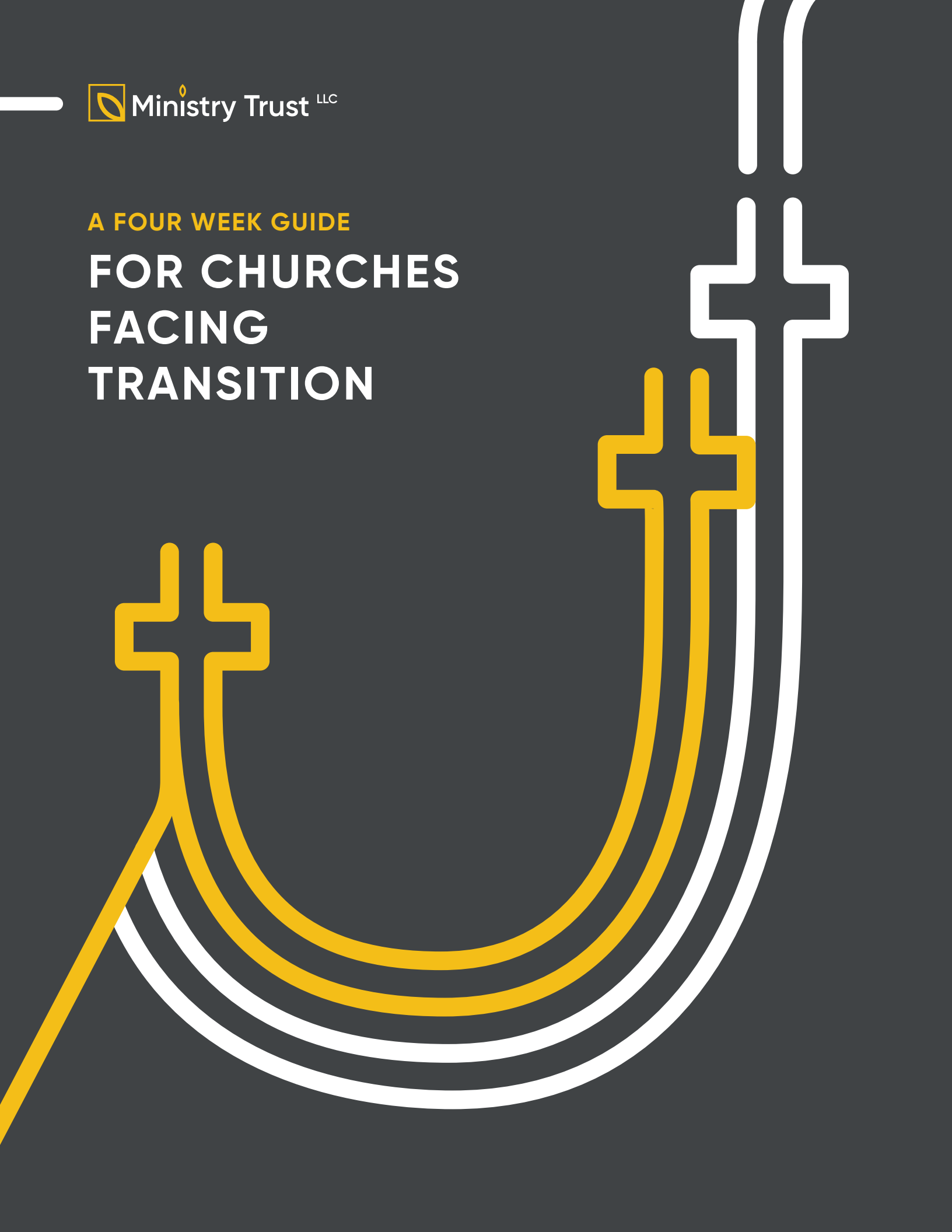


A FOUR WEEK GUIDE

FOR CHURCHES FACING TRANSITION



INTRODUCTION

Transitions are never easy, but oftentimes necessary. As a church body faces their future, there are needed times of evaluation and contemplation which sometimes lead to frustration. This Prayer Guide offers a church family the opportunity to do more than to contemplate change; it provides a four-week discovery period to determine God's direction into the future.

