



**Slide #1**

Transforming an established church to match the New Testament pattern is difficult, beginning with intention and moving on through implementation. The effort is not for the faint of heart. Whatever the reasons, the church is what it is today and we must decide if we will make the plunge to change or continue doing what we have always done.

We all know there are challenges in every worthwhile pursuit! Certainly it is true when making changes in the local church.

## Transforming an Established Church (Intention through Implementation)

**Ken Neff**  
Director  
LeaderQuest

1

**Slide #2**

This well-known saying certainly captures the real situation in which church leaders find themselves:

When you are up to your neck in alligators, it's difficult to remember that your main objective was to drain the swamp.

Notice: If you don't focus on the objective, you'll remain in the swamp!

When you are up to your neck  
in alligators, it's difficult  
to remember that your main  
objective was to drain the swamp.

Source: Unknown

2

**Slide #3**

If you want to consider cleaning up the swamp, several steps are necessary. Shown is the blueprint to implement that goal.

*Step A* addresses the need to evaluate your current situation, realizing that the church's focus should always be on the main thing—the purpose of the church.

*Step B* is to develop a biblical strategy, making the purpose of the church the goal.

*Step C* is to institute a means for developing leaders who serve as elders, shepherds and teachers.

*Step D* is to establish shepherding-groups (small groups), which are lead by elders.

*Step E* is to align the ministries of the church with the New Testament model.

Lets consider each of these steps.

**Slide #4**

The initial task is shown in *Step A*. Suggested activities include first the selection of an evaluation team from current leadership to assess the church's present philosophy and methodology of ministry—*why we do what we do!* Further, taking a survey of church attendees will reveal their perception of the church's purpose and the programs they think are necessary to accomplish that purpose. Finally, the team should begin to study and research the New Testament to evaluate how their particular church aligns with the biblical pattern of the first-century church—*why they did what they did!* Remember: questions are our friends! How we respond is critical.

This should take no longer than six months

**BLUEPRINT FOR TRANSFORMING  
AN ESTABLISHED CHURCH**

STEP	BLUEPRINT
A	EVALUATION & FOCUS
B	STRATEGY FOR THE CHURCH
C	LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT
D	SHEPHERD-GROUP ESTABLISHMENT
E	ESTABLISHING A NEW TESTAMENT MODEL

**3**

**STEP A  
EVALUATION & FOCUS**

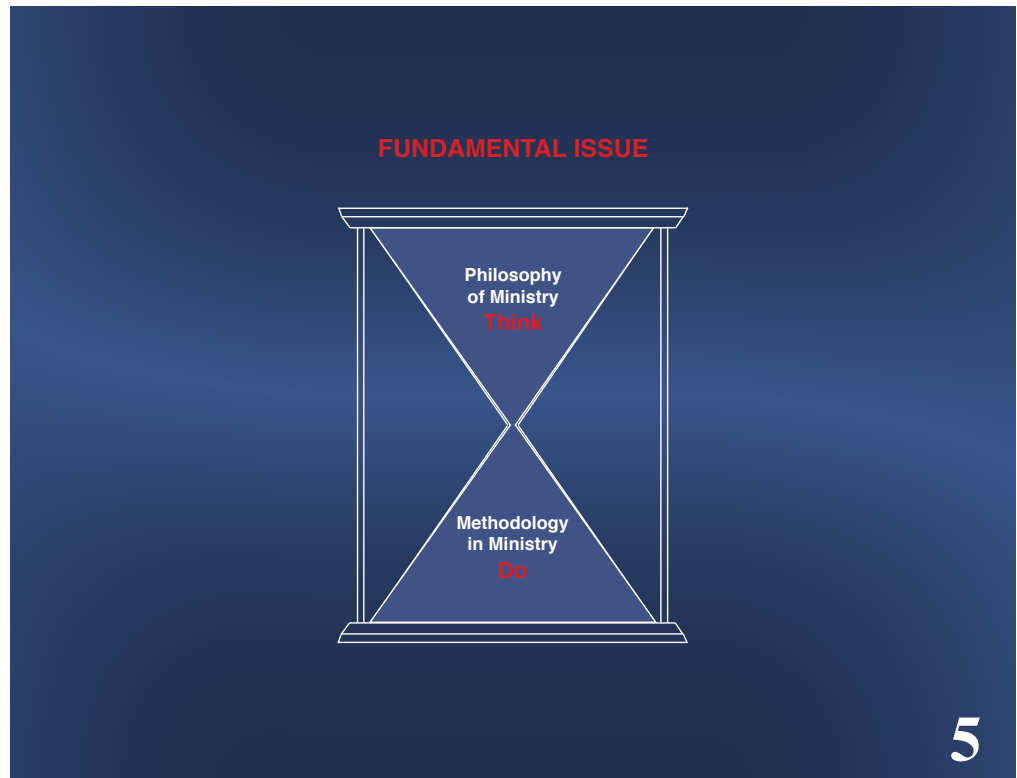
ACTIVITY
SELECTION OF AN EVALUATION TEAM
EVALUATION OF PRESENT PHILOSOPHY & METHODOLOGY
SURVEY OF MEMBERSHIP'S PERCEPTION OF THE CHURCH
STUDY & RESEARCH

DURATION
SIX MONTHS

**4**

### Slide #5

Just like sand flowing through an hourglass, philosophy of the ministry determines methodology in the ministry. What you *think* will show itself in what you *do*! The leadership team should evaluate the church's present approach to ministry—*why we do what we do*! The results from the survey taken by the church will reveal if the attendees' perception coincides with that of the leadership team.



### Slide #6

Insight to approach *Step A* is provided from both the Bible as well as a management book, *Creating Excellence*.<sup>1</sup> Amidst the rapid growth in the early Jerusalem church, leadership concluded they should concentrate on their appointed task (Acts 6:2-4). Not losing sight of their main purpose was instrumental in the success of the early church.

Management of any organization requires focus:

Focus enable leaders to invest available resources toward implementing successful and lasting change (33).

