
Acts 2 Journey Cohort

Retreat 3 Handout

Pastor and Vision Team Guide



Use the QR code to visit the Retreat 3 resources page.

Here, you'll find video segments of the teaching, along with guidance on how to complete discussion activities and assignments prior to Retreat 4.

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“Transformation is not a destination. For congregations it is not a place of arrival where the transformation journey can be declared as over. It is an ongoing journey. Congregations do not transform once. They are continually transforming.”

—George W. Bullard Jr., “Seven Enduring Principles for Transforming Your Congregation”

1. Why do we exist?

2. Where are we going?
3. How should we behave?
4. How will we get there?
5. How will we engage new people?
6. How will we treat them when they arrive?
7. How will we disciple them?
8. How will we train them to serve?
9. How will we inspire them to be missional?
10. How will we help them encounter God?

“While a compelling vision can certainly get the flywheel going, it takes successful progress toward the realization of the vision to keep it turning, and at an ever-increasing pace.”

—Bud Wrenn,
*Innovative Planning:
Your Church in 4-D*

Mission: Review

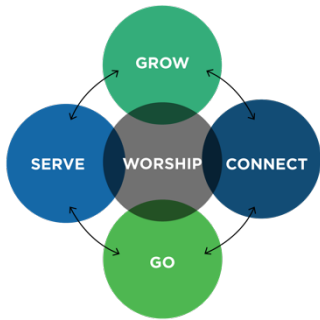
The Acts 2 Church process directs the local church to grasp foundational teachings that will fulfill its mission. The mission of the church is the objective of the church—who we are and how we should operate. The Acts 2 Church has the Great Commission as its spiritual direction and the Great Commandment as its guide for love-directed behavior.

The Great Commission focuses on the **BELIEF** system which Christ taught.

“Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age” (Matthew 28:19–20, ESV).

The Great Commandment focuses on the **BEHAVIOR** system which Christ modeled.

And he said to him, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment. And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself” (Matthew 22:37–39, ESV).



Biblical Functions: Review

In the last retreat, we shared the five biblical functions of the first-century church described in detail in Acts 2:42–47. These five functions are actually the ministry model for the New Testament Church. In Retreat 3, we will focus on the dynamics of this ministry model.

1. Fellowship (Connect)
2. Discipleship (Grow)
3. Gift-Oriented Ministry (Serve)
4. Evangelism (Go)
5. Worship

1. Why do we exist?
2. **Where are we going?**
3. How should we behave?
4. How will we get there?
5. How will we engage new people?
6. How will we treat them when they arrive?
7. How will we disciple them?
8. How will we train them to serve?
9. How will we inspire them to be missional?
10. How will we help them encounter God?

If you cannot positively answer these questions, the possibility of your vision being effective in producing the desired outcomes greatly diminishes. Additionally, there are three reasons why vision fails.

1. Poor communication
2. No strategic plan
3. No implementation process

Vision: Review

Vision takes the mission and the biblical systems of the church and articulates them toward a preferred future. Vision communicates where the church is going.

- Vision is courageously exploring possibilities.
- Vision answers “Where?” and “Why?”
- Vision unites people around a common cause.
- Vision gives clear focus on an intended destination.
- Vision is memorable, inspiring, ambitious, and relevant.
- Vision is bigger than your ability to achieve.

In reviewing your congregational vision:

- Does it contain the biblical functions from Acts 2?
- Is it clear and understandable?
- Can your congregation make it happen?
- Is it vital and urgent to your church?
- Is it future focused?
- Does it require faith to fulfill?
- Does it matter?
- Will it take you to the next level?

1. Why do we exist?
2. Where are we going?
3. **How should we behave?**
4. How will we get there?
5. How will we engage new people?
6. How will we treat them when they arrive?
7. How will we disciple them?
8. How will we train them to serve?
9. How will we inspire them to be missional?
10. How will we help them encounter God?

Core Values: Review

Vision focuses on the belief systems of the church; core values deal with the behaviors and attitudes of leadership and the church. More than mission or vision, **CORE VALUES** tell those inside and outside the congregation what is distinctive and important. Core values represent the identity of the church and reflect how the congregation lives into its preferred future. Core values create boundaries for church life and articulate what the church stands for. Core values drive priorities, shape attitudes and actions, direct processes, govern relationships, and must be identified and communicated for the church to reach its full kingdom potential.