In many ways, this is a preparation guide, prompted by prayer and undergirded with scripture. It is intended to provide church members a coordinated, daily study, reinforced through church leadership support. The options for a church body in transition are multiple, and therefore, it is essential to hear from God's perspective, rather than making hurried decisions with unexpected consequences. No prayer, no power – little prayer, little power – MUCH PRAYER, much power!

John C. Bryan

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WEEK 1

DISCOVERING GOD'S WILL



THROUGH HIS WORD

2 TIMOTHY 3:16

"All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work."

God speaks to us through His Word. The written word of God is a mirror image of the Living Word of God—Jesus (John 1:1). His words to the church are much more than a weekly message from the pastor or a passage of scripture studied from the Bible. His God-created words have at least four purposes.

TEACHING

We never push pause on learning. We need God to teach us by giving us instruction and direction.

REPROOF

Churches, like individuals, need to accept responsibility, disapproval, and even blame. We need God to speak Truth into our lives.

CORRECTION

This is not a harsh discipline as much as a needed change that ratifies an error or inaccuracy. We need God to guide our course.

TRAINING

Righteousness is simply right living. We need God to direct our steps rightly so that we can be made complete and be equipped for every good work for His glory.

PRAY

- Ask God to teach us his ways through His Word.
- Plead with God to direct our steps.
- Purpose in your heart to obey His Word.

THROUGH HIS WAY

ISAIAH 55:8

"For my thoughts are not your thoughts,
neither are your ways my ways, declares the LORD."

Direction in life is not optional; it is essential. If we don't know the way, we'll get lost and off track. GPS can be a wonderful tool, unless you get misguided.

God's ways are different than ours. There are many times in our lives and the life of the church when confusion outweighs clarity. We may not understand why we are experiencing trials or troubles. Sometimes these periods of concern are used by God to direct us into a better way.

If we could see the end result of every action, it could be terrific or, in some cases, it could be terrible. That's why reliance on God's ways is essential. He knows our "now" and he sees ahead to our "tomorrows."

Following God's way, even when it doesn't make sense or match our past experiences, is the pipeline to a clearer purpose. We cannot have His perfect thoughts, but we must be willing to walk in His purifying ways.

PRAY

- Ask God for clear direction.
- Seek to follow, even if you don't understand.
- Thank God that He will share His ways with us.

THROUGH THE POWER OF PRAYER

MATTHEW 21:22

And whatever you ask in prayer, you will receive, if you have faith."

Faith is the key that unlocks the heart of God. We exercise our faith through our actions, attitudes, and our alterations.

If we say we are a people of faith, but never pray, our words do not match our walk. Our greatest action is discovered through our interaction with God.

Faith is not like a water spigot. You don't turn it on when you need it and turn it off when unnecessary. Our attitude is to be the same as Christ Jesus (Phil. 2:5) Prayer becomes an outer expression of an inner impression of our attitude.

If we want God to alter our lives and even our church body, we must be willing to ask for His help. Never use prayer as an emergency flare for assistance; it is a constant conversation with the Almighty God who listens, responds, and repairs our anxiety and our anguish.

Our every emotion should be processed in prayer to invite God into the equation of church-wide decisions and to reveal the solution for our struggles.

PRAY

- Just do it!
- Ask God for the mind of Christ.
- Praise Him for listening and answering.

THROUGH TIMES OF TESTING

JAMES 1:3

"For you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness."

The least favorite time in school is probably "test time." The pressure is on to perform and recall what you've studied and hopefully learned through listening.

However, during times of testing, we experience what we know, and we can also come to realize all that we don't know. The same is true when God allows us to be tested in our faith and understanding in life. Scripture teaches us that Our Lord never tempts us, but He does test our hearts (1 Thess. 2:4).

The Spirit of God prompted James to write in our key verse for today that when our faith is tested, the result is steadfastness. We can steady ourselves in times of trouble and uncertainty; we can gain deeper understanding in the midst of confusion.

It seems odd that life lessons can be learned in ways we least like. Tests do not have to be terrible; they make us stronger.

PRAY

- Thank God for times of testing.
- Ask God to show you what you don't know.
- Believe God has a plan to be revealed.