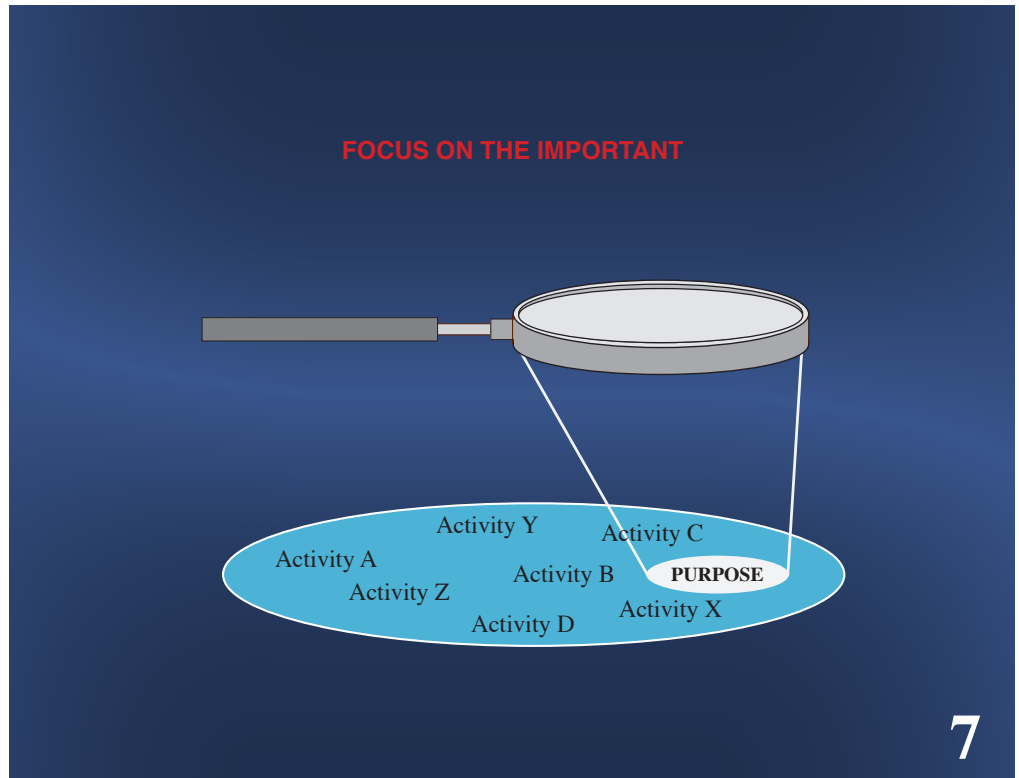
To master focus, you must develop the ability to manage your interests (207).

Focus makes successful, lasting, and profitable change possible (219).

The slide content is on a dark blue background. At the top, the word 'FOCUS' is written in red. Below it, 'BIBLE' is written in white. The Bible text from Acts 6:2-4 is in white, with the phrase 'we will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word' in red. Below the Bible text, '(Acts 6:2-4)' is written in white. Underneath, 'CREATING EXCELLENCE' is written in white. The first paragraph of text from the management book is in red, followed by a white paragraph. The second paragraph of text is in red, followed by a white paragraph. The number '6' is in the bottom right corner.

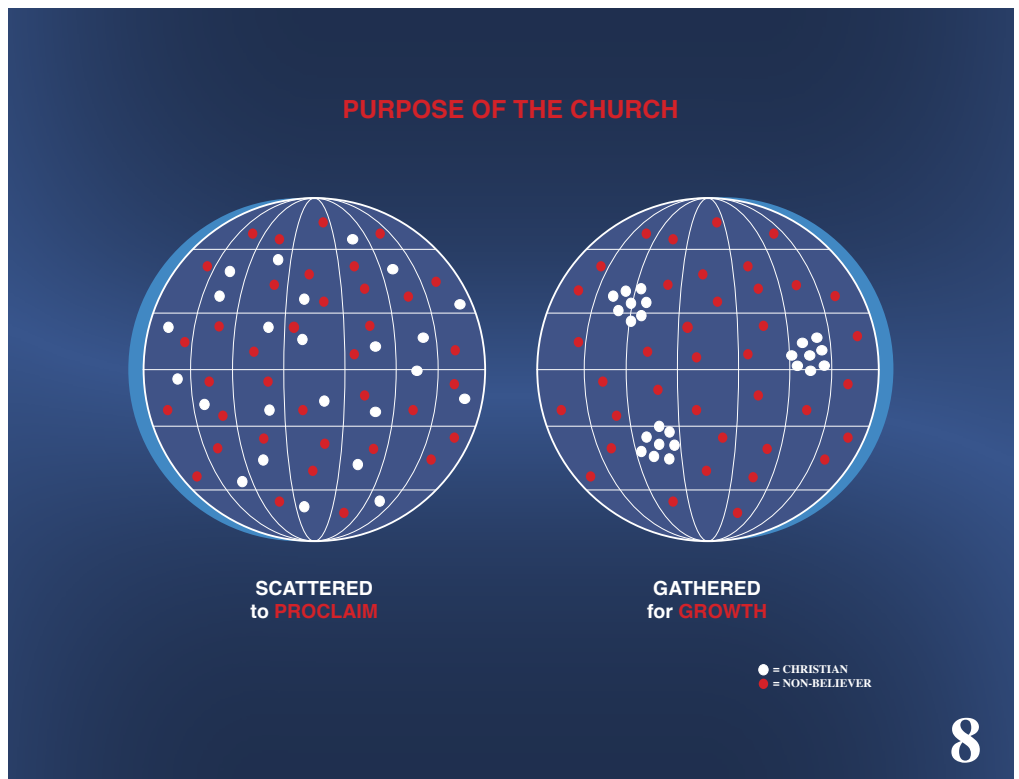
Slide #7

A well-known business principle is “The main thing is to keep the main thing the main thing!” We can become sidetracked with “good activities and programs” and not accomplish the “main thing.” Remember the apostles focused on their purpose and delegated tasks to others (Acts 6:3-4). Each local church must concentrate on its purpose rather than on a smorgasbord of activities, which can cloud the goal for the church.



Slide #8

The actual purpose of the church is two-fold. The church scatters into the world in order for believers to reveal Christ through their lives and by their words in their spheres of influence, where they live, work, or go to school (Col 4:5-6). Second, the church gathers together to grow spiritually, as shepherd-teachers (elders) prepare the body to function properly through intimate connections and mutual ministries (Eph 4:11-12). Certainly, growing spiritually when the body is gathered will lead to making Christ relevant when the body is scattered. To ensure that occurs, the evaluation team should begin to study and research the New Testament to evaluate how their particular church aligns with the first-century church—why they did what they did!