For video instruction on each of the strategic questions on the following pages, use the QR code on the first page of the handout or visit tinyurl.com/a2jstrategy.

1. Why do we exist?
2. Where are we going?
3. How should we behave?
- 4. How will we get there?**
5. How will we engage new people?
6. How will we treat them when they arrive?
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8. How will we train them to serve?
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10. How will we help them encounter God?

“The steps of a good man are ordered by the LORD; and he delighteth in his way.” (Psalm 37:23, KJV).

“Commit your work to the LORD, and your plans will be established.” (Proverbs 16:3, ESV)

“The heart of man plans his way, but the LORD establishes his steps.” (Proverbs 16:9, ESV)

“Plans fail for lack of counsel, but with many advisors they succeed.” (Proverbs 15:22, NIV)

Understanding the Strategic Plan

If a church has a vision statement and a set of core values, will that church grow? We need a strategic plan for the leadership team to take the leap of faith, we need an understandable plan to build the bridge of hope, and together we need a course of action to climb the new mountain.

The only way for your church to grow is to add more people, and the only way to retain people is to have a Spirit-empowered strategic plan to fulfill the vision.

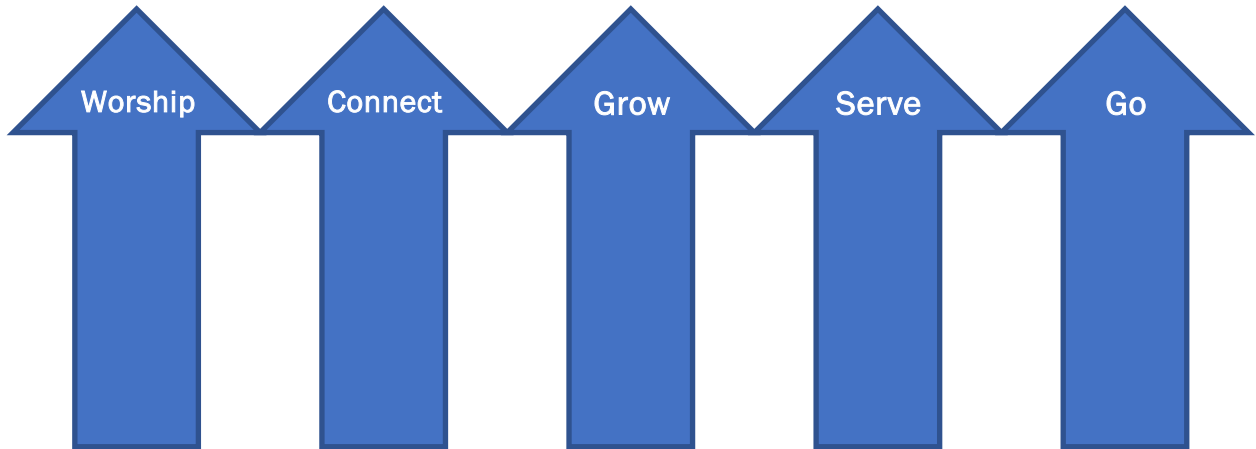
Throughout scripture, we see how God directed people by giving them a strategic plan.

- Moses sought the Lord and was given a strategic plan to lead Israel out of Egypt.
- Joshua had a strategic to lead Israel into the Promised Land and overcome their enemies.
- God gave David a strategic plan to overthrow Goliath.
- Paul was totally invested in a God-given strategic plan to spread the gospel on four missionary journeys.
- God Himself has a strategic plan for humanity.

Let's look at how our vision statement, core values, and strategic plan work together to lead us to where we are going through Christ.

