



Learning Community Eight

What Game Are We Playing?

20-30
minutes

Personal Check-in:

Facilitator Instructions: Read through Psalm 23 as a group and then work through the sharing questions below. After the discussion, pair up and spend a few minutes praying for each other.

Sharing Questions:

1. What “green pastures or quiet waters” are you currently experiencing?
2. In what ways has God rescued or guided you recently?
3. Are you experiencing the “presence of enemies” right now at all? If so, in what way?
4. What dark valley are you currently experiencing?



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. In the next 30 days, coordinate with your church to pay at least one unchurched, non-believer per week to visit your church and complete a visitor survey. Following the Book Review Questions you will find both an outline of how to approach recruiting the visitors as well as the Visitor Survey to be distributed. Come to the next learning community meeting prepared to discuss the highlights and findings of your surveys.

2. Read *Winning On Purpose* by John Kaiser and come prepared to discuss the Book Review questions.



30-45
minutes

Book Review Debrief:

Winning on Purpose by John Kaiser

1. What do you specifically like about the Accountable Leadership strategy?

2. What concerns do you have about the strategy?

3. What does your church need to do to become more clear about the "Object of the Game" (Ch. 4)?

4. What does your church need to do to become more clear about the "Rules of the Game"?

5. What would more effective accountability look like in your setting?



6. From Part 3 of the book, what needs to happen for your church to be more clear on:

- The role of the congregation in “playing ministry”?

- The role of the pastor in “playing leader”?

- The role of the board to “play Umpire, Cheerleader, Scorekeeper, and Commissioner”?

7. What steps do you need to take to implement the ideas advocated in Chapter 13 about scheduling, planning, and implementation? What is your time frame for implementing these ideas?

8. What are the three most important insights you have gained from this book that you want to implement?



Pay Someone to Critique Your Church

Handpick the person you want to participate in this survey. Find someone you or someone else in your group (or church) has a relationship with. It could be a waitress, a bartender, a coffee barista, a schoolmate, a co-worker, etc. Then have some fun when you issue the invitation. You can open with something like this:

Hey Debbie. I'm involved with a group of people who are trying to figure out why folks don't like church and why they tend to avoid Christians. We're tired of discussing it among ourselves, so we decided to get feedback from some people we like who don't regularly attend church. I was wondering if you'd be willing to do a survey for me. By the way, do you go to church regularly? [In this context, "regularly" means about once a month. If they say they do attend that often, ask where and say, "Wow, great!" Thank them and ask if they know someone who doesn't attend church. About 90 percent of the time, the first person you approach will meet the requirement.]

You don't attend regularly? Okay. I'd like you to come to our church (or Bible-study group or spiritual-support group) one time and tell us what your experience there is like. You'll have to attend a church service (or a group meeting) and fill out a survey. It'll take about an hour, but you don't have to participate or anything. All we ask is that you observe what's going on and then answer several written questions. We'll pay you twenty-five dollars for your help! Your insights are valuable to us, so it's worth it.

If the person says he doesn't care about the money, just say, "No, we really feel better about this if we can pay for your time." If he continues to push it, tell him, "We'll work it out." (Experience in this area says that a person will never refuse the money or a twenty-five dollar gift certificate on site.)

Assure him that this isn't a bait-and-switch deal in which someone will call or visit his home afterward without his permission. Tell him that you or one of your friends will sit with him during the service (or meeting) to answer any questions or explain anything he may be wondering about.

It's important that he feel you really want the information and aren't just setting him up. Be sure that you personally meet him at church and sit with him. Give him the survey at church, not before. Don't draw attention to him – "Hey, this is the guy we've hired to do that survey from a non-Christian's perspective!"

When the service (or meeting) is over, take his filled-out survey and give him a handwritten thank-you card with cash or a gift card inside. (Don't give him a check. Instant gratification is better!) Tell the person you'll touch base with him later that week- wherever you normally see the person. Then send the person on his way. You will pleasantly surprise the person by not pressuring him in any way.