THROUGH OUR TESTIMONY

PROVERBS 16:1-3

"The plans of the heart belong to man, but the answer of the tongue is from the LORD. All the ways of a man are pure in his own eyes, but the LORD weighs the spirit. Commit your work to the LORD, and your plans will be established."

A testimony by definition is an attestation as to the truth of the matter. Legally, a testimony is a form of evidence attained from a witness who makes a statement.

Christ-followers share their faith as they testify how they trusted God by believing and receiving Jesus Christ as their personal Savior. Another form of testimony is the evidence we share with an on-looking world who watches our behaviors, listens to our words, and observes our responses. This type of testimony can be either positive or negative.

If a church acts outside of biblical boundaries by being contrary to God's Spirit and conflictive with one another, the testimony is spoiled. If a church takes into account the truth of their legacy and commits their work and decisions to the Lord, the writer of Proverbs promises that God's plan can be established.

Every church has a history upon which they should build so as not to spoil God's testimony among the community of faith and beyond.

PRAY

- Ask God to keep your testimony pure.
- Thank God for the evidence of God's grace and glory in your church's past and present.
- Trust God to establish His plans through you.

THROUGH TIMES OF TALKING

PROVERBS 11:14

"Where there is no guidance, a people falls, but in an abundance of counselors there is safety." ESV

Nobody needs nobody. Everybody needs somebody and every church needs an abundance of counselors to stay on track. The beauty of the body of Christ becomes radiant through fellowship with God, with other believers, and through wise guidance.

We are all capable of believing that "our way" is OK. However, when we exclude the possibilities of talking it over with the right advisors, we lose the added ingredient of objectivity. Many times a church cannot see what is most needed because their own familiarities and traditions have stolen opportunity for change.

Pride is a thief of the glory of God. Cultural customs lead us to where we feel safe, but they may not lead us to where we are most effective. The result of seeking safety-first can stifle the voice of God because we pridefully dismiss the help of others.

Not every word from everybody is a good word, but no words from nobody leave us vulnerable and weak.

PRAY

- Praise God for others who care enough to share.
- Ask God to lead you to wise counselors.
- Believe God for discernment.

THROUGH GOD'S TIMING

ECCLESIASTES 3:1

"For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven"

"Timing is everything," say some. What may be more truthful is that everything is better when it is done in the right time.

Every church has a timeline. You are much more than a group gathered in a certain place on a certain day for a limited time. You leave a legacy which started from your birth as a new body of Christ up to the present. Many churches only look backwards, yearning to return to a better time when circumstances were different and decisions were not as difficult. It's time to look ahead as well.

However, the best time for any church family is the present, because it is now that determines how you handle your past and how you will direct your future witness for Christ.

Just as there are seasons in our personal lives and nature's seasons throughout the year, there are also seasons in every church. None of us likes aging and few of us like conflict, yet it is how we handle these challenges that can make a difference to God and to ourselves.

You are looking to turn the page in discovering your next chapter. Don't waste this time.

PRAY

- Yearn for God's leadership at this time.
- Trust God to give you His timing.
- Thank God for every season experienced in your church life.



WEEK 2

DEALING WITH OUR OWN DESIRES



ARE WE HOLDING ON?

MARK 7:8

"You leave the commandment of God and hold to the tradition of men."

Traditions are foundational for any church, however they do not have to forge the future of every church. Change and adaptation to current reality is never easy, but it is essential.

Because every day is new, God challenges us with fresh opportunities to minister within the context of what is current. This doesn't mean that every church should bend to sacrifice what is sacred; it's a matter of hearing and heeding the voice of God and resisting the temptation to hold on to what may be more comfortable and less volatile.

Jesus spoke truth to the religious traditionalists and many times disrupted their culture. His desire for the church is to stretch us, mold us, and to use us for God's glory—never our own.

A church's goal is accomplished by sharing the Gospel to disciple new believers. This new life in Christ demands a changed lifestyle. The former traditions of new Christians must be altered for obedience to operate. The same is true in the life of a church. We must also be willing to do whatever it takes to please our Lord, which sometimes means letting go of our control to advance God's goal for our future.

PRAY

- Thank God for the past.
- Ask God to show you His future.
- Be willing to release control to God.

ARE WE HURRYING UP?

PSALM 27:14

"Wait for the Lord; be strong, and let your heart take courage; wait for the Lord!"

Nobody likes to wait. We equate efficiency with speed. Fast food—fast cars—fast returned calls—fast response to our prayers. All of these are normal experiences and expectations. However, many times they don't bring the best benefits.

The same holds true when a church must make major decisions. If we hurry-up the process, we can get ahead of God's desire to bring His answers, in His timing. Our cultural training equates busyness with godliness—not so.

Waiting on the Lord brings strength and shows trust. Waiting is not inactivity; in fact, it takes more active thought and prayer and exercises more faith than "getting the job done." The Psalmist stated that it takes courage from your heart, not fear.

In a hurry-up world, God's people should walk more slowly, listen more keenly, and follow more closely. After all, God waits on us all the time.

PRAY

- Ask God for patience.
- Thank God for His perfect plan to be revealed when ready.
- Believe God through trusting His timing.

ARE WE HUSHING OTHERS?

1 PETER 2:15

"For this is the will of God, that by doing good you should put to silence the ignorance of foolish people."

Opposition is irritating. If someone opposes your ideas or ideals, it may seem awkward to tell them to be quiet, especially if they pose a threat to you or others. However, though it is not easy, it may be essential—especially if they are spewing gossip.

Churches are not immune to unnecessary chatter expressing inappropriate opinions at inappropriate times. Exercising spiritual discipline includes taming the tongue to build up the body of Christ so as to bring healing, not hurt. (James 3:8)

Every believer is responsible for his or her response to any given situation. However, we are also responsible to bring correction and give guidance to others who have violated biblical code and conduct.

It may seem like a risk to tell someone to be quiet and to exercise discernment before they speak up, yet it is also one way to fulfill God's way of speaking truth to them in love. Having a unified voice is not beyond possibility; it is plausible and pleasing to God.

PRAY

- Ask God to help you help others who gossip.
- Ask God to show you if you are the problem.
- Thank God for unifying prayer.

ARE WE HASSLING OTHERS?

PROVERBS 16:18

"Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall."

Persuasion is not a bad activity, unless it is done for a bad reason. Positive persuasion comes in the form of sharing helpful knowledge and encouragement. Negative persuasion is pressuring others continually to force them to accept or adopt your stance.

No one likes robocalls from businesses who make it their business by hassling you into buying their product. If we answer the call, it is usually not long before we hang up or disconnect. Why? Because we don't want to be pressured into making a decision without enough knowledge or personal conviction.

Churches should also hate hasslers. Some people know they are doing it; others not so much. When voices get louder and go longer than the voice of God's Word while waiting on His timing, then the purest opportunity has been side-tracked or even derailed.

Remember, Jesus never hassled others. He speaks the truth and gives us choices.

PRAY

- Invite God to reveal your inner motives.
- Thank the Holy Spirit for His persuasive power.
- Seek to help those who may be forcing their opinions on others.

ARE WE HASTENING OBJECTIVES?

ISAIAH 49:17

"Your builders make haste; your destroyers and those who laid you waste go out from you."

What is your church's objectives? Sometimes it is promoted in a mission or purpose statement. Sometimes it is unknown. Yet, all of the time it is achieved through a process and is not a neat-and-clean product.

Every church wants to glorify God and to do His will in His way. The best way to sabotage this objective is to substitute personal desires for the desire of God. How we do what we do is as important as why we do what we do.

A "let's get it done" attitude can alter God's objective and detour a church from the discovery process which leads us to it. There are times when every believer is tempted to use spiritual language in an unspiritual manner. When this becomes habitual, God's objective purpose and process is weakened. Jesus never hurried others to discover God's best.

PRAY

- Ask the Savior if you are on His timetable.
- Plead with God for patience as He reveals His objectives.
- Trust Jesus to take your church to a higher level of discovery and purpose.

ARE WE HALTING OBJECTIONS?

I CORINTHIANS 4:5

"Therefore do not pronounce judgment before the time, before the Lord comes, who will bring to light the things now hidden in darkness and will disclose the purposes of the heart. Then each one will receive his commendation from God."

Limiting adequate discussion on a church-wide decision in order to keep things moving along may be one way to force a decision before understanding the potential consequences and concerns. Halting any or all objections to a church proposal is limiting the opportunity for God to speak through the body of Christ.