VISION

Beliefs, Actions, Where We Are Going

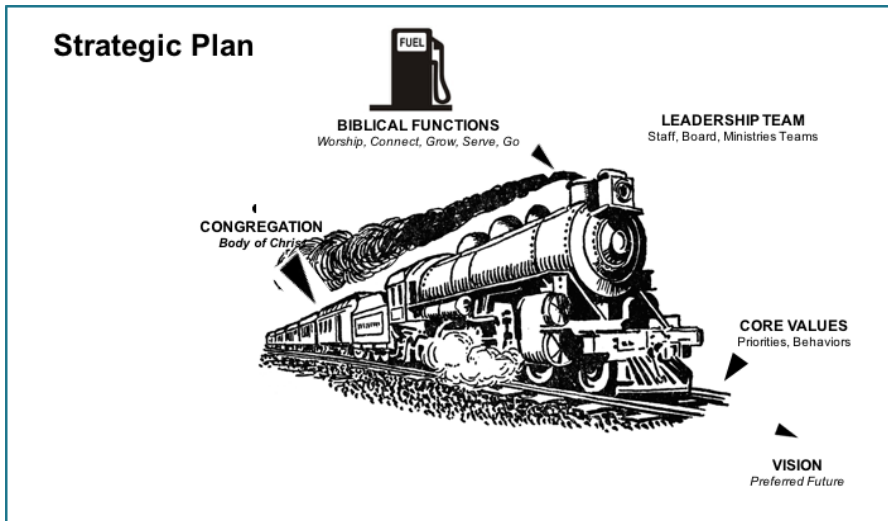


VALUES

Behaviors, Attitudes, Where We Are Now

Creating the Strategic Plan

Once a congregation establishes its mission, vision, values, and the five functions, it is prepared to create a strategic plan.



Where We're Going
Vision (Preferred Future)

Why We're on the Journey
Mission (Beliefs, Behaviors)

Who's in the Car
Congregation (Body of Christ)

What We're Doing Inside
Biblical Functions (Worship, Connect, Grow, Serve, Go)

What Rails We Run On
Values (Chosen Priorities)

How We Will Get There
Strategic Plan

When you cast vision, you may think you're not getting traction, but what you're really doing is beginning to move the train and preparing for the long journey. When the train begins to move, the focus will shift to regulating its momentum.

In Retreat 1, each team created "I dream of a church..." statements. These statements will now become the foundation for building the strategic plan around the five functions of Acts 2:42-47. This strategic plan is the pathway to fulfill the vision created in Retreat 1.

1. Why do we exist?
2. Where are we going?
3. How should we behave?
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5. **How will we engage new people?**
6. **How will we treat them when they arrive?**
7. **How will we disciple them?**
8. **How will we train them to serve?**
9. **How will we inspire them to be missional?**

The Five Strategic Questions

When building an Acts 2 strategy, the five functions serve as the framework for organizing the plan. With the use of five strategic questions, the team can identify a path for pursuing vision and implementing values that will address the most significant elements of an effective plan.

Since outward focus is the key catalyst for church health, most churches must prioritize their movement outward into the community if momentum toward health is to be gained. For this reason, our first question will relate to the church's evangelism or "Go" strategy, and the remaining questions (and related functions) will follow in a more natural order.

QUESTION 1: *How will we engage new people?*

To start a new life cycle, you must have **NEW LIFE!**

First, who are your friends?

- The best place to find new friends is among those its **PEOPLE** are meeting and connecting with every day. If you've ever been a part of a growing church, you already know that the pastor isn't the one bringing new people each week—the people are!
- Reaching people isn't what your church pays the **PASTOR** to do. Some churches fire their pastor when the church doesn't grow, somehow thinking that news of his excellent pulpit skills should be packing the house.
- It's not why your pastor decided to hire some **STAFF MEMBERS** either.
- Consider Friend Day events or opportunities for the people to **TARGET** their invitations.

Next, who are your church's neighbors?

- If you're looking for people to love, why not start **NEXT DOOR?** These folks are right there, just walking distance from your church!
- If the church people have little **IN COMMON** with those who live closest, no one expects to find friends there.

Finally, what are your church's ministry strengths?

Every church has them, even if they're covered up like a valuable painting hidden under the basement staircase.

- What a church does **WELL** needs to be visible to its community!
- **NEW PEOPLE** are more likely to show up when you are doing what you do.
- At the same time, those who drift in during your **LESSER** quality moments seldom choose to come back.

Which of the five functions could be most effective in helping you connect to people outside your church? Which do you think you could do really well?

Some churches effectively use evangelistic **OUTREACH EVENTS** to connect with new people.

Some church families find their “engine” in **TEACHING TRUTH**.

Unfortunately, many churches with excellent teachers limit their gifts to the congregation. Excellent Sunday school classes or children’s ministries never leave the building and rarely contribute to the effort of bringing new life. Certainly, strong disciple-making efforts are critical to congregational life, but churches that excel in teaching may also be missing a great opportunity to connect with their communities. People need to know how to live, and you’ll be surprised at how many are ready to admit it.

Some churches find their “engine” in meaningful ways of **SERVING** their communities.

Another church finds its engine in **WORSHIP**.