Slide #9

Looking at *Step B*, the leadership team digs deeper into *why the first-century church did what the first-century church did!* Consequently, the team can begin the process of developing a biblical philosophy of the ministry and a biblical methodology in the ministry. Once a biblical ministry perspective has been established, a strategy for change can be developed, including the following:

- Study the extent of needed changes
- Determine what changes must be made
- Study the impact of any changes
- Determine how the changes can best be made

This could take six months

**STEP B  
STRATEGY FOR THE CHURCH**

**ACTIVITY**

DEVELOP A BIBLICAL PHILOSOPHY FOR THE CHURCH  
DEVELOP A CORRESPONDING BIBLICAL METHODOLOGY  
DEVELOP A STRATEGY FOR CHANGE

**DURATION**

SIX MONTHS

**9**

Slide #10

A biblical ministry perspective begins with developing a philosophy of the ministry from the study of the principles and practices of the first-century church. Once settled, it leads to working out a corresponding biblical methodology, which considers structures, relationships, and the purpose of the gathered church.

[Note: for an expanded explanation see Article, *Adopting a Biblical Ministry Perspective*.]

**DEVELOPING A BIBLICAL MINISTRY PERSPECTIVE**

**10**

## Slides #11 & #12

Insight into building a strategy for change is provided in two management books, *Leaders*<sup>2</sup> and *Creating Excellence*.<sup>3</sup>

*Leaders* addresses the following criteria for a successful organizational strategy:

### *Leadership Style*

A pull style of influence works by attracting and energizing people to an exciting vision of the future (80).

### *Participation Encouraged*

When individuals feel that they can make a difference and that they can improve society in which they are living through their participation in an organization, then it is much more likely that they will bring vigor and enthusiasm to their tasks and that the results of their work will be mutually reinforcing (91).

### *Culture Transformation*

Greatest task in making a strategy succeed will be the ability to transform the organizational culture (113)...If an organization is to be transformed, the social architecture (culture) must be revamped (139).

*Creating Excellence* likewise provides ideas for a successful organizational strategy:

### *Obstacles to Successful Change*

Three major obstacles to excellence:

- Short-term orientation
- Shallow thinking
- Quick-fix expectations (pp 37-38).

### *Culture Evaluated*

A strong, successful culture is even more than the way things get done, it's also the unique ways people unify behind a common purpose, deliver superior performance, and pass skills along to others. An excellent culture is a resource, an asset that helps implement corporate strategy (63).

Assessing an organization's culture is the first step any executive must take before considering if and how a culture needs to be built, adopted, or changed (72).

### *Patience Required*

Lasting patience comes from living in the long term, which means constructing an environment in which everything you and your people do is linked to the future...it does mean that you must fully consider the future impact of your actions (240).

**STRATEGY** 1 of 2

LEADER

The essential thing in organizational leadership is that the leader's style pulls rather than pushes on people. **A pull style of influence works by attracting and energizing people to an exciting vision of the future.** It motivates by identification, rather than through rewards and punishments. (p 80)

**When individuals feel that they can make a difference and that they can improve society in which they are living through their participation in an organization, then it is much more likely that they will bring vigor and enthusiasm to their tasks and that the results of their work will be mutually reinforcing.** (p 91)

Leader creates the understanding, participation, and ownership of the vision. (p 103)

**Greatest task in making strategy succeed will be the ability to transform the organizational culture.** (p 113)

**If an organization is to be transformed, the social architecture (culture) must be revamped.** (p 139)

11

**STRATEGY** 2 of 2

CREATING EXCELLENCE

**Three major obstacles to excellence:**

- Short-term orientation
- Shallow thinking
- Quick-fix expectation. (pp 37-38)

**A strong, successful culture is even more than the way things get done, it's also the unique ways people unify behind a common purpose, deliver superior performance, and pass skills along to others. An excellent culture is a resource, an asset that helps implement corporate strategy.** (p 63)

**Assessing an organization's culture is the first step any executive must take before considering if and how a culture needs to be built, adopted, or changed.** (p 72)

**Lasting patience comes from living in the long term, which means constructing an environment in which everything you and your people do is linked to the future.** Again, that does not mean that you neglect the short term, but **it does mean that you must fully consider the future impact of your actions.** (p 240)

12

Slide #13

Assuming *Step B* leads to a needed realignment from a current perspective to that of the first-century church, a strategy for change is required, with *intention* leading to *implementation*. Translating intention into reality begins with initiating an idea or vision. Successful implementation of that idea means *integrating* two essential processes:

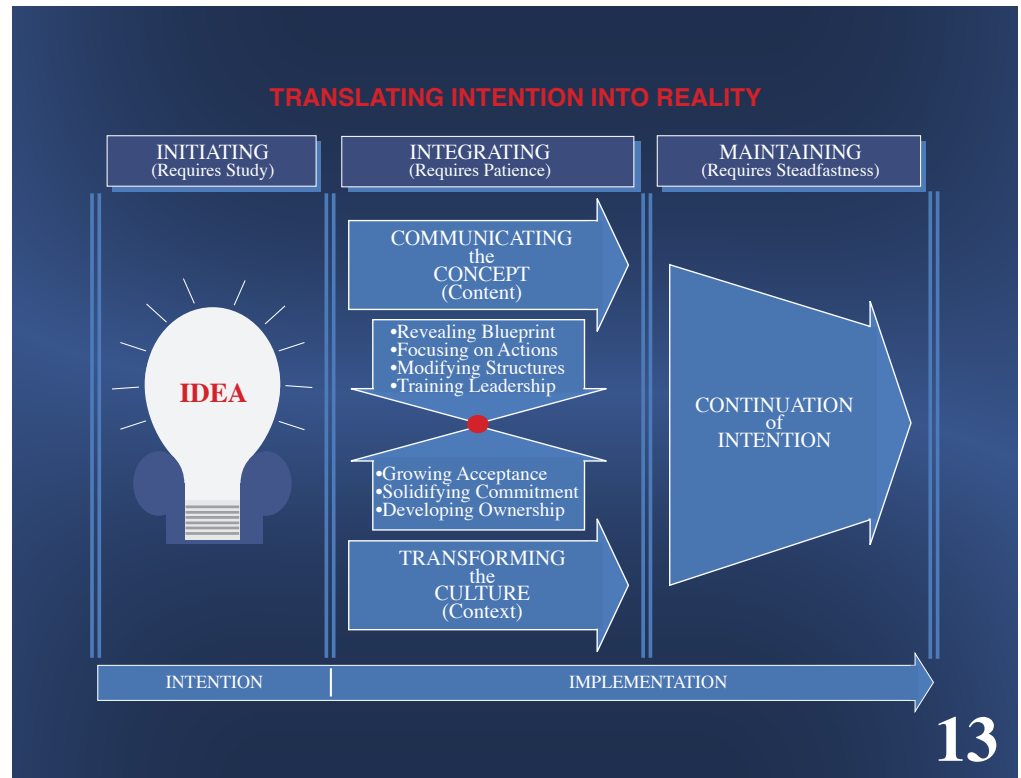
First—a process of *Communicating the Concept*, the *Content* of the vision, involves:

- Revealing the Blueprint from intention through implementation
- Focusing on Actions that ensures implementation
- Modifying organizational Structures
- Training Leadership

Second—a process of *Transforming the Culture*, the *Context* that allows for change, results in:

- Growing Acceptance of the blueprint
- Solidifying Commitment for needed changes
- Developing Ownership for implementation of intention

When, and only when, these two processes converge (see Red Dot), will implementation be successful. Consequently, a proper strategy for change is critically important.



Slide #14

*Step C* is leadership development for future leaders, who will implement the vision. Recognition of the following is critical:

- The Need—Leadership
- The Problem—Leadership Bottleneck
- The Solution—Leadership Development
- The Selection—Potential Leaders

Following the identification of potential leaders with biblical character traits and abilities, they are required to participate in a one-year special training. This training ensures each has adequate biblical knowledge and leadership skills to lead and teach in the church.

The four slides (#15–#18) can be used, as recruitment slides, to encourage potential leaders to



participate in the training and hopefully become elders in the church.

This task requires one year for the first group of potential leaders, but training is ongoing thereafter.

**Slide #15**

With a change in ministry perspective aligning with the first-century pattern, there will be a requirement of shepherd-teachers to lead in small-group gatherings (shepherding-groups) as well as in the large gathering for corporate worship. A change from one “preacher” or “pastor-teacher” to multiple “shepherd-teachers” creates *the Need*, a critical need for biblically qualified leaders.

**The NEED  
LEADERSHIP**

✓	✓	✓	✓	≠		✓		
✓	✓	✓	✓					
✓	✓	✓	✓				✓	
✓	✓	✓	✓					
Requirement					Reality			

15

**Slide #16**

Focusing on the biblical model presents *the Problem*. A leadership bottleneck has been created due to the prior emphasis on the “singular” leadership, being defined by seminary training. While seminary training is certainly beneficial, unfortunately it has promoted the one-man-pastor model and as a consequence negatively impacted leadership development from within the local church.

Frankly, “the pastor” in small churches has been so busy with sermons, committee meetings, counseling, and visitation he does not have time to develop other leaders from within, even if he thought it was a good idea. In a larger church, “the senior pastor” shares leadership responsibilities with “assistant pastors” who run their own programs (e.g., music, Sunday school, youth, or children). In each case, they are the “holy men” who do “the work of the ministry,” rather than equipping or preparing Christians to do “the work of the ministry” (Eph 4:11-12).

