because I know God has a purpose for my life.

Write out your testimony below in a format that can be shared in 2 minutes or less:

The Early Church Enjoyed _____ with All the People

They were not a drain or a burden on the community. Rather, they sought ways to meet their needs and serve them.

5 Ways Your Church Can Bless the Community

1. Collect food and clothing for needy people
2. Offer free babysitting services for single parents
3. Offer free help to widows who need assistance with household chores
4. Clean the trash in a public park
5. Distribute free cold water bottles on hot days

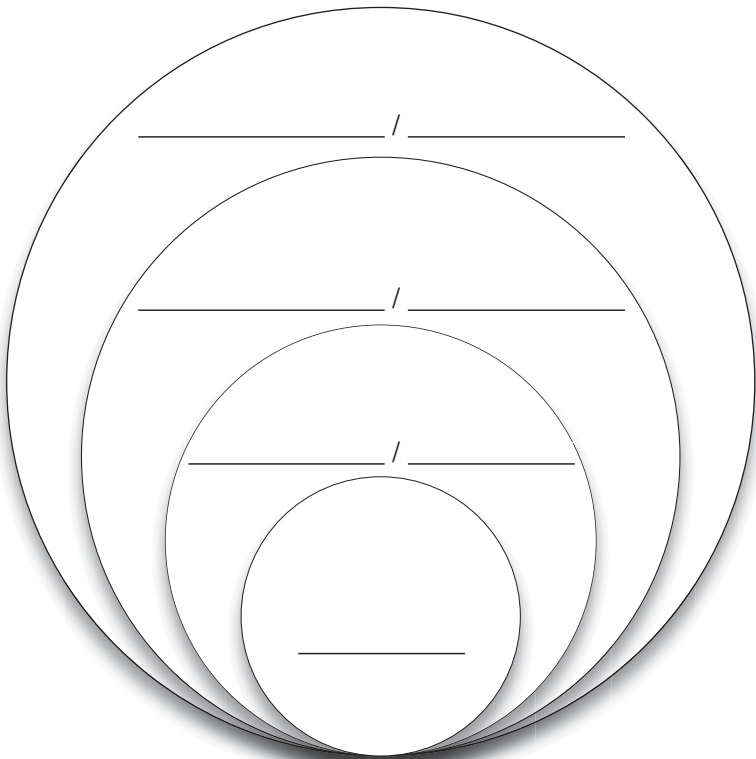
What would you add to the list of creative ways to bless your community?

While you are not explicitly sharing the Bible, you are demonstrating God's love in tangible ways. People will wonder what is different about your church.

You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven. Matthew 5:14-16

Consider Your _____

An American seminary professor, Oscar Thompson, designed a model to picture the relationships in our lives with whom we can share Christ. Here is a simplified version of his ideas.



You can most easily reach the spiritual needs of those closest to you (family/relatives). You can then move outward into the next “circle” to reach those with whom you have far less contact. This gives you an idea where to start sharing your faith and a strategy for reaching others around you.

In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven.” Matthew 5:16

How well does your church “enjoy favor with all the people” in your community?

Applying the Truth:

Complete the following assignments and reflect on your response:

1. *What did you learn from this lesson that you can put into practice immediately?*
2. *Make a list of all the current ministries in your church. Compare that with a list of perceived needs in the community. How can your church meet some of the needs in the community with your existing ministries?*
3. *How can your church equip people to share their faith through relationships with others?*

Summary

One of the best ways to share our faith is through relationships. Over time, we can earn someone's trust and share the Truth of the Gospel with him or her. Our job is to share it—God's job is to save the person. A healthy church creates curiosity in the community about Christ by creatively sharing God's love in tangible ways and meeting others' needs.

Answer Key Lesson 4: Healthy Churches Impact Their Community in Positive Ways

Relationships are Central to the Gospel

1. The message of the Gospel is communicated through relationships
 - People come to church because of their friends.
 - People come to Christ through their friends.
2. Healthy churches practice relational evangelism

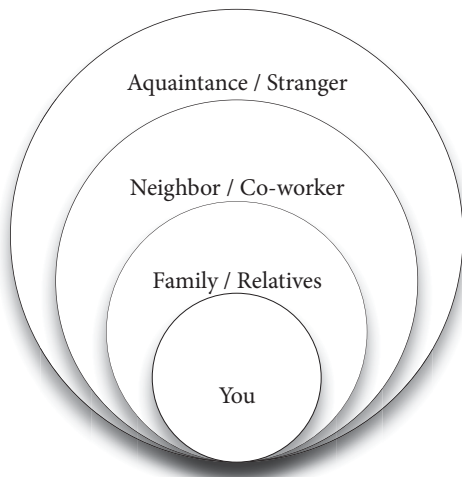
Two Parts to Reaching the Community for Christ

1. My Part is to Seek Lost People and Share the Good News.
2. God's Part is to Save the Lost and Grow His Church.

Sharing Your Testimony

- My life before Christ
- How I came to know Christ
- What difference He has made in my life since

The Early Church Enjoyed Favor with All the People
Consider your relationships.



Notes:

LESSON FIVE

Healthy Churches Welcome New People into Their Church Family

Introduction to lesson

Key Truth: Be prepared to welcome, nurture and find a place of service for new people in your church as God adds to your number.

Scriptural Context:

*They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Everyone was filled with awe, and many wonders and miraculous signs were done by the apostles. All the believers were together and had everything in common. Selling their possessions and goods, they gave to anyone as he 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 (bold emphasis)*

In the previous lesson, we learned how to interest people in Christ and your church. Now, what do you do once the Lord

“adds to your number” and you have many new people in your church? A healthy church will welcome, nurture and find a place of service for the new people God brings their way. This is how the church grows to a healthy size (although, remember, it’s not about the numbers!).