Blessed with gifted musicians, dramatic actors, or a pastor who excels in communicating with outsiders, these churches see guests return at a high level. Their quality presentations make an impact and provide an open door to the neighborhood and beyond.

Many churches concentrate these gifts on church settings like Sunday mornings or Easter and Christmas musicals, moments the church folks love but new friends rarely find.

When the goal is to extend love and belonging to those on the outside, a church community can look to its strengths to find answers. Even if you insist that no such strengths exist, the effort to make friends is always available. Some aging congregations may have lost their energy for service or struggle to present themselves well with music or technology. Their teaching voices may seem a bit dated as well, but all of us can love. In fact, sometimes the older saints are better at loving than anyone else—likely because as parents and grandparents, they’ve had the most practice.

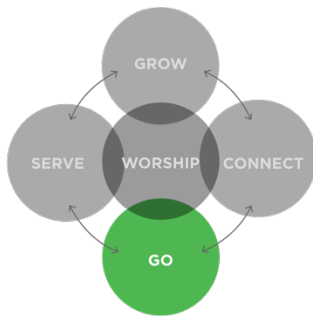
- People lined streets because of Jesus’ healing capacity.
- They filled hillsides because He taught like no one else.
- The woman who crashed a Pharisee’s dinner party did so because she had found the love and compassion she desperately needed.

When you find your unique capacity as a congregation, aim it at people outside your doors. Trying to fix your weaknesses is exhausting and frustrating work, but pouring your best energy into your strengths will even help you find energy you didn’t know you had and even bring new people who can help in those weaker areas. Your engine reveals what your church is made to be. And, it will prove to be element your guests will find most attractive.

EXERCISE: (15 minutes) Have each church discuss, in detail, their possible “engines” by using the following questions:

1. Do the people of your church invite their friends to come with them? What steps can you take to encourage them to do so?
2. What impressions do people in your community have of your church?

3. What are some of the most common reasons why people visit your church?
4. To what degree does your church reflect the neighborhood around it? Are there significant people groups in your neighborhood that you could reach? What steps might you take to do so?
5. Which of the following does your church do most effectively—worship, build relationships, serve others, teach, evangelize? Would people who don’t attend your church agree with your assessment?
6. Which of the following would be more effective in bringing new people to your church—worship, relationships, serving, teaching, evangelizing?
7. What steps could you take to make your “engine” more visible to your community?
8. Who in your church could help you better understand the gap between your church and the unchurched people of your community?



GO

Our Commission extends well beyond our street corner. The local church is made to impact its world, both near and far. So, what is our plan to get people involved in Christ’s mission beyond our setting?

Here we find our own efforts to engage our community, our partnerships with other congregations to fulfill Christ’s purposes around us, and our investment in the work of missionaries who will go where we do not.

This question also may encourage us to consider planting another congregation in our community or beyond. Remember that just as healthy disciples produce other healthy disciples, healthy churches can reproduce other healthy congregations.

See
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in
*A Spirit-
Empowered
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1. **World Missions: What will we do to help reach the world with the gospel?**
2. **Acts of love: What will we do to demonstrate Christ’s love to our surrounding community?**
3. **Marketplace evangelism: How will we help our congregation become involved what God is doing in the surrounding community?**

As you consider your strategy steps for evangelism, think about steps you could take in the next 2-3 years that could help you fulfill your vision in this area. Revisit your, “I dream of a church where evangelism is . . .” statement to help stir your thinking.

Use a whiteboard or large pad to record potential strategy steps

QUESTION 2: *How will we treat them when they arrive?*

Acts Grow Track

The Acts Grow Track is a downloadable resource designed to lead new believers on three distinct spiritual tracks (Connect, Grow, and Serve) toward assimilation into your church. It is divided into three primary sessions, although you can adapt it for a longer timeframe. These sessions will help participants develop personal relationships with other believers, explore opportunities to grow in their walk with God, and find their place serving in the church and community. The Grow Track is customizable, allowing church leaders to be creative and tailor its curriculum to suit your teaching style and your church environment. Purchase and download the customizable Acts Grow Track by scanning the QR code:



Guest Assimilation

Guest assimilation is much more than having front-door greeters. Assimilation is the process of moving new attendees to higher levels of Christian discipleship, from unbeliever to reproducer (see chapter six in *A Spirit-Empowered Church*). Guest assimilation is the process of moving new attendees to the level of Christian discipleship.

