



Learning Community Fifteen

The Externally Focused Church

20-30
minutes

Personal Check-in:

Facilitator Instructions: Focus everyone's attention on the passages below. Then spend some time discussing the sharing questions and praying for each other:

And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds.
Hebrews 10:24

But as for you, brethren, do not grow weary of doing good. 2 Thessalonians 3:13

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

This is a trustworthy statement; and concerning these things I want you to speak confidently, so that those who have believed God may be careful to engage in good deeds. Titus 3:8

Sharing Questions:

1. Which of these verses inspire you? How so?
2. Which of these verses do you have the hardest time living out?
3. How can we specifically pray for you as you lead your church toward a greater external focus?



15-30
minutes

Homework Debrief:

Instructions: Below is a list of the homework assignments from the last meeting. Ask each pastor to update the group on how they responded to each of the items. After everyone has checked in regarding the homework, take some time to talk about lessons that are being learned so far. Capture the discussion on a whiteboard or a flipchart.

1. Your homework assignment is to run some kind of training session in the next 30 days that incorporates the principles that you have been exposed to in this module. You pick the material that you want to expose your leaders to. In particular, you are to run a training experience that is friendly to adult learners. With this in mind, pick some group in your church that you will meet with this month (council, deacons, small group leaders, or some other committee) but don't lecture! In fact, try to talk as little as possible. Get others involved, create exercises that get others talking and sharing. Ask lots of questions, facilitate discussion, and challenge the adults to do something with what they have heard.
2. For next time read *The Externally Focused Church* by Rick Rusaw and Eric Swanson and respond to the Book Review Questions.



6. How would you respond to question #1 on page 142?

7. Using Bakke's chart on pages 165 and 166, what are some opportunities that you could respond to?

8. How were you personally challenged as a leader by this book?

9. What are the three most important ideas that you take away from this book?

10. What are your two favorite quotes from the book?



45-60
minutes

Case Study Interaction:

Instructions: If a pastor is lined up for this meeting, give him 10-15 minutes to talk about his church. With the remaining time, ask the group to give feedback on the following questions and to spend time interacting with the pastor about the following:

- 1. Please share the prescriptions you received from the Weekend Consultation.**

- 2. What progress have you made toward implementing the prescriptions?**

- 3. What are the most significant challenges you are facing in implementing the prescriptions?**

- 4. Have you done your time study? What did you learn about your use of time? What are you doing to make changes in your use of time? How are you getting these changes rooted in your life for the long term?**

- 5. What leadership skills are you focused on developing? Share your sense of progress and your challenges.**

- 6. Have you built new bridges into the community? If not, why not? If so, how? What are the results so far? How can you improve your vision casting for reaching the community?**

- 7. What are you doing each week to create a sense of urgency? Are you seeing an increase in Sunday worship attendance?**

- 8. What are your plans for the next three months?**



30-40
minutes

Learning Activity: The Externally Focused Church

Facilitator Instructions: Transition the group to the article entitled “The Externally Focused Church.” Ask everyone to read slowly and to highlight key ideas. After everyone has read, ask people to respond to the Discussion Questions in pairs or triads.

The Externally Focused Church

And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds. Hebrews 10:24

But as for you, brethren, do not grow weary of doing good.
2 Thessalonians 3:13

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

This is a trustworthy statement; and concerning these things I want you to speak confidently, so that those who have believed God may be careful to engage in good deeds.
Titus 3:8

Sometimes in the Church we get it backwards. We observe how time poor people are so we feel guilty asking for their time. Or perhaps we were trained under a paradigm that places an unhealthy emphasis on the role of the pastor. Or we have become disillusioned and cynical because people have given you “lines” for years about why they can’t get involved in the church. But let’s get one thing straight: there is no more noble cause on the face of the earth than the local church. There is nothing in the community or in the workplace that rivals the destiny-shaping influence of the local church. When we call people to give, to sacrifice, and to sweat for the church, it is a blessed call.