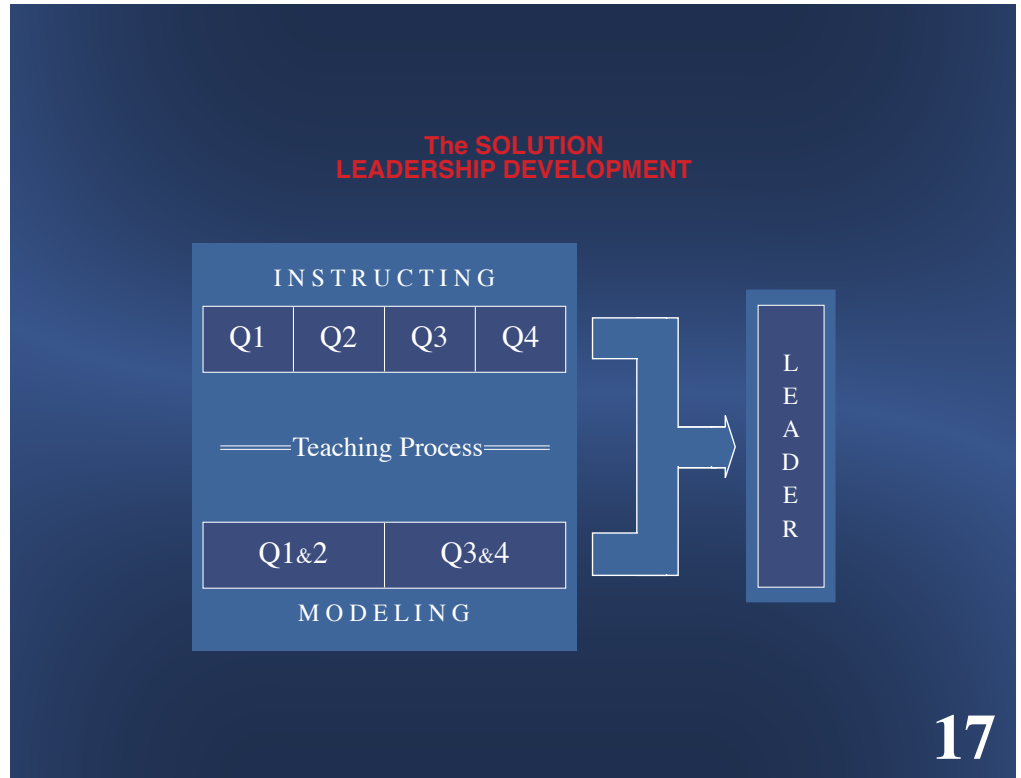
**The PROBLEM  
LEADERSHIP BOTTLENECK**

16



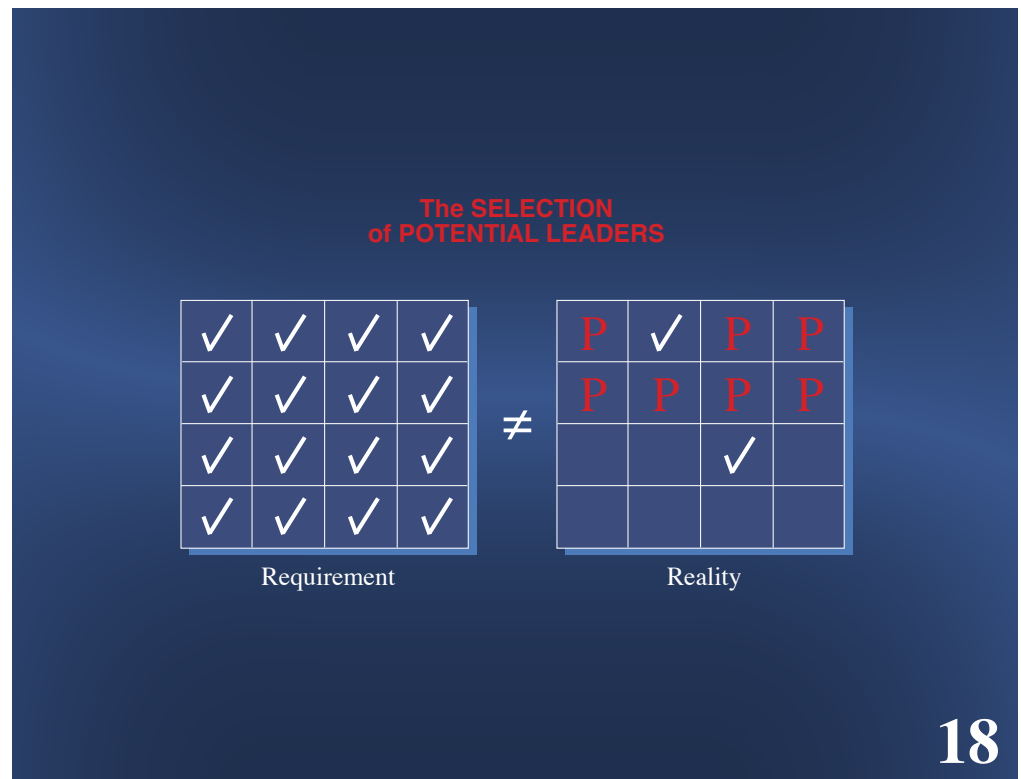
**Slide #17**

*The Solution* is to have ongoing development for leadership in the local church. This is why the local body must “buy into” the biblical ministry perspective discussed above. Current leaders should be allowed to develop potential shepherd-teachers from within the body. Priorities must be altered in order for a teaching process to begin and leaders to be trained. Course content must be developed and taught. Additionally in a small-group setting, future leaders can experience closer relationship with the current “pastor” as he leads the group by discussion as well as through his personal praise and prayers. In this modeling environment, they experience the “real person” rather than the “platform pastor.”



**Slide #18**

Before initiating leadership training, *the Selection* of potential leaders takes place. After identifying potential leaders who have character traits and abilities outlined in Scripture, they should be approached to see if they desire to take part in a one-year special training, using the four slides (#15–#18). Those who choose to participate will hopefully become the foundation for the coming changes in the church.



**Slide #19**

This slide is an expansion of Slide #17. Suggested quarterly courses for the *instructing* segment are listed. Quarterly, the focus is an overview of the entire Bible, how to understand the Christian life, how to study the Bible, and followed by how to lead a shepherding group. On the other hand, the *modeling* segment involves participation in a shepherding group lead by the current church leader. Suggested study material is first Philippians and then James 1–2, both covered in two quarters. The first book is a straightforward letter of encouragement, while the second is a complicated section of Scripture addressing issues in the Christian life.

[Note: further *Ongoing Training* of leaders is recommended:

1. Prior to the one-year training for each new group of potential leaders, there should be an all-day training on a Saturday to take these men through the implementation process in order for them to completely understand the reasons and strategy for change.
2. Once a quarter provide all-day training on Saturdays to cover doctrinal issues and Christian life teaching.
3. Weekly on Sunday morning, meet with all the shepherd-teachers to aid them in the material (topic or passage) they will be covering that week in their shepherding groups.]

**Slide #20**

*Step D* concerns the establishment of shepherding groups. Following leadership development by the first group of leaders, the initial shepherding-groups are established with the new leaders.

This task initially requires one year for the first groups but is ongoing thereafter as more potential leaders go through leadership development.

**SPECIAL TRAINING OF POTENTIAL LEADERS  
ONE YEAR**

Q1      Q2      Q3      Q4

INSTRUCTING (SUNDAY MORNING)

#1	#2	#3	#4
Understand Bible	Christian Life	Study Bible	Leading Group

MODELING (MID-WEEK NIGHT)

Small Group Involvement of Potential Leaders as Participants	
Philippians	James 1–2

19

**STEP D  
SHEPHERDING-GROUP ESTABLISHMENT**

ACTIVITY

ESTABLISHMENT OF SHEPHERDING GROUPS

RESPONSIBILITIES OF SHEPHERDING-GROUP LEADERS

DURATION

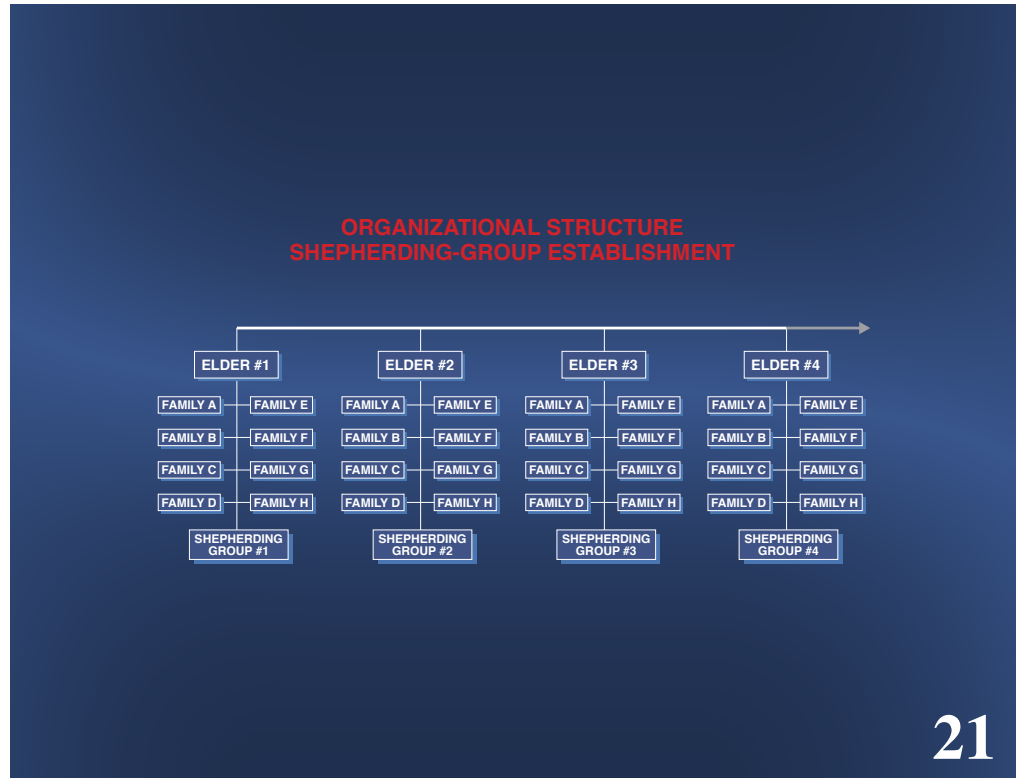
- ONE YEAR—INITIAL GROUPS
- ESTABLISHING GROUPS ONGOING THEREAFTER

20

**Slide #21**

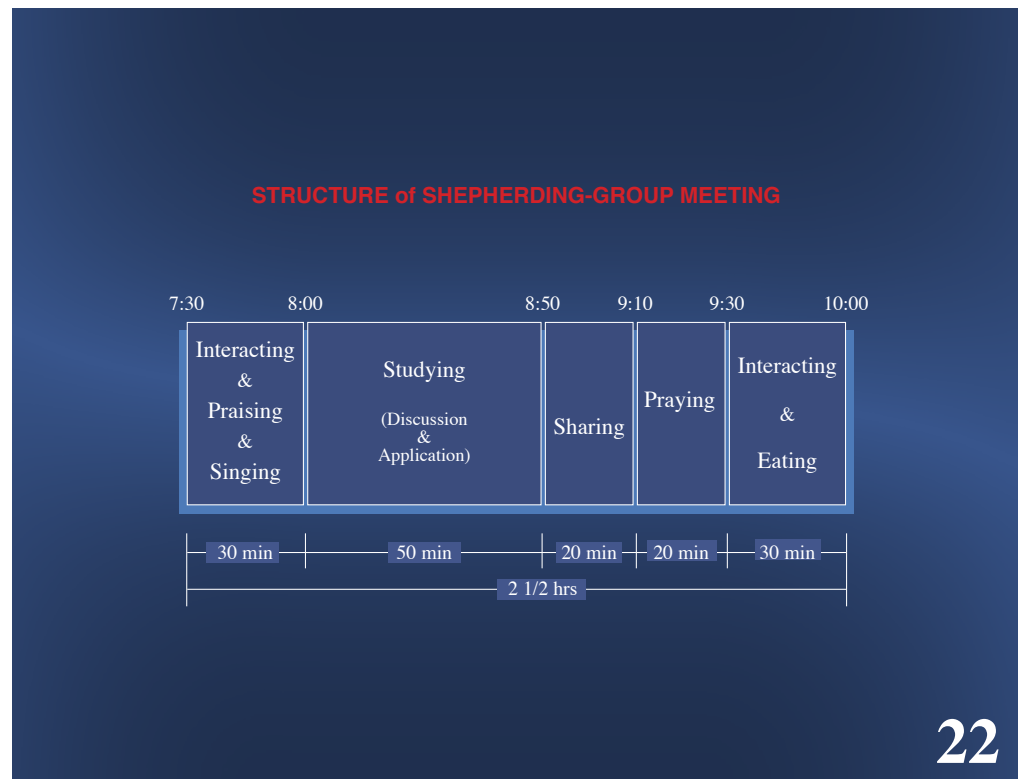
The organizational structure of shepherding-groups, beginning with the initial groups, is illustrated on this slide. Each shepherd-teacher or elder would be responsible for a portion of the body. Segmented by geographical region lends itself not only to close proximity for gathering together but even more importantly for ministering to physical or spiritual needs when concerns or problems arise within the group.

[**Note:** while the shepherding groups should meet regularly, preferably weekly, in homes, it is suggested every six weeks that two groups should meet together in a home primarily for fellowship, encouragement, and fun.]



**Slide #22**

The suggested structure of each shepherding-group meeting is shown. Prior to studying a biblical text or topic via discussion and application, the meeting should begin with praise and singing. Flowing from the study time, mutual concerns and prayers in application from the study would be a natural outcome. The meeting would conclude with member of the group interacting with one another and sharing goodies together.