Most surveys indicate an effective guest-assimilation effort will take people from first visit to strong relational connections in *six weeks* and to active discipleship through ministry involvement and small-group participation by *eighteen weeks*. This process starts when we connect with people at their first visit and provide an opportunity for new friends to hear about the church. The church has a responsibility to communicate its desire and activities to meet the needs of the new people, engage in intentional acts of love and service throughout the week, and assist them in finding their place in ministry within this eighteen-week window.

How do you connect people from their first visit and assimilate them into the full life of the church in less than eighteen weeks? Make sure one of your focus points is discipleship, not just converting the lost. This process allows people to explore *belonging* before *becoming*. People want to *belong* before they *become*. Oftentimes, the church’s actions demonstrate that people should *become* before they *belong*.

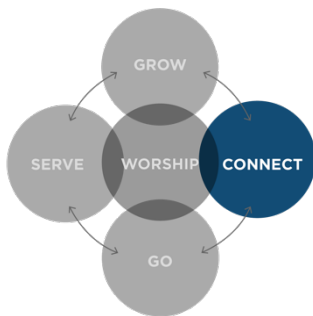
The Ministry of Greeters

When churches are asked if they are friendly, they almost always say yes. However, too often, “friendly” means we are friendly to each other. The real question should be, *Does your church make friends with the unchurched and new people easily?* To help address this, every church should have greeters.

The number of different types of greeters that a church has and the role that each type plays will depend on its size and the number of guests the church welcomes. Each role is important, has unique qualifications, and requires an investment of training. The sidebar provides examples of greeting roles. Remember, your church may only get one chance to make a lasting impression.

1. **Parking lot greeters**—it’s never too early to welcome guests.
2. **Entrance greeters** help people feel welcome. These greeters should have clear gifts of hospitality and be some of the friendliest people in the church.
3. **Sanctuary greeters** realize that the Sunday morning auditorium experience can be unfamiliar and uncomfortable for some people, so sanctuary greeters must demonstrate the ability to help people feel comfortable.
4. **Exit greeters** make sure each person feels loved as they leave the church. A guest’s final experience should underscore the welcome you’ve been showing all morning.

CONNECT



While there is certainly more to healthy Spirit-empowered fellowship than effectively welcoming guests into our services, effective efforts in loving and assimilating our guests will raise the level of all our fellowship efforts. Frankly, if we love new friends well, it’s highly likely that our love for one another will grow as well.

Develop an assimilation process that extends from the church parking lot to full involvement in the life and ministry of your church. Consider the following areas:

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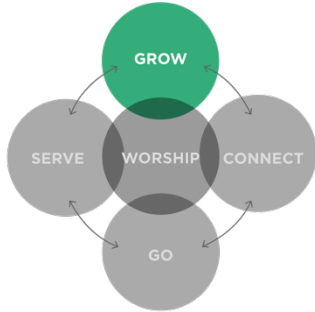
- Appearance of property
- Guest parking
- Clear signage (entrance, children’s areas, restrooms)
- Greeters (exit and entrance)
- Follow-up communication with first-time guests
- Simple connect card
- Acts Grow Track / Newcomers’ class

As you consider your strategy steps for fellowship, think about steps you could take in the next 2-3 years that could help you fulfill your vision in this area. Revisit your, “I dream of a church where fellowship is . . .” statement to help stir your thinking.

Use the following items to discuss, in detail, your church's process for guest assimilation.

1. Do you treat new people at your church as guests or as visitors? What steps might you take to treat these new friends more as guests?
2. Would you describe your church as guest friendly? What changes could you make that would make a guest's first day in your church a little easier?
3. What are some of your memories of your first experience as a guest at your church?
4. In what areas are your church greeters most effective? Where are they least effective?
5. Are people with clear hospitality giftings the first people a guest might meet at your church? If not, who are your most friendly people, and how might you put them in such roles?
6. Would you describe your church's approach to a guest as more information focused or friendship focused? What steps can you take to become even more friendship focused?
7. What are the first things a guest sees when entering your church?
8. What steps has your church taken to help guests find their way in your church building?
9. What will guests most likely experience in their first twelve minutes at our church? What could we add to those twelve minutes that might make a stronger first impression?
10. Are you currently providing ways for your guests to integrate into church life?
11. How do you track those moving through the guest-assimilation process? (In other words, how do you track first- and second-time visitors as well as those who recently have become part of the church?)
12. What steps can your church take to make its hospitality center more effective?
13. How could your church better help its guests understand your worship practices?
14. How does your church's worship service demonstrate the importance of compassion, prayer, relationships, worship, and instruction?
15. Do you ask guests for information before making a strong effort to welcome them?
16. What gift does your church give to first-time guests? Is the gift as appealing to the guests as it is to the church? Are there changes your church should consider in the type of gift given to guests?
17. How does your church use its welcome gift as a way to request guest information?
18. What would be the most important steps you'd want a new person in your church to take first?
19. Contextualize to each individual demographic and location.
20. Having designated people in these areas is good, but consider the "five-foot rule." Help every member realize the importance of doing their part in creating a welcoming atmosphere. The "Five-foot rule" is if a guest gets within five feet of a regular attendee, the regular attendee is responsible to care of that person by being friendly, introducing themselves, answering questions, or guiding the guest to their destination.

QUESTION 3: *How will we teach them how to follow Jesus?*



GROW

The Great Commission defines discipleship quite clearly. Jesus said to “baptize them” and “teach them.” While baptism is a single moment that demonstrates the choice for new life, teaching them all Christ has commanded requires an ongoing effort—and a plan!

So, how will we teach them what Jesus has taught us? Healthy churches have a plan for such efforts. Here we must think about a new believer’s early steps, the deeper journeys of those who’ve known Christ for a while, the age-appropriate needs of our children and youth, and the development of personal Bible study disciplines that will help people continue their growth between Sundays.

1. **What will we teach our children and students, and how will we communicate this to the congregation?**

2. **What will our adult discipleship process look like?**

As you prepare your plan in the area of Discipleship, refer to pages 168-172 in *A Spirit-Empowered Church*.

Imparting Faith to the New Believer

Explore	Embrace	Experience	Express
The truths of faith	The truths of the faith in a personal way	The truths of the faith in everyday life	The truths of the faith to others through my identity as a Christ-follower

Impacting Faith at Home

Birth–Preschool	Grade School	Middle School	High School
Explore	Embrace	Experience	Express
The truths of faith	The truths of the faith in a personal way	The truths of the faith in everyday life	The truths of the faith to others through my identity as a Christ-follower

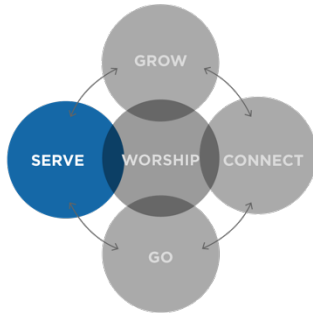
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Use the following questions to discuss the church's present reality and future plans for their children's ministries with the following questions as a guide:

1. Is there a system that allows children to grow spiritually and engage in Christian education?
2. Is the focus of your children's and youth ministries simply on social experiences, or are they focused on training children in biblical principles?
3. Has the church established the truths each child should know before graduating from high school?
4. How can the church become a more effective place for families and children to receive Christ?
5. How do you perceive children's ministries in terms of the five functions of the church?
6. How do families currently respond to the ministry provided to children?
7. How can you strategically use children's ministries to better equip families, even during the week?
8. How can building the foundation of discipleship, evangelism, and worship in children now impact the church positively in the future?
9. How can you connect children's ministries to the Sunday morning experience?

As you consider your strategy steps for discipleship, think about steps you could take in the next 2-3 years that could help you fulfill your vision in this area. Revisit your, "I dream of a church where discipleship is . . ." statement to help stir your thinking.

Use a whiteboard or large pad to record potential strategy steps.

QUESTION 4: *How will we help them find a place to serve?***SERVE**

Every individual has gifts and abilities to be used to strengthen the body of Christ. In truth, one can't really be following a Servant if he or she is not learning to serve. So, we need a plan for engaging people in serving Christ's mission.

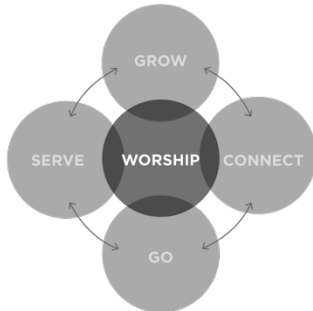
Serving is a primary way in which we express our love for Christ. Self-sacrifice is the Bible's best definition for the love we are called to show to others. Of course, our principal focus in serving extends beyond the walls of our local church. While serving on Sundays is important and a great way to develop a servant's heart by "practicing" on those who share our faith, the real impact of our lives should be in our community—that's the mission we're made for.