There are times when a church family becomes weary and even worn out from seeking God's direction. This posture creates vulnerability to a hurry-up attitude or even apathy.

It's not that everyone should be given the right to say whatever they feel whenever they feel like it. Discernment and discretion must rule, along with Christian discipline, so as not to judge others too quickly. It hurts God's church to label or categorize His people. He is the One who will disclose the purposes of our hearts.

He is the One who will bring light from the things which seem hidden in darkness. Jesus gave His disciples the freedom to speak even when he already knew their motives and intent.

PRAY

- Believe God for His voice through many.
- Trust Jesus to use differing opinions to guide His process toward His purposes.
- Receive from others as you would have them to receive from yourself.

ARE WE HARBORING GUILT?

ROMANS 5:5

"And hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us."

A sense of hopelessness is sometimes fueled by guilt. Because we are prone to look backwards, rather than ahead, questions may arise in the life of a church such as, "What if we had...?" Or, "Why didn't we...?" Or, "If only we could have ..."

Guilt can bring on shame which can rob us from God's hope. When the Holy Spirit guides a church, He is not interested in condemning. The role of the Spirit is to convict and teach us to use the experiences of our past actions as a foundation for the future.

Many times guilt leads us to blame others or even ourselves. We want a reason for every problem with the belief that this will provide a quick solution. Pointing out the mistakes of others to address any current church mishaps can lead to a misalignment of God's best. Our God is patiently waiting for us to act by faith and not by fear.

Jesus never used guilt to force anyone to a deeper faith. He gives us hope for the future wherever it may lead.

PRAY

- Ask God if you are blaming others for any church-wide missteps.
- Search within yourself to see if you carry any guilt affecting your church.
- Confess to our Lord that He uses every experience to discover His direction.



WEEK 3

DETERMINING OUR DISTINCTIVENESS



WHAT ABOUT OUR RELIANCE?

PSALM 26:3

"For your steadfast love is before my eyes, and I walk in your faithfulness."

Every church is distinctively different and this is a good thing. However, we need not ever differ in our reliance on God in times of decision. This is the one constant that should never erode.

Too often we look in the wrong directions. If we look backwards to our past, we can miss the challenge of the present. If we are only focused on present problems, then we remove God from the equation of life. If we fear the future, our trust is determined only by our limited experiences and vision. Look up!

As Charles Spurgeon said many decades ago, "When we cannot see the hand of God, we must trust the heart of God." 'This is for our own good and His glory.

There are so many voices of opinion which surround us. Everyone else's solution may lead you to an even bigger problem, because it may not include the God-factor for your church at this time.

Our total reliance on the Redeemer is the only guarantee for His guidance. A walk in faith will prevent many stumbles in fear. Jesus always relied on the Father's voice to discover His plan.

PRAY

- Thank God he has a plan for you and your church.
- Ask God to reveal the plan among you.
- Test yourself to see which direction on which you are dependent.

WHAT ABOUT OUR RELEVANCE?

PHILEMON 1:1

"Formerly he was useless to you, but now he is indeed useful to you and to me."

No church is ever washed-up. God is never finished with any of His creation. How we relate to Him, to other believers, to our own church community, and to ourselves is critical. For a church to be relevant is not synonymous with being socially correct. God views us in relation to Himself more than toward others.

Too often we are involved in comparative "churchianity." We look around us and can begin to judge ourselves based on what we think we are or what others say that we are. When we fall into this trap, we lose sight of the uniqueness of every church's past, present, and future.

A church's relevance is not based solely upon attendance or activity—especially if it is being graded only by past performance. God is seeking for us to be relevant to His current call and plan for our body of believers. Many times this may be radically different from what we may think or do.

Each chapter of life builds upon the previous one, but it differs as the journey continues. If we get stuck on one paradigm of relevant success, we may miss the next step taking us to even greater possibilities in expanding God's work through a new and fresh approach.

Jesus was always relevant to the Father's next step because He stayed in tune with His voice.

PRAY

- Thank God that your church is relevant to His Kingdom regardless of the future.
- Ask God to show you areas where you need to improve in relating.
- Believe that our Lord will help you to grow in church relevancy to others.