From this call we must not shrink away. The people in our pews were made to make a difference. They are blessed to bless. It is a part of God’s great design that we serve and lay our lives down. To not, is to miss out on the satisfaction of knowing you made a difference. That’s what young people and millionaires alike are searching for. Volunteering our time is the only cure for that empty spot in our hearts that yearns to make a difference.

Leaders, therefore, are people who consistently redeem volunteerism. The clarion cry of the leader is, “We need you,” “This church needs you,”



“This community needs you,” and “I need you.” Resist the tendency to be apologetic with your invitations and challenges because there is nothing to apologize for or to feel guilty about when you ask people to join God’s worldwide work.

Passages like Philippians 2 and Ephesians 4 make it clear that raising up volunteers is part and parcel of the work that leaders are meant to do. If we’re not careful though, we can become so inundated with “doing the ministry” that we lose sight of equipping others for ministry. Jesus was very intentional about mobilizing others for ministry because He knew that His time on earth was limited. The three years of training that the disciples received was the leadership foundation upon which the Church would later be built. It’s the same 2,000 years later. The local church is an organization that will rise and fall on its volunteer base.

Some say volunteerism is dead. In past decades, study after study seemed to suggest that people were donating less and less of their time to volunteer organizations. But something funny has begun to resurface across the landscape of our country people, young and old, are rediscovering the “natural high” that comes from giving your life away. The latest trends suggest that the younger generation is looking and searching for worthwhile causes to invest their lives in. Make no mistake: a fresh and vibrant volunteer spirit is reemerging.

The question is, as a leader will you capitalize on this fresh move of God?

Rick Rusaw and Eric Swanson go a step farther in their book *The Externally Focused Church* when they share:

How often have we heard the slogan “Bring them in; build them up; send them out”? Not a bad approach; it sounds logical and should work. But the leadership of LifeBridge Christian Church has found that many people don’t get excited about spiritual disciplines...LifeBridge and other churches have discovered that getting people involved in service is much easier than getting involved in activities specifically designed to deepen their faith. But they’re also finding that people return from their service opportunities asking, “Can you teach me how to pray, understand the Bible, share my faith? I was helping out at the food bank, and the person I was working with knew I was from the church and asked to pray! I don’t know how! Can you help me? I had an opportunity to share my faith, and I wasn’t sure what to say. What should I do?”...It seems in our culture today that service is an easier reach for people.



Six ways to turbo-charge your external focus

1. Serve Day

Recruit a task force in your church to spearhead a Serve Day in your community. The task force would be responsible for creating a list of one-day service opportunities that would be a tangible, concrete way for your people to be a blessing to the community. The possibilities are endless, including widows, schools, parks, nursing homes, etc. The point is that for one day, people carve out time to tackle a short-term issue. A number of projects could be tackled at once if you have enough volunteers.

2. Challenge small groups to adopt a need

Small groups that do mission together discover a whole new dimension of community. With this in mind, look for ways to encourage your existing small groups to add a “mission” component to their focus. A group simply needs to wrestle with this question, “What need in our community could we touch on a regular basis if we banded together?” A regular monthly commitment is a great starting place for the average group. Amazing things can happen from humble beginnings.

3. Link with another church or organization

Some fantastic community initiatives may already be in motion in your area. Chances are that a near by church or community organization would love to have more volunteer manpower. Partnerships give your people an opportunity to get involved quickly without having to worry about leading or coordinating a project.

4. Kingdom Assignment

One of the more creative ideas for community involvement is called “Kingdom Assignment.” There are an infinite number of ways to accomplish this Kingdom Assignment. You can help homeless people, widows, or orphans. You can help start a church or meet medical needs or assist a school or the Red Cross. You can make things, buy things, or build things, all with the goal of blessing people with Christ’s love.

Here’s how Kingdom Assignment works:

- Each volunteer is given \$100.
- They are asked to invest it in a way that extends God’s Kingdom of love, mercy, and Good News to people outside the church.
- Each person needs to report back in 100 days on how they’ve invested in God’s Kingdom.