Outcomes: As a result of this lesson, you will:

- Understand the needs of a new person in your church
- Learn practical principles for assimilating a new person into your church family
- Apply the principles to your church setting

Exploring the Principle:

What New People in Your Church Need

Do you remember what it was like to move to a new town, a new job or a new school? The easier we make it for new people to feel “at home” in our churches, the more likely they will come back a second and third time. When newcomers visit your church, they have very specific needs:

And whoever welcomes a little child like this in my name welcomes me. Matthew 18:5

1. New People Need to feel _____.

It’s not easy to go to a new place for the first time. Guests may feel uncomfortable or out of place—especially if it seems like a church is “closed” to new people. Sadly, some churches seem to have room for “Us four and no more!” when it comes to welcoming new people.

How _____ Is Your Church?

- Do you make it _____ for new people to find where and when your church meets?
- Do you have a welcoming _____ to greet people as they arrive for church?
- Do you have extra _____ reserved for guests?

How accepting are you personally toward newcomers? Rate yourself:

- 1- I always look for guests to welcome
 - 2- I sometimes notice new people at my church
 - 3- I never think of new people being at my church
-
-
-

2. New People Need to be _____.

Nurturing a relationship with a new person at church is the same as establishing a new friendship. It does not happen automatically. You have to get to know a new person, spend time together and build a bond. Churches can't assume new people will find friends on their own—the other members have to help them feel connected. We will examine this point further later.

How _____ Is Your Church?

- How do you follow up with _____?
- How many of your visitors _____ for a second or third visit?
- How do you help new people make _____ at church?

How well does your church welcome others into your family?

3. New People Need a Place of _____.

Church is not for spectators—a healthy church involves new people in places of service. Identify where the church needs volunteers to help. It may be taking care of young children while the adults are worshipping together. It may be greeting other new people. If new people feel needed, they will feel like they belong. Let's look at this last point more closely.

Everyone has _____ _____ to Serve in the Church

The world is where people learn to be selfish and to look out for their own needs. The church is where people learn to serve others. “Me First” is the most popular core value of the world. “Jesus First, Others Second and Me Third” is the core value of the Church.

That's why God gives each believer one or more spiritual gifts. These are spiritually endowed abilities or talents that He wants us to use.

Spiritual Gifts are for _____ _____ and the _____ of others.

In a church setting, people's gifts may include things like:

- Serving
- Teaching
- Praying for others
- Working with children
- Sharing the Gospel
- Organizing business matters
- Encouraging
- Being generous with resources
- Helping people

There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit. There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord. There are different

kinds of working, but the same God works all of them in all men. 1 Corinthians 12:4-6

What spiritual gifts do you see at work in your church?

Healthy churches provide opportunities for everyone to exercise their talents and abilities. Serving helps believers grow in their faith and become spiritually mature. And it helps the church to accomplish more for God's kingdom.

Do people in your church believe they are ministers who serve? Or do they depend on church leaders to do all the ministering? Explain.

What to Expect of Church Members

Church members are not part of an organization. The word the Bible uses is "family." That means we have expectations of each other, much like people have expectations in healthy families in order for the family to work properly.

In the church, family members should agree to:

- **Safeguard the _____ of the church**
That means members will support the leadership of the church as well as live peacefully with other members. As I stressed in previous lessons, unity pleases God and is essential to the health of a church.

- **Share the _____ of the church**
Remember the illustration of filling 500 water bottles with a fire hose or one-by-one? When all the family members in the church agree to share the responsibility to reach others for Christ, everyone will share the Living Water of Christ more effectively. And the church will grow.
- **Serve _____ in the church**
We've emphasized in this lesson the value of serving—both for believers and for the church as a whole. Caring about others is foundational to any church.
- **Support the _____ of the church**
Tithes and offerings support the work of the church. Generous givers help free the church to accomplish more for God's kingdom.

What does your church expect of members? What can be improved?

Applying the Truth:

Complete the following assignments and reflect on your response:

1. *What did you learn from this lesson that you can put into practice immediately?*
2. *Make a list of all the current ministries in your church. Compare that with a list of perceived needs in the community. How can your church meet some of the needs in the community with your existing ministries?*
3. *How can your church equip people to share their faith through relationship with others?*

Summary:

One of the best ways to share our faith is through relationships. Over time, we can earn someone's trust and share the Truth of the Gospel with him or her. Our job is to share it—God's job is to save the person. A healthy church creates curiosity in the community about Christ by creatively sharing God's love and meeting others' needs.

Answer Key Lesson 5: Healthy Churches Welcome New People into Your Church Family

What New People in Your Church Need

1. New People Need to feel accepted
How Friendly Is Your Church?
 - Do you make it easy for new people to find where and when your church meets?
 - Do you have a welcoming team to greet people as they arrive for church?
 - Do you have extra seating reserved for guests?
2. New People Need to be nurtured
How Nurturing Is Your Church?
 - How do you follow up with visitors?
 - How many of your visitors return for a second or third visit?
 - How do you help new people make friends at church?
3. New People Need a Place of service

Everyone has Special Abilities to Serve in the Church

Spiritual Gifts are for God's glory and the good of others.

What to Expect of Church Members

- Safeguard the unity of the church
- Share the faith of the church
- Serve gladly in the church
- Support the work of the church

Notes:

Notes:
