

# STRONGER CHURCHES

## MODULE 12

### Five Guidelines for a Healthy Church



#### FACILITATOR GUIDE

##### OBJECTIVES

By the end of this module, you will be able to:

1. Teach a transforming perspective regarding the Gospel.
2. Understand spiritual dualism.
3. Create healthier congregations.

##### TIME FOR SHARING & PRAYER

Read Isaiah 65:17-25 and Revelation 21:1-5.

What is the Lord's promise in Isaiah 65:17?

In your own words, describe the new reality of this passage.

What is similar in Revelation 21:1-5?

##### Session 1: Biblical Foundation

Sometimes we ask ourselves why over the past several generations the Church has been unable to permeate society and make a transformational impact.

**DO:** Welcome the group back.

**SAY:** In a few minutes, we will take time to review your hard work, ask questions, and share with one another.

##### Today's module is called Five Guidelines for a Healthy Church

By the end of this module, the participant will be able to:

1. Teach a transforming perspective regarding the Gospel.
2. Understand spiritual dualism.
3. Create healthier congregations.

##### TIME FOR SHARING & PRAYER

**SAY:** Before we get too far in the module, we would like to spend some time in God's Word and to give some opportunities for testimonies and prayer. Let's begin.

**ASK:** Who would like to read Isaiah 65:17-25 and Revelation 21:1-5?

What is the Lord's promise in Isaiah 65:17?

In your own words, describe the new reality of this passage.

What is similar in Revelation 21:1-5?

##### Session 1: Biblical Foundation

**SAY:** Sometimes we ask ourselves why over the past several generations the Church has been unable to permeate society and make a transformational impact. Some countries that have had decades of mission presence are still among the most violent and oppressive in the world.

El Salvador and Honduras currently have the highest levels of violence in the world.

## AN INCOMPLETE UNDERSTANDING OF THE GREAT COMMISSION |

Matthew 28:18-20

Dimensions of the Great Commission

- Geographic / Ethnic Dimension
  - Matthew 24:14
  - Acts 1:8
- Historic Dimension
  - Deuteronomy 4:9
  - Proverbs 22:6
- Cultural Penetration Dimension (*Cultural Mandate*)
  - Genesis 1:28
  - Genesis 2:15

In the United States, the Gospel has been preached everywhere but discrimination and racism persist, sometimes even in the church.

This is contrary to the principles of the Kingdom of God and the shalom (God's peace) to which the Bible calls us. This module presents some guidelines for corrective action.

**ASK:** What kind of Gospel have we been preaching? What kind of churches have we established?

**DO:** Collect ABC reports and have participants report on implementing their action plans from the previous module.

**DO:** Pray.

## AN INCOMPLETE UNDERSTANDING OF THE GREAT COMMISSION |

Matthew 28:18-20

**ASK:** What does Matthew 28:18-20 say?

**SAY:** To announce the Gospel of the Kingdom of God, we must understand the three dimensions of the Great Commission. People often understand just two of them, and that can create confusion.

**SAY:** **Geographic / Ethnic Dimension**

*Only be careful, and watch yourselves closely so that you do not forget the things your eyes have seen or let them fade from your heart as long as you live. Teach them to your children and to their children after them.*

– Matthew 24:14 (NIV)

*Only be careful, and watch yourselves closely so that you do not forget the things your eyes have seen or let them fade from your heart as long as you live. Teach them to your children and to their children after them.*

– Acts 1:8 (NIV)

**Historic Dimension**

*Only be careful, and watch yourselves closely so that you do not forget the things your eyes have seen or let them fade from your heart as long as you live. Teach them to your children and to their children after them.*

– Deuteronomy 4:9 (NIV)

*Start children off on the way they should go, and even when they are old they will not turn from it.*

– Proverbs 22:6 (NIV)

The third dimension may not be given enough attention.

The word “culture” comes from the word “cultivate”

Read Acts 3:2, Colossians 1:19-20 and Ephesians 1:22-23.

A healthy church doesn't divorce the Great Commission from the Great Mandate and the Cultural Mandate.

To “make disciples of all nations,” we must understand that discipleship is the holistic transformation of all nations under the lordship of Jesus Christ. If we ignore the biblical petition that God's “will be done on earth as it is in heaven” (Matthew 6:10), we will have an insipid Gospel (Matthew 5:13) that offers no power for change.

The mission of God in the world includes at least three other dimensions:



THE CHURCH PARTICIPATES WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT  
IN RECLAIMING THIS WORLD FOR CHRIST

### Cultural Penetration Dimension (Cultural Mandate)

*God blessed them and said to them, “Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky and over every living creature that moves on the ground.*

– Genesis 1:28 (NIV)

*The Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it.* – Genesis 2:15 (NIV)

**SAY:** The word “culture” comes from the word “cultivate.” God has given humans the responsibility to create culture but after the fall, it also became necessary to transform culture, including our vocations. Across the centuries, the Church has understood that it will participate with God in the transformation of culture and society until the day “all things are restored.”

**ASK:** Will someone read Acts 3:2, Colossians 1:19-20, Ephesians 1:22-23?

**SAY:** A healthy church doesn't divorce the Great Commission from the Great Mandate and the Cultural Mandate. To “make disciples of all nations,” we must understand that discipleship is the holistic transformation of all nations under the lordship of Jesus Christ. If we ignore the biblical petition that God's “will be done on earth as it is in heaven” (Matthew 6:10), we will have an insipid Gospel (Matthew 5:13) that offers no power for change.

One reason we have not made a greater impact on society is that we often share the Good News as if it is individualistic. We have reduced it to a personal—sometimes merely emotional—acceptance of Jesus, who paid for our sins on the cross. We do not mention what we are saved from and what we are saved for. We do not mention creation, or the new creation, or God's intention that we should participate with the Holy Spirit in the renewal of all things. God's intentions are of cosmic magnitude. Citizenship in the Kingdom of God includes participation in the life of the Church and God's mission to the world.

The mission of God in the world includes at least three other dimensions:



THE CHURCH PARTICIPATES WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT  
IN RECLAIMING THIS WORLD FOR CHRIST

## TOWARD A BIBLICAL WORLDVIEW | Romans 12:2

We all have a worldview—an ideology or guideline (a filter if you will) with which we see the world around us and interpret reality. We inherit the worldview of our culture.

*"A worldview, or way of seeing the world, is a conceptual outline in which we, consciously or not, put or make fit everything we believe in and through which we interpret and judge reality."*

- Ronald Nash

*"A vision [worldview] is our sense of how the world works..."*

- Thomas Sowell

*"Each person carries in their mind a model of the world, a subjective representation of external reality."*

- Alvin Toffler

*"A worldview consists of the basic assumptions of what is real and good and includes our assumptions of who we are and what we must do."*

- Dallas Willard

### WHY DO WORLDVIEWS EXIST?

- Truth
- God
- Purpose for humans
- Beginning of universe
- Good/Evil
- Meaning
- Death of life

There are many worldviews and each culture, religion, and life philosophy has its own. Let's look at three: an animistic worldview, humanistic secularism, and theism.

**ASK:** Do you think the church in your country has an integrated perspective on this?

## TOWARD A BIBLICAL WORLDVIEW | Romans 12:2

**SAY:** Analyzing the dimensions of the Great Commission broadens our understanding of the Gospel's transforming power. We develop a biblical perspective on the world and the mission of God. As the apostle Paul instructs.

**ASK:** Will someone read Romans 12:2?

We all have a worldview—an ideology or guideline (a filter if you will) with which we see the world around us and interpret reality. We inherit the worldview of our culture. Like a fish in the water, we are surrounded by our worldview and don't always realize the impact it has in our lives. However, we must allow a biblical worldview to reshape our cultural worldview. Here are several definitions of worldview.

*"A worldview, or way of seeing the world, is a conceptual outline in which we, consciously or not, put or make fit everything we believe in and through which we interpret and judge reality."* - Ronald Nash

*"A vision [worldview] is our sense of how the world works..."*

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*"Each person carries in their mind a model of the world, a subjective representation of external reality."* - Alvin Toffler

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- Dallas Willard

**ASK:** Which one of these definitions do you like best? Why?

### WHY DO WORLDVIEWS EXIST?

**SAY:** Worldviews try to answer humanity's big questions. Does truth exist? Is there a God? Does God relate with human beings? What can I know? How can the beginning of the universe be explained? What is the purpose of humankind's existence? What is good and what is evil? What is the meaning of life? What happens after death? Is there anything beyond the physical?

Churches share certain perspectives about life and the world because they follow the same God, read the same Bible, and are guided by the same Holy Spirit.

**SAY:** **Animistic Worldview** | Emphasizes that what we see is not the real world. It believes that persons, animals, trees, and inanimate objects possess spirits and the spirits' invisible realm drives reality. Morality is

**Animistic Worldview**

- What we see is not real
- Everything possesses spirits
- Appease the spirits

**Secular Worldview**

- The physical world is the only reality
- Spirituality is discarded
- No absolute truth
- Relativism
- Society determines morality

**Biblical/Theistic Worldview**

- God is creator and sustainer
- God determines morality
- Humans are stewards
- God is incarnated through Jesus Christ
- God is making all things new
- God invites us

**WHAT DOES THIS HAVE TO DO WITH A HEALTHY CHURCH?****THE WORLD BELONGS TO GOD**

| Revelation 21:5

And God saw that it was good!

Humans rebelled against their Creator.

Sin impacted everything.

inconsistent because it has no real foundation. People who have this worldview seek to appease the spirits or manipulate them for protection, healing, business success, etc.

**ASK:** Who do you think aligns with this worldview?

**SAY:** This worldview is widely accepted and can be found in Buddhism, New Age thinking, esotericism, and some cultures' popular folklore.

**Secular Worldview |** Says that the only reality is the physical world that can be analyzed and measured. Because spiritual matters cannot be measured or studied scientifically, they are completely discarded, or may be considered a realm about which not much can be known. Therefore, the world is mechanical and impersonal. Humans are free of the idea of absolute truth and relativism rules the day. Morality is limited only to that on which societies manage to agree.

**Biblical/Theistic Worldview |** Recognizes that God exists and God created heaven and earth (Genesis 1:1) and determined morality for humans' wellbeing. Humans are stewards of God's affairs on earth. God sustains the world and relates to humans in a personal and loving way. The love of God brings him to identify with humans. God is incarnated in the world through Jesus Christ, through whom He is making all things new and inviting us to participate in His ministry of reconciliation (2 Corinthians 5:18-19).

**ASK: WHAT DOES THIS HAVE TO DO WITH A HEALTHY CHURCH?**

**SAY:** Each church can be different, depending on the culture and worldview where it is immersed. But churches share certain perspectives about life and the world because they follow the same God, read the same Bible, and are guided by the same Holy Spirit. Hundreds of aspects of the biblical worldview are non-negotiable. Still, we must recognize that different worldviews compete for people's loyalty. It is as though we all wear "worldview glasses" through which we subconsciously filter beliefs that help us either draw closer or move further away from a biblical worldview of the Kingdom of God. We need to be aware of those filters and must be ready to adjust them when that is necessary.

**THE WORLD BELONGS TO GOD | Revelation 21:5**

**ASK:** Will someone read Revelation 21:5?

**SAY:** The biblical perspective points out that God created the world—human beings, families, work, science, art, everything—and was satisfied with what He had done (*"And God saw that it was good"*). Sadly, human beings rebelled against their Creator. Consequently, sin and evil entered the world. This catastrophe affected everything and God's original purpose is now drastically distorted. At a moment in history, Jesus Christ incarnationally burst into the world, being made in human likeness. His

Jesus Christ incarnationally burst into the world, being made in human likeness. His arrival inaugurated the Kingdom of God. With His life and teaching He shows us how to live under His reign and rule in every area of life. Every dimension of what is created is under His authority and dominion.

Forgiveness of sins

New relationship between God and man

Holy Spirit

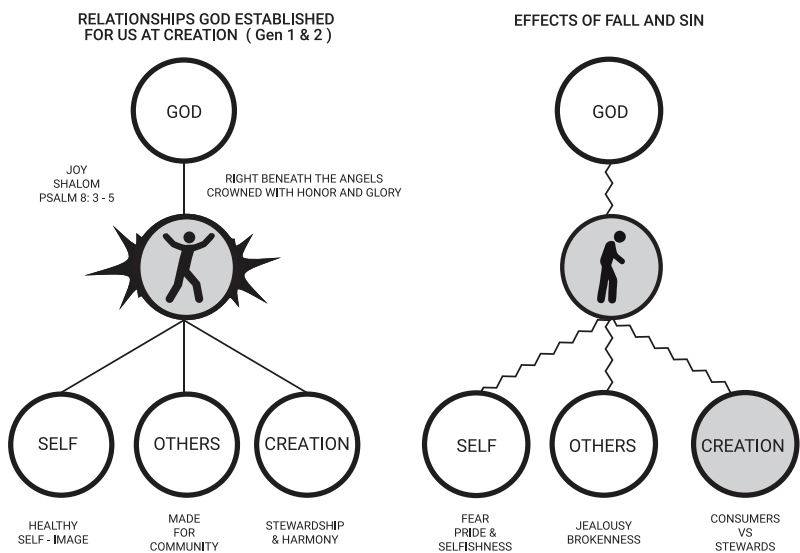
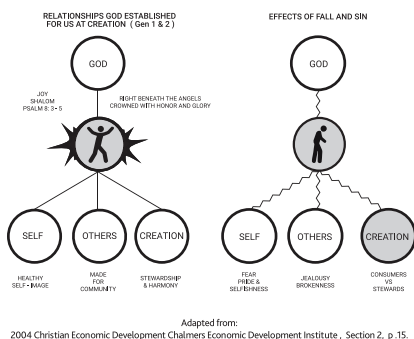
God is making all things new

Church misunderstanding

arrival inaugurated the Kingdom of God. With His life and teaching, He shows us how to live under His reign and rule in every area of life. Every dimension of what is created is under His authority and dominion.

On the cross, Jesus forgives our sins, defeats death with His death, and enables a new relationship between God and His creation. With His resurrection, God invites us to a full life, to life everlasting and abundant, through our repentance and His grace and mercy towards us. The Church is gifted with the power of the Holy Spirit to participate with God in the restoration of all things. Jesus declares that He is making all things new—that we are on our way to a new creation, which has already begun, where the will of God will be done, on earth as it is in heaven (Revelation 21:5). This will be fully realized when Christ comes again.

Some churches have misunderstood the biblical message of redemption, believing that God has called them to care only for those already in the church and to have nothing to do with “the world.” Their idea is that we should be concerned about a different world, far away. When the Church acts on that belief, it loses its power to transform this world, God’s possession, through the activity of the Holy Spirit. We are called to love and minister to others (community), not just to ourselves. This can take many forms. For example, after a poor community could not persuade the government to improve some streets that were in terrible condition, one church in the community gathered people and made the repairs. Many would not see this as a task for the church but as a result, people who had never had anything to do with the church started responding to this form of love. Their respect for the church grew so much that in a similar situation later, they asked the pastor to be their spokesperson.



Once we understand that the world belongs to God and not to Satan, we can evaluate the various ways we understand the relationship between the Church and the world. There are at least three possibilities:





## GOD CREATED US FOR RELATIONSHIPS | Genesis 1 - 2

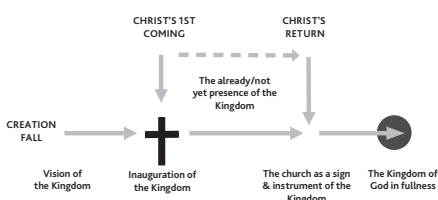
God is Triune. He sends His Church into the world but as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, He is also the God of community, or social God.

He creates us in the image of God (imago Dei). Redeemed mankind reflects the glory of God. He is reflected in our relationship to God, others, ourselves, and creation.

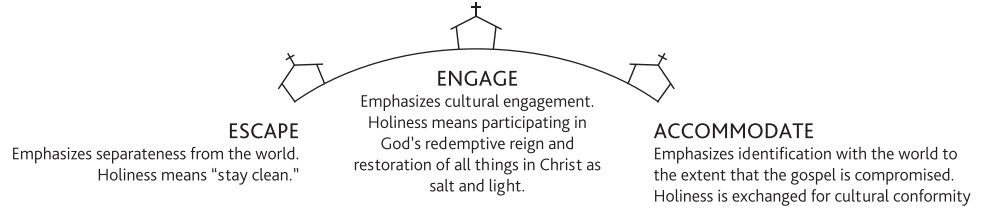
The Church is a demonstration of the future that God will bring about. Thus, the Church in the present is an agent, an ambassador, and a sign pointing to the Kingdom.

## GOD IS TRANSFORMING THE WORLD

According to Revelation 21, the King once again lives among us. The end of history and the Church is not about "going to heaven"—it is about God returning to earth to live with human beings forever and be their light. Jesus' wish, "*Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.*" (Matthew 6:10), will be a reality.



the escapist model, the adaptable (or conformist) model, and the transformational model.



**ASK:** Which model do you align with?

**SAY:** **GOD CREATED US FOR RELATIONSHIPS** | Genesis 1 - 2

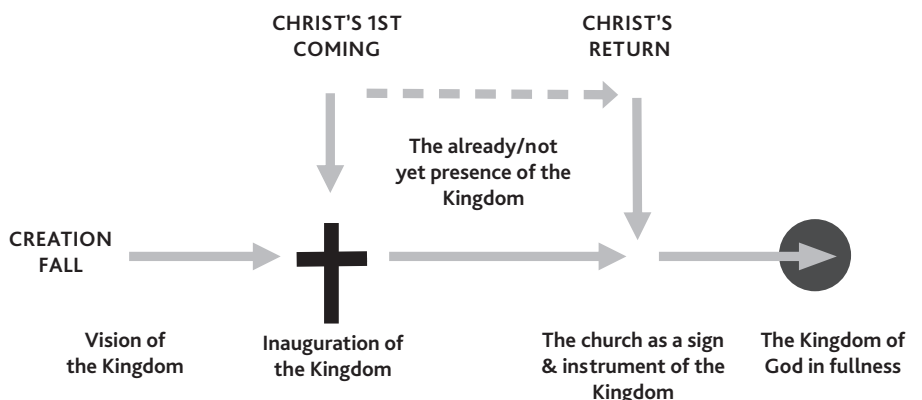
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He creates us in the image of God (imago Dei). Redeemed mankind reflects the glory of God. He is reflected in our relationship to God, others, ourselves, and creation. Sin and evil distorted the original model of these relationships. In Jesus Christ and his redemption of all things, we have hope of shaping this restoration by God's love and the power of the Holy Spirit. The Kingdom of God is already inaugurated through Jesus Christ, and when it is fully restored, all these relationships will be completely healed. We look forward to that day when God will perfect all things; but in the present, the Church can demonstrate the reshaping of these relationships, even though imperfectly. The Church is a demonstration of the future that God will bring about. Thus, the Church in the present is an agent, an ambassador, and a sign pointing to the Kingdom.

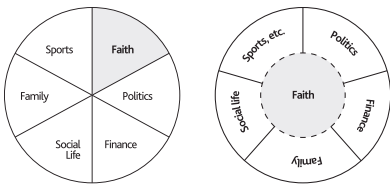
## GOD IS TRANSFORMING THE WORLD

**ASK:** What do Revelation 21 and Matthew 6:10 have in common?

**SAY:** According to Revelation 21, the King once again lives among us. The end of history and the Church is not about "going to heaven"—it is about God returning to earth to live with human beings forever and be their light. Jesus' wish, "*Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.*" – Matthew 6:10 (NIV), will be a reality.



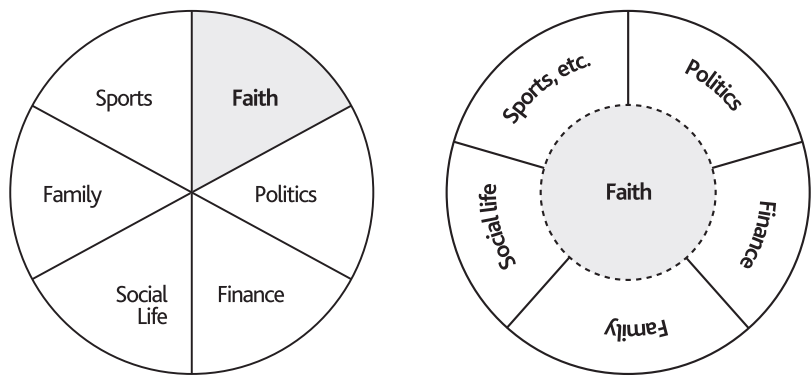
## THE GREAT PROBLEM: EVANGELICAL DUALISM



Another way of explaining this divorce is the distinction that some make regarding the spaces God occupies. Calling them sacred and secular can make us think that the Gospel has no impact on some important aspects of culture and life, including our vocations and priorities. This can weaken the Church's transformational power. In the Kingdom of God, every knee will bow and every aspect of life will be under His government.

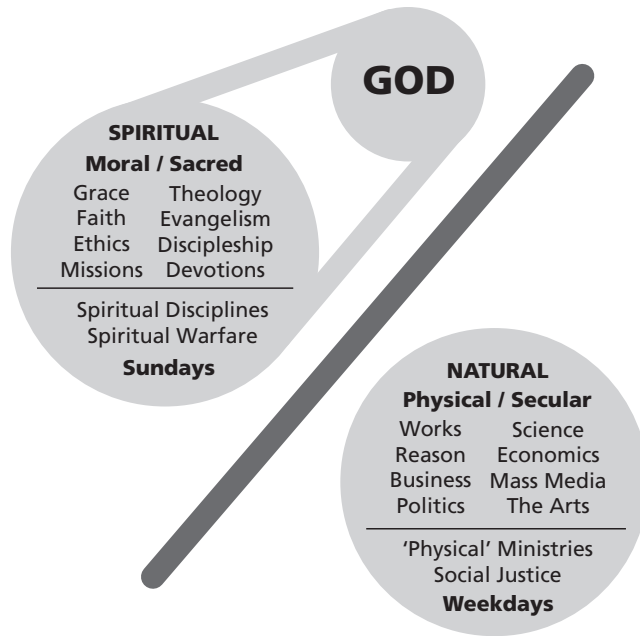
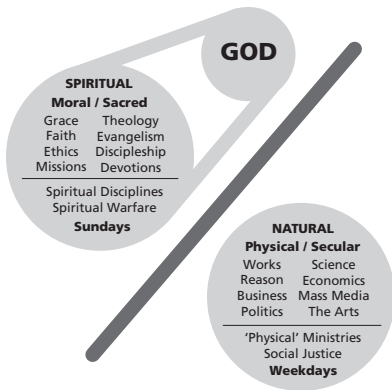
## THE GREAT PROBLEM: EVANGELICAL DUALISM

**SAY:** Dualism in the Church is not rooted in the Bible. It developed from Greek philosophy and leads to Gnosticism—a perspective that teaches that there is a dichotomy between the sacred and secular and between the physical and spiritual. This prevents real transformation because it claims that God is limited to a “spiritual” sphere and not present in ordinary human experience. Dualism regards faith as relevant only in particular aspects of life. We hear this when people talk about their “secular job” as less important than their “spiritual work at church.” Other people may talk about the soul as the good part of human beings—as though God cares only about people’s souls, not about our bodies. This does not allow for a deep understanding that the incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ and the final resurrection of all believers are concrete and physical. This errant teaching is one of the main reasons why a holistic biblical worldview has not penetrated deeply in many countries. Dualism has created a distorted worldview that minimizes the Gospel’s true impact. Note the difference between the charts:



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## CONCLUSION

**SAY:** Armed with a biblical perspective on doing God's mission, we can participate in transformation of the world through the power of the resurrection and the Holy Spirit. But we must do so in a holistic way, seeking real transformation of our culture. We are citizens of heaven here on earth (see Philippians 3:21), representing the interests of heaven as ambassadors for Christ (2 Corinthians 5:20). It is crucial that we understand God's redemptive purposes so we will not be ensnared by dualistic reductionisms of the Gospel.

This definition of the church can help us understand its essence and function in the mission of God, so we can be effective ambassadors.

## DEFINITION OF CHURCH

The Church is the Body of Christ, a community of believers created by the Holy Spirit that confesses Jesus as Lord and Savior. It gathers regularly in local communities to live its new identity in Christ and its vocation as reconciler in the world. As ambassadors of the Kingdom, these faith communities participate with the Triune God in the renewal of all things to be a testimony of the incarnational, redemptive purposes of the King.

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## Session 2: Tools

The following are helpful questions that you should answer as a group. It is important to answer them regularly.

1. Does your congregation wish to participate in multiplying healthy churches?
2. When will your church plant a daughter church?
3. What factors are helping you plant another church? What factors are keeping you from planting one?

The challenge is to begin a new healthy church representing the Kingdom of God in each community (Ephesians 3:10).

## Session 3: End of the 12 Modules for Better Churches

### Congratulations!

The primary purpose of the Stronger Churches pathway has been preparing you to strengthen your community of faith and consider planting another one. We have shared theological, biblical, and practical concepts that can help you as you look to the future. Planting new faith communities is a strategic and biblical way of advancing the cause of the Gospel.

### NEXT STEPS:

1. We encourage you to use the **"Take Your Church's Pulse"** tool again now that you have completed these modules for an assessment of how God has equipped you to strengthen your church. Compare and contrast your results from before and after you studied and implemented the modules.
2. We encourage your pastor to identify a future church planter and turn in a **CHURCH PLANTER PROFILE** that is included at the end of this module. This will begin the journey of planting a healthy church representing the Kingdom of God in a new community. A healthy church should desire to multiply itself with more churches (Ephesians 3:10)!

### MORE INFORMATION

The vision of Multiplication Network Ministries is "A healthy church, representing the Kingdom of God in every community." For this, Christian leaders are trained and equipped to revitalize and multiply healthy churches. If you wish to get in touch with the authors, please visit [www.multiplicationnetwork.org](http://www.multiplicationnetwork.org).

# THE CHURCH PLANTER PROFILE

## PERSONAL INFORMATION

|                  |                 |   |                |
|------------------|-----------------|---|----------------|
| <div>PHOTO</div> | SURNAME:        |   |                |
|                  | GIVEN NAME:     |   |                |
|                  | MARITAL STATUS: | GENDER: M <input type="checkbox"/> F <input type="checkbox"/> |                |
|                  | DATE OF BIRTH:  | AGE:  | # OF CHILDREN: |
|                  | ADDRESS:        |   | PHONE:         |
| CITY:            | STATE:          | COUNTRY:  | EMAIL:         |

## INFORMATION OF THE AREA WHERE THE NEW CHURCH WILL BE PLANTED

|       |          |          |  |
|-------|----------|----------|--|
| NAME: | ADDRESS: |          |  |
| CITY: | STATE:   | COUNTRY: |  |

## INFORMATION OF THE MOTHER CHURCH

|                |                |          |  |
|----------------|----------------|----------|--|
| NAME:          | PASTOR'S NAME: |          |  |
| MENTOR'S NAME: | PHONE:         | EMAIL:   |  |
| ADDRESS:       | NEIGHBORHOOD:  |          |  |
| CITY:          | STATE:         | COUNTRY: |  |

## TESTIMONY OF THE CHURCH PLANTER

Two lines are the minimum required. If you need more space, please use the reverse side of this sheet.

How was your life before accepting Christ? \_\_\_\_\_

How did you meet Christ? \_\_\_\_\_

How were you called to church planting? \_\_\_\_\_

## PRAYER REQUESTS

- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

CHURCH PLANTER'S SIGNATURE

MENTOR'S SIGNATURE

\_\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_\_  
MONTH / DAY / YEAR