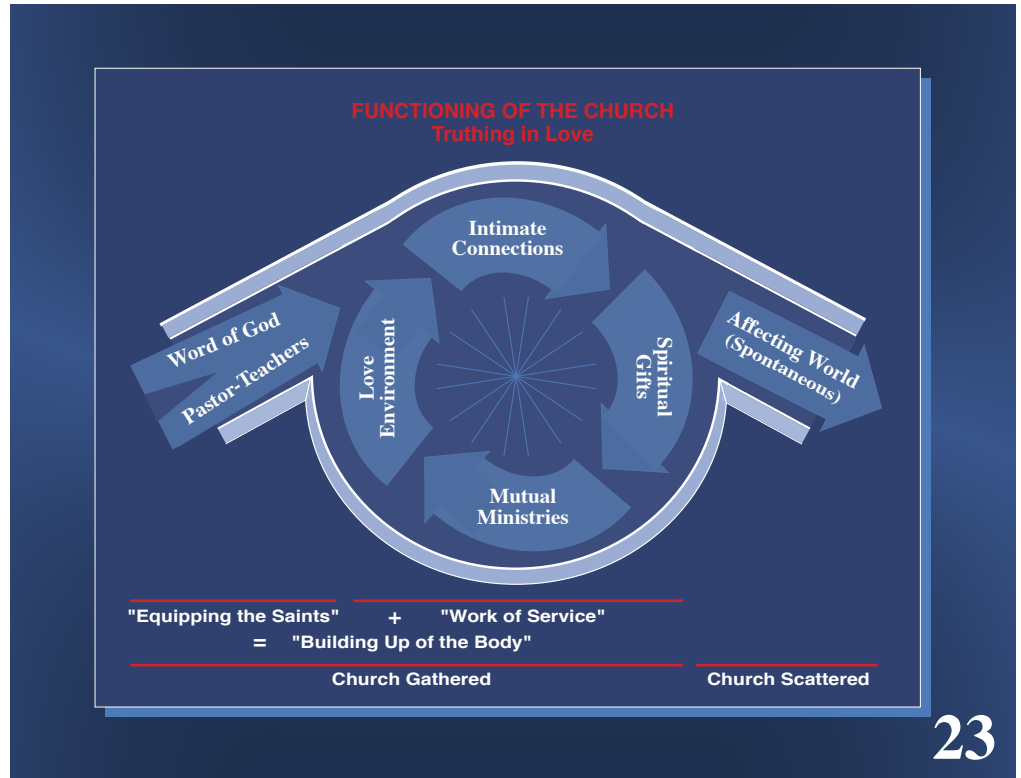


Slide #23

The environment of a shepherding-group promotes the proper functioning of the church when gathered and then when scattered. This diagram captures this idea. Through the ministry of the shepherd-teacher (Eph 4:11-12), using the word of God (2 Tim 3:16-17), the body of Christ functions as “the work of service” that leads “to the building up of the body of Christ.” Summarizing Ephesians 11-16, verse 16 can be rendered “the body, properly functioning, causes its own spiritual growth.” That is the hope for each shepherding group as a small community of believers.

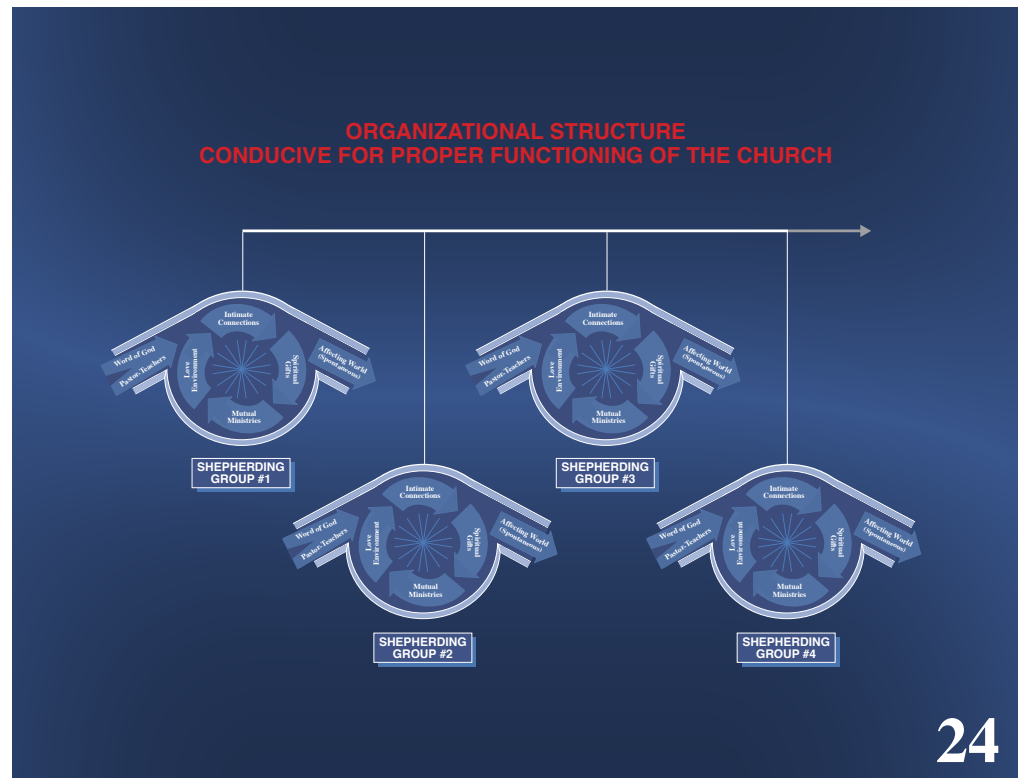
[See Articles, *Insight to Ephesians 4:11-16* and *Office of Elder, Part 3*]

[Note: this shepherd-group concept differs from the typical idea of small-group ministries. Shepherding groups are mini-gatherings of the body of Christ. While fellowship certainly takes place, it isn’t the main purpose of the shepherding groups. (See Article, *The Church’s Elusive Search*)]



Slide #24

The organizational structure of shepherding-groups, as each functions as a mini-church, is illustrated on this slide.



**Slide #25**

Step E addresses the ongoing establishment of the New Testament model. In order to maintain progress, decisions of staff requirements and responsibilities must be made. These are required in light of the ongoing training of leadership, particularly in light of additional shepherding groups being established, and adjustments to programming being required.

These tasks are ongoing, as evaluation is ongoing

**STEP E  
ESTABLISHING A NEW TESTAMENT MODEL**

**ACTIVITY**

- DECISIONS ON STAFF & RESPONSIBILITIES
- ONGOING ELDERS' LEADERSHIP OF SHEPHERDING GROUPS
- NECESSARY ADJUSTMENTS OF PROGRAMS

**DURATION**

- ONGOING EVALUATION

**25**

**Slide #26**

An overview of needed transition in programming is shown. [Note: diagram only addresses adult ministries.] The large gathering of the body in corporate worship continues, while adult Sunday-school-type programming is phased out as more shepherding groups are established. With the shift of emphasis to leadership development and shepherding groups, paid staff focus is on leadership development.

What about children or the youth? During worship service, current programs should continue for children. The youth should attend the worship service. But, the youth also should have a mid-week teaching-learning time in small groups.

[Note: the shift of emphasis to shepherding groups, which meet in homes, allows for greater flexibility in the type and size of physical facilities that are required.]