HOW ABOUT OUR RESPONSE?

ROMANS 8:31

"What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us?"

In the life of a church, there should never be any score-keeping. We must not be tempted to think in terms of winning or losing. Every church body of Christ is connected to the One who has given us victory through Jesus Christ our Lord.

The greatest opposition in a church seeking the favor of God is the devil himself. The Bible refers to him as a liar and a thief (John 10:10). He wants to steal our response to God through distractions and derailment.

Satan's plan also involves doubt and discouragement. If he can cause a church to doubt their value, they will succumb to discouragement. God is for us, not against us, regardless of what steps are taken in a new direction for the congregation. Truly, our Father knows best.

When a church member or church family responds negatively to circumstances or leadership decisions, it can be interpreted as a slap against God.. For certain, spiritual warfare is real and it is difficult, but God's sovereign rule is distinctively victorious.

PRAY

- Seek to evaluate your response to the challenges facing your church.
- Ask God to give you His perspective.
- Thank Jesus for paying the ultimate price for our victory.

WILL THERE BE ANY REMORSE?

2 CORINTHIANS 7:9

"As it is, I rejoice, not because you were grieved, but because you were grieved into repenting. For you felt a godly grief, so that you suffered no loss through us."

Godly grief differs from regret. Our current emotional responses are closely linked to our past actions. If we feel that our church has declined in its impact and usefulness, sorrow is a natural response.

While grief is a normal part of every life, including the life of a church, we must remember that we grieve because we love. A sense of loss, no matter how large or small, triggers wonderment over what we might have done differently to have impacted the present.

The definition of remorse is deep regret or guilt for a wrong committed. There is a sense in which everyone is responsible, in part, for the well-being of a church family. All believers make up the body with differing roles and purposes—but as one of the whole. There is no single blame on which all consequences hang.

Godly grief and remorse over a burden is no sin. Our willingness to confess will bring cleansing and move a church forward to face the future. How you handle what you know now will determine how you will handle more as God reveals it.

Jesus grieved and so should we.

PRAY

- Confess whatever God may reveal as ungodly thoughts or actions.
- Thank God for His cleansing power.
- Repent of any sin which may prevent the church from spiritual breakthroughs.

WHAT ABOUT A REBOUND?

ISAIAH 43:19

"Behold I am doing a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it? I will make a way in the wilderness and rivers in the desert."

Every church should be open to a "new thing." Rebounds in the game of basketball are simply an exchange of how the game continues. The same is true in life.

One of the persistent problems we all share is our perception of problems. The prophet Isaiah speaks for God when he asked, "do you not perceive it?" Sometimes we do; sometimes we don't.

God's grace is evidenced when we experience a rebound in our spiritual lives. Our Redeemer redeems. He doesn't leave us alone in our desert times--He provides a way in our wilderness--His way.

Churches are not buildings, they are bodies, people, the children of God for whom Christ died and for whom God lives. A new direction can bring refreshment as we remain open to new possibilities for our family of faith and for ourselves.

PRAY

- Believe God for his new thing.
- Ask God to show you what it is.
- Thank God for His guidance in the wilderness.

WILL WE BE RECONNECTING?

I CORINTHIANS 5:4

"When you are assembled in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and my spirit is present, with the power of the Lord Jesus."

We all want to be connected to someone, somewhere. Disconnections are disturbing, especially when we valued the relationships and memories with those with whom we connected the most.

Good news — God never disconnects from His people. He is in the business of connecting us to what is next for our lives and service of His church.

It hurts when we think of an experience or a separation from what we have learned to love of our church as we know it. However, our assemblage with God's family is never limited to the past. God has a future reconnect which can become an incredible blessing beyond our expectations.

Some churches wonder if it will ever be the same. The answer is: NO. The challenges of the future reconnections are limitless, while our past has parameters.

Jesus constantly reconnected believers to new experiences and new people of faith.

PRAY

- Ask God to take away your fear of the unknown.
- Trust Jesus to guide you toward future connections with confidence.
- Believe that the best may yet be ahead for you and your church family.

WILL WE EVER BE RE-SERVING?

MALACHI 3:18

"Then once more you shall see the distinction between the righteous and the wicked, between one who serves God and one who does not serve him."