For more information on this initiative go to:

www.kingdomassignment.com



5. Put legs to your Community Assessment

By now you have probably invested energy and focus into assessing your community. Perhaps it's time to nail down a new initiative that relates to all that you have discovered about the needs of your region. One of the easiest ways to start a new initiative is to raise up a task force that would be willing to own the project. Here are a few questions that are worth asking:

- > What need are we uniquely positioned to touch?
- > During our community assessing was there a need that jumped out at us?
- > Is there a need that someone in our congregation seems particularly drawn to meet?
- > What is preventing us from getting started now?

6. Preaching emphasis

Good deeds abound in the Old and New Testaments. Consider emphasizing these aspects of the Christian life for six months so that the congregation gets a steady diet of the idea that God wants them to give their lives away. Sprinkle your sermons with real-life stories of people in and outside your church who are making a difference through volunteering.

Discussion Questions:

1. What stood out to you from the article?
2. Which ideas from the article would you like to experiment with?
3. How are you personally challenged by what you read?



20-30
minutes

Learning Activity: My Externally Focused Church

Facilitator Instructions: Give each participant ten minutes to reflect on the worksheet below and then bring the whole group together to share insights and ideas.

Instructions: On the worksheet below, consider the different areas or arenas of church life and brainstorm new ideas for cultivating an external focus in your church. Use ideas from this module and from Rusaw and Swanson's book.

Area of Church Life	What can we do in this area of our church life to become more Externally Focused?
Small Groups	
Children's Programs	
Preaching	
Weekend Services	
Service Projects or teams	



5
minutes

Homework and Wrap-Up

Facilitator Instructions: Close out the session by highlighting the homework assignment.

Homework Assignment:

1. Complete the Community Outreach Planner sheets at the end of this module and come to the next LC prepared to discuss your six to twelve month plan for your church.
2. For next time read *Church That Works* by Gary McIntosh and respond to the Book Review Questions.



Community Outreach Planner

The book of Nehemiah reminds us that a group can accomplish great things for the Kingdom. It started with a legitimate need and a compassionate response. Once Nehemiah heard about the broken walls in Jerusalem his heart was moved. Eventually he was able to motivate others to join him in the quest to rebuild the protective walls around the city.

In the book *Irresistible Evangelism* several helpful principles regarding serving together are discussed (pages 97-105). Let's consider a few of those principles for a moment...

Keep it Simple: Acts of kindness don't have to be elaborate, expensive, or complicated to do. With some creativity and brainstorming there are a number of ways to extend love to others that are easy to pull off. In the initial stages, the simpler the better.

Low Risk, High Grace: When deciding on a project, choose something which is low risk for you and your partners. Handing out sodas at a community soccer match might be considered high risk for some people. But putting a packet of flower seeds in mailboxes could be more comfortable. But be forewarned...acts of kindness are contagious. Once you start blessing people with no strings attached it can become addictive. So get the ball rolling and watch what opportunities the Lord lays on your heart.

It's a Process: Remember, people don't care what we know until they know that we care about them as individuals. Acts of kindness and compassion is one way to demonstrate care to folks and to ripen their hearts for the Good News. It's a process for us too! Many of us need to develop our under-used serving muscles. We're not used to extending kindness to others with no strings attached.

Have Fun!: Serving together can and should be outrageously fun. Blessing others can bring tremendous enjoyment. What better way to speak into our culture today but by having a great time through service. That's the kind of Christianity that is winsome and attractive in a culture that has lost its way.

Just do it...Today! : The old adage is true: "There's no time like the present!" So get out there and serve. Don't procrastinate. Take some of the community outreach ideas, team up with some people you know, and go make somebody's day!

*Use the Community Outreach Planner and the Community Outreach Ideas worksheets to start brainstorming and putting a plan together.