Follow-Up

Read the survey responses and glean one or two insights. Share those insights with your church or small group. Ask fellow church members (or group members) to ask other unchurched persons if that information fits their perceptions as well.

Check back with your survey buddy about a week later to ask him or her about any "after" feelings. Stay connected with the person and use this experience as an on-ramp into his or her life.

Visitor Survey

Thanks for taking time to help us. We've asked you to give us your feedback because you don't attend our church regularly. While we appreciate positive feedback, we are primarily looking for constructive criticism. We want to see our church through your eyes. Please answer the following questions:

1. What were your very first impressions- how did you feel coming into "our space"? Nothing is too trivial to mention.

2. What is the name of the first person who introduced him or herself to you today? Did you know this person before you came here?

3. Was the building easy to find? How about our signs?
What would you do differently?

4. As you sit and observe us, do we seem sincere? Forced? Fake? Why

5. What do you think about our rituals (we call it a liturgy or a program)?

6. Are you able to understand why we do what we do? What do you think we're trying to do with our approach to "doing church"?

7. If applicable, write down the feelings you had watching people sing.

8. What was the speaker trying to get across in his or her talk?

Visitor Survey (continued)

9. On a scale of one to ten, with ten meaning “off the charts” and one meaning “boring”, how would you rank the following:

Singing _____

Preaching or speaking _____

Prayer and Scripture reading _____

Reciting creeds or other material in unison _____

Please explain your rankings:

10. What do you think we’re trying to accomplish in this meeting?

11. Check out our church program/ bulletin. If the program asks visitors to give their name and other information, how did you feel about that request?

12. If you were in charge of running this church, what are three things you would change right away? (Please be candid.)

1.

2.

3.

13. Tell us anything else we may have forgotten to ask about, but you think would be good for us to think about.



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?**



20
minutes

Learning Activity: What Game Are We Playing?

Facilitator Instructions: Draw the groups' attention to the article entitled "What Game Are We Playing?" Ask them to read slowly and to underline key thoughts and principles as they go. After everyone has finished ask the following discussion questions (either in pairs, triads, or as a group):

1. What ideas or principles stood out to you as you read the article?
2. What were you most challenged by personally from the article?
3. How do you think the conversation would go between you and Jesus concerning your church?

What Game Are We Playing?

Imagine for a moment that You had an opportunity to talk with Jesus about how things were going in your church. Just you and Jesus...one on one. And the nature of the conversation eventually comes around to His thoughts, observations, affirmations, and concerns related to your congregation. He's noticed some things that He wants you to pay attention to. He shares insights that have remarkable clarity and He offers counsel that is both forthright and empowering.

Judging from what God had to say to the churches listed in Revelation, your conversation with Jesus probably wouldn't go over much differently. He would commend you for things that He is pleased with. The praise and the appreciation would be lavish and sincere. And yet, Jesus would voice His concerns about your church that would need to be addressed. Historically, He had a knack for confronting stumbling blocks toward effective ministry. He was never bashful about calling a spade a spade.

For many churches, the conversations with Jesus would be fairly eye-opening.

Picture Him turning to Luke 5 to drive home some important truths about your church. The conversation might go something like this:

Do you remember the time I called Matthew to become one of My disciples? I told him to come and follow Me and Matthew walked right out of his tax collector booth. And then he decided to throw a huge party for Me at his house where he wanted Me to meet all of his tax collector buddies and other "friends". It was a marvelous day and a great celebration, except for a few side conversations that I had on that day. The Pharisees and other religious leaders became incredibly agitated with Me. They wanted to know why My disciples and I hung around so



many sinners. Why, they asked, did My followers not fast and pray more instead of going to so many parties!

I had to remind them that the people in Matthew's house were just the kind of people who needed Me. People who were from God were the ones that I wanted to befriend, to talk with, and to mix with. And beyond that, I wanted My disciples to get that message. I constantly looked for ways to reinforce the idea that lost people matter to God. They were always on My radar screen and I wanted My followers to truly have the heart and passion to become "fishers of men