Human emotions sometimes demand a pause, especially in times of stress or change. We want to sit back and let others take charge. Exhaustion and frustration steal our momentum and desire to serve God and others.

We must remember that our Lord never offers a retirement plan. For a believer, serving Christ is not an option—it is essential. We are saved to serve and equipped to equip and to disciple others. To do less is to disobey God.

As God opens new expressions of church relationships, He also opens new opportunities to serve the body of Christ and reach out to the unreached in Jesus' name and by His power.

Selfishness must be replaced by selflessness and entitlement must be overridden by encouragement to serve in even greater ways. This will involve new people and new approaches, but all blessings can be attributed to God's greater good for our lives.

PRAY

- Start thanking God as He is starting to show you some new or different service options.
- Ask Jesus out loud for ways to serve Him more.
- Trust our Savior to bring new opportunities to serve through new relationships.



WEEK 4

DIRECTING GOD'S DECISIONS



BE DECISIVE

ROMANS 4:20

"No unbelief made him waiver concerning the promise of God, but he grew strong in his faith as he gave glory to God,"

Procrastination is contagious. At first, it seems easier to put off acting on a decision than to put out energy and time to move ahead. However, in time, our wavering and waiting creates a greater frustration and a harder task to accomplish.

Alexander Graham Bell said it succinctly, "the only difference between success and failure is the ability to take action." Procrastination is the thief of time. Once you determine God's direction, move toward it without wavering.

Think of it this way: if God has given your church a clear directive as you have sought Him through tough decisions, it is absolute disobedience to wait or waiver in following His lead. Our Lord always blesses obedience, but disobedience always leads to conflict.

Indecisiveness will certainly alter God's desired outcome, but it will not "buy time" to alter the ultimate will of God. If you know what to do—do it! Make it an action of joy because you know it will bring you closer to God's next step for your church and yourself.

PRAY

- Thank God for his direction.
- Ask God to help you to follow that direction.
- Plead heaven for your church to stay decisive and unwavering in obedience to what has been revealed.

BE DELIBERATE

JOB 42:2

"I know you can do all things, and that no purpose of yours can be thwarted."

As God speaks to a church about his direction, a church must act-- deliberately, not tentatively. Just as you have taken initial steps toward discovering the will and way of God, so there should be steps to follow through.

Acting with a purposeful plan is as important as seeking God's plan. I have only built one house in my many years of home ownership, though I have renovated at least a dozen places. Each construction project demanded a set of architectural plans. You must know where you're going before you'll ever get there.

A deliberate movement counteracts indecision and fosters advancement. A stalled intention is sure to bring about stagnation.

As you sense God's plan unveiling before your church family, don't push pause with fear or uncertainty or this may cause further delay from fulfilling His direction. Move forward deliberately, until or if, you reach an impasse. Jesus never hesitated to follow God's directives.

PRAY

- Ask God to give you spiritual energy to stay steadfast.
- Believe that God will guide your steps toward completion.
- Thank God that Jesus never side-stepped the Father's will.

BE DETERMINED

JAMES 1:4

"And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing."

Once a church makes a deliberate decision, a steadfast determination to follow through will help to prevent wavering and delay in accomplishing God's revealed plan. The difference in being deliberate and being determined is intensity.

Determination accelerates success and fulfillment by formulating a positive impetus toward accomplishment.

The "full effect" of steadfastness results in completeness. The power and the promise of this scripture is motivational and inspirational. God desires that we stick with his ways as He rewards us through providing His complete care for our faithfulness.

Warning! Determination can become distorted. If a church becomes overly fixated on any plan, with no flexibility, the Holy Spirit can be thwarted. Jesus proved that he was determined to follow the will of God, even through to the ultimate end of death.

PRAY

- Ask God to give you spiritual energy to stay steadfast.
- Believe that God will guide your steps toward completion.
- Thank God that Jesus never side-stepped the Father's will.

BE DISCERNING

PROVERBS 15:14

"The heart of him who has understanding seeks knowledge, but the mouths of fools feed on folly."

Satan has a sharp and destructive tool named confusion which is evidenced in a church through distortions, distractions, and disruptions. We must be discerning.