Community Outreach Ideas

- Newspapers
- Windshield Washing
- Coffee Giveaways
- Restroom Cleaning
- Grocery Bag Loading Assistance
- Grocery Cart Returns
- Donut Giveaway during Morning Traffic
- Cookies
- Bottled Water Giveaway
- Flower Seeds
- Popcorn
- Popsicles
- Windshield Washing
- Hand Cleaning Towelettes
- Trash Pick Up
- Glow in the Dark Necklace Giveaway
- Parking Meter Feeding
- Hot Dog Grilling
- Helium Balloons for Kids
- Polaroid Family Photos
- Picnic
- Ice Cream Coupons
- Gatorade at Biking Trails
- Face Painting
- Doggie Dirt Cleanup
- Doggie Wash
- Clowning
- Single Mom's Oil Change
- Summer Car Washes
- Popsicle Giveaways
- Trash Pickup with "Kindness in Progress" Signs
- Tutoring
- Drinks at Athletic Events
- Care Packages for Students
- Snacks (chips, crackers)
- Christmas Gift Wrapping
- Childcare
- Oranges for High School Practice
- High School Sports Party
- Facilitate community service project
- Make hospital visits
- Greet students and parents and help the freshmen move in
- Baby-sit for coaches
- Take a camera to practice/games
- Clean up after a sporting event
- Give away peanuts/popcorn at sporting events
- Offer to do videoing of a team's practice
- Fruit Giveaway
- Sunday Morning Paper and Coffee Giveaways
- Leaf Raking
- Lawn Mowing
- Grass Edging
- Screen Cleaning
- Rain Gutter Cleaning
- Garbage Can Return from the Curb
- Food Delivery to Shut-Ins
- General Yard Cleanup
- Door to Door Carnation Giveaway
- Tulip Bulbs
- Potted Plant Giveaways
- Sidewalk Sweeping
- Minor House Repairs
- Community Dinner
- Weed Spraying
- Tree Limb Trimming
- Garage Cleaning
- Bark and Mulch for Yards
- House Number Painting on Curbs
- Steaks and Salmon for Firefighters
- Free Bird Feeders and Refills to Convalescent Home Residents
- Move In Welcoming Party
- Soft Drink Giveaways



Community Outreach Next Steps Chart

Instructions: Reproduce the Next Steps Chart below and brainstorm action steps that you will need to work through to plan a Community Outreach. use the questions below to stimulate your thinking. One action step goes on one post-it-note. Don't worry about sequencing the notes initially... you can do that after you have brainstormed.

Next Step Questions:

- Who should be included in this?
- When can we get started?
- What needs to be sorted out first?
- What could get in the way?
- How will we get started?
- How should we promote this?
- What decisions need to be made?
- When will we review our progress?
- When will we review our progress?
- Other Questions

Place Post-it-Notes™
on the Next Steps chart

30-Day Action Steps	60-Day Action Steps	90-Day Action Steps
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LC Evaluation:

Date:

Location:

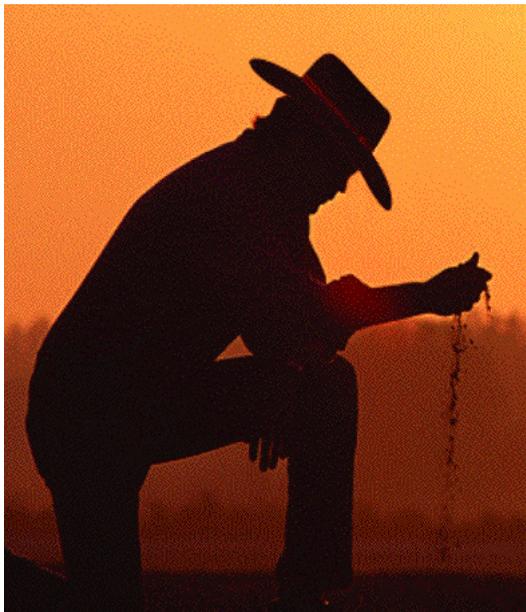
Questions:

1. What did you like most about the homework from the last Learning Community?

2. What did you like least about the homework from the last Learning Community?

3. How could we improve today's Learning Community experience?

4. How can we give you additional support for developing leadership skills in your own life and helping your church turn outward?



Me and the Harvest

1. How committed have I been to praying for people who need Jesus?
2. What have I done in the past month to help someone move closer to Christ?
3. What changes do I need to make in the next month to find time to be more outreach focused?
4. How did I keep the fire burning for outreach in our church this past month?
5. What have I learned about the community needs in this past month that our church could be poised to meet?
6. What's the most important outreach oriented action step I can take in this next month?