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1. Move from a "leader with helpers" mentality to a team concept of ministry. List ministry teams for the congregation to see.
2. Create an onramp of training for each ministry team.

As you consider your strategy steps for gift-oriented ministry, think about steps you could take in the next 2-3 years that could help you fulfill your vision in this area. Revisit your, "I dream of a church where ministry is . . ." statement to help stir your thinking.

Use a whiteboard or large pad to record potential strategy steps.

QUESTION 5: *How will we teach them to pursue God?*

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WORSHIP

Our final strategic question calls for a plan to help every individual connect with God. This is certainly not a last step in the sequence of our efforts. We need a plan to help people engage God regularly and directly in worship, repentance, and pursuit. Studies have demonstrated that unless people learn to engage God on their own, they will often stop growing after around five years of becoming a Christian. Simply put, *one day a week does not make a healthy spiritual life.*

Spirit-empowered daily living requires each of the following:

- Fresh encounters with Jesus (John 8:12)
- Frequent experiences of Scripture (Psalm 119:105)
- Faithful engagement with God’s people (Matt. 5:14).

Each time your church gathers for corporate worship, are you inviting them into encounters with Jesus, experiences with Scripture, and engagement with God’s people?

1. Reframe worship from a Sunday morning practice to an everyday reality.
2. Develop a prayer ministry strategy that includes personal and corporate prayer.

As you consider your strategy steps for worship, think about steps you could take in the next 2-3 years that could help you fulfill your vision in this area. Revisit your, “I dream of a church where worship is . . .” statement to help stir your thinking.

Use a whiteboard or large pad to record potential strategy steps.

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Next Steps

Group Assignment

1. Meet as a Vision Team to discuss the timing for publicly communicating the church's vision and strategic plan to the congregation. (Strategic communication should begin soon after Retreat 4.)
2. Begin assessing your church facilities and ministries and be realistic about the transformation necessary to accomplish the goals in your strategic plan. For example, what facility improvements can you make now that fall within your current budget? If there are critical facility repairs, renovations, or enhancements that are not covered in the budget and require a special offering, how can you include the action/activity in your strategic plan?
3. Before the next Vision Team meeting, have each team member tour the church's facilities as if they were guests/visitors. Make notes about observations, including issues that require immediate attention and ideas for improving the guest experience—restrooms, cleanliness of décor and furniture, ease of access, etc.
4. Review notes from Retreat 3. Over the next 90 days, begin to write, in detail, your church's strategic plan for the next two to three years. (This will be comprised of the strategies for implementing the biblical functions—worship, connect, serve, grow, and go.) Bring your strategic plan to Retreat 4.
5. Prepare to present your strategic plan at Retreat 4 using PowerPoint®, video, or any other communication tool. Each group will have five to eight minutes to present their strategic plan. Bring a copy of your strategic plan for the presenter.

Recommended Resources

- *A Spirit-Empowered Church* by Alton Garrison – Chapters 11–17
- Acts Grow Track – visit digital.myhealthychurch.com or use the QR code below to access the downloadable Acts Grow Track.



APPENDIX

Strategic Plan Presentation Examples



Use the QR code provided to access downloadable examples of strategic plan presentations from Acts 2 Journey alumni.

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Meeting 1: Strategy

Work with your team to write down three to five strategic steps you could take over the next two to three years to move each of the five functions toward your desired destination.

	1	2	3	4	5
Evangelism (Go)					
Fellowship (Connect)					
Discipleship (Grow)					
Gift-Oriented Ministry (Serve)					
Worship					

Meeting 2: Prioritizing Strategy

Transfer your list of new items from the previous page and place them in the order in which you will pursue them.

	Evangelism (Go)	Fellowship (Connect)	Discipleship (Grow)	Gift-Oriented Ministry (Serve)	Worship [vertical relationship]
1					
2					
3					
4					
5					

Meeting 3: Strategy Implementation Plan

AREA	GOAL	PLAN	DEADLINE	WHO	NOTES
GO (Evangelism)	1.				
	2.				
	3.				
CONNECT (Fellowship)	1.				
	2.				
	3.				
GROW (Discipleship)	1.				
	2.				
	3.				
SERVE (Gift-Oriented)	1.				
	2.				
	3.				
WORSHIP	1.				
	2.				
	3.				