There are so many voices around us, especially when a church is earnestly seeking God's direction. Not all of the voices that we hear need to be heeded. Some create a cloud of confusion when we are asking God for clarity.

Sometimes the majority opinion is not a clear expression of God's best. Certainly, we must be discerning between the loudest voices around us and the still small voice of our Lord. Church leadership is responsible for helping the body of Christ to prevent personal opinions from misguiding a church from godly knowledge and understanding.

Be careful! These are important days with determining decisions which will affect your church family, your community, and yourself. When confusion reigns, it's time to seek the Counselor and rely upon the Holy Spirit for guidance.

Jesus knew the difference between those who were speaking like angels, but living out demonic lies through deception. You can do the same.

PRAY

- Believe God for Spirit-led discernment.
- Thank Him for clear direction devoid of confusion.
- Trust our Savior to show you which voices are truthful as you take your next steps.

BE DIRECTIVE

PHILIPPIANS 4:1

"Therefore my brothers whom I love and long for, my joy and crown, stand firm thus in the Lord, my beloved."

Positive and affirming leadership is God's strong design to direct His people to the next step in fulfilling his purposes. The apostle Paul affirmed the church at Philippi who he loved dearly, but he also gave them a stern admonition to "stand firm."

Times of decisions are never easy, particularly if the decisions involved are different from the regular or normative pattern of a church. Confusion can cloud God's direction if we don't stand firm on His Word that leads us to discover His way.

Standing firm to direct your church rightly involves following God's leadership and trusting His appointed leaders within the body of Christ. Leaders must lead positively without abdicating their God-given responsibility to lead. If leadership is divided, this creates a divided follow-ship forcing the congregation to "pick sides."

A healthy church in transition recognizes the need to be affirmed, but also the necessity to stand firm when it's time for action.

PRAY

- Praise God for His affirmation of love.
- Ask God to direct your church leadership.
- Seek the Lord in following your leaders.

BE DESIROUS

JOHN 17:4

"I glorified you on earth, having accomplished the work you gave me to do."

Jesus knew that his work on earth was not to remain forever. The Father had given him a task to accomplish and a time to fulfill His mission. The same is true for God's church.

We never need to "settle" on a majority decision alone—we must ask God to give us a desire to accomplish the spiritual work which He assigned and a willing desire to know when it's time for a new direction. This is especially difficult when we do not understand or agree with the process involved.

What is the goal for any and every church family? The answer is found in Jesus' prayer to God, His Father—to glorify him on this earth. The disciples did not believe, nor did they desire, for Jesus to leave them. They wanted an ongoing ministry without interruption. We are no different.

Sometimes God's greatest advance for His kingdom occurs through the greatest sacrifices made. Jesus faced the cross without which we would not have forgiveness.

Giving in to God's desires is not giving up; it's an opportunity to gain God's glory.

PRAY

- Ask God if you have given him the glory.
- Believe Jesus prayed for your church before He faced Calvary.
- Thank God that His desires can become yours.

BE DEMONSTRATIVE

ACTS 26:20

"But declared first to those in Damascus, then in Jerusalem and throughout all the region of Judea, and also to the Gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God, performing deeds in keeping with their repentance."

To succumb to a church-wide and God-led decision, we must demonstrate our support. Words without deeds are shallow and do not undergird God's plan. If we feel that we cannot demonstrate a positive posture, we must be certain not to become a stumbling block to others.

Repentance is not a one-time activity. All believers and all church families must continually turn back to God's will to discern His ways. We demonstrate this through personal humility and selfless honor which will lead us to a reservoir of hope.

The early church needed to retool constantly and so do we. God is never frozen in time or culture. Though He never changes, we do. We demonstrate our total dependence and reliance on Him as we return through a willingness to let go of the past.

The legacy of any church can be preserved and remembered through documents, records, pictures, and statements. They need not be lost, but should remain as a reminder of how God moved among you and how He continues to move you to a new expression of ministry.

Jesus demonstrated His love of the Father by following His direction to the end which actually became a new beginning.

PRAY

- Tell God that you are ready for your church to be 100% His church.
- Ask God to show you ways to demonstrate your support of His decisions for the future.
- Thank God that your church belongs to Him—past, present, and future.

NOTES