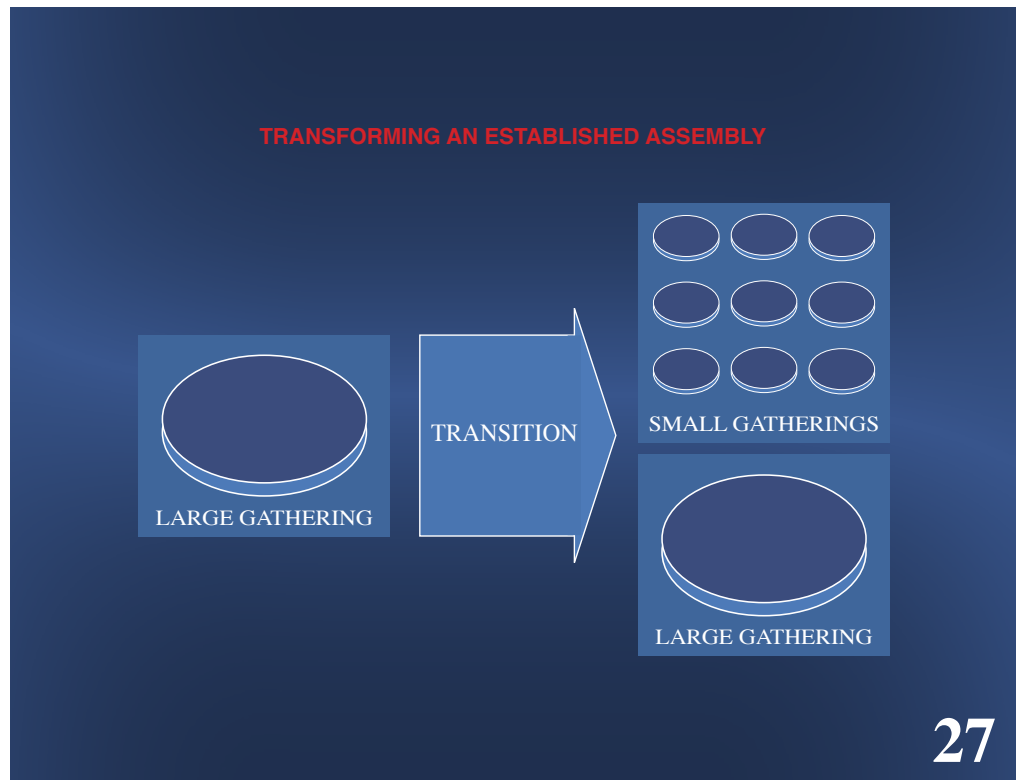
**TRANSITION OF MINISTRIES  
(Adults Only)**

	Yr1	Yr2	Yr3	Yr4	Yr5	Yr6
<b>WORSHIP SERVICE</b>	[Active throughout all 6 years]					
<b>SUNDAY SCHOOL</b>	[Active in Yr1, Yr2, and Yr3]					
<b>LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT</b>	[Active in Yr2, Yr3, Yr4, Yr5, and Yr6]					
<b>SHEPHERDING GROUPS</b>	[Active in Yr3, Yr4, Yr5, and Yr6]					

**26**

Slide #27

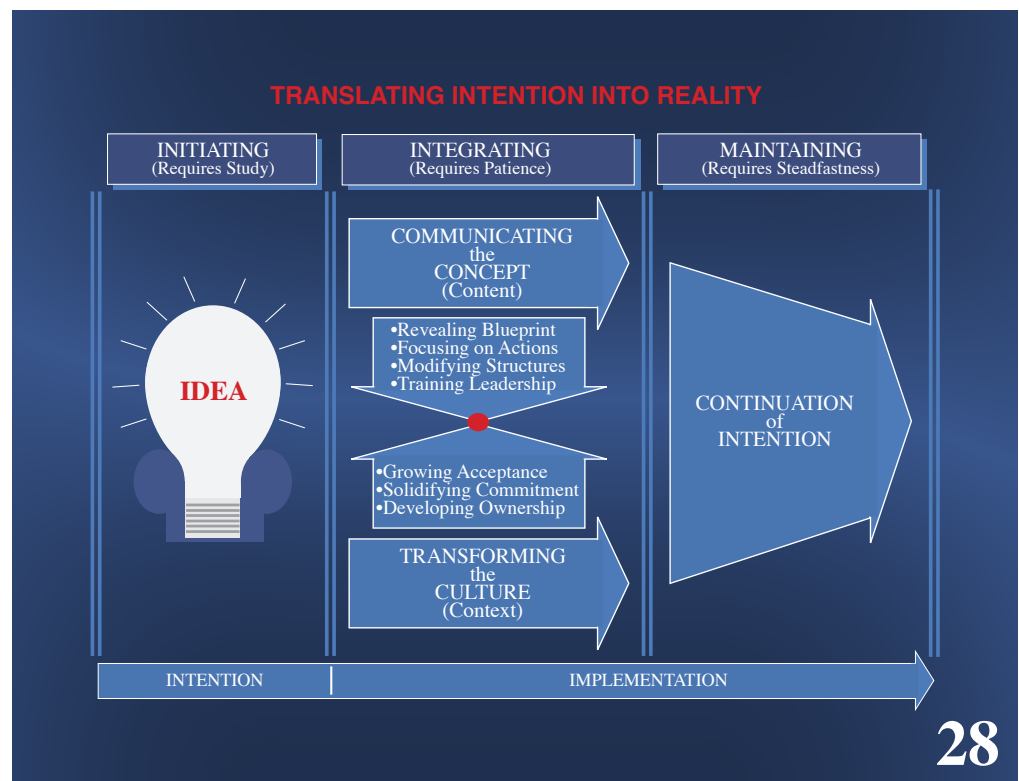
The New Testament model transformation continues with large gatherings of the assembly. The major shift is in the establishment of small gatherings where intimate connections and mutual ministry by the members of the body can take place, allowing the body to grow spiritually under the leadership of shepherd-teachers.



Slide #28

Translating intention into reality begins with an idea and then integrating concept with culture. Continuation of the intention once established is an ongoing work of evaluating and maintaining. The implementation of a goal is work. But remember:

When you are up to your neck in alligators, it's difficult to remember that your main objective was to drain the swamp.





**Endnotes:**

1. Craig R. Hickman and Michael A. Silva, *Creating Excellence* (New York: New American Library, 1984), 33, 207, 219.
2. Warren Kennis and Burt Nanus, *Leaders* (New York: Harper & Row, 1985), 80, 91, 103, 113, 139.
3. Hickman and Silva, 37-38, 63, 72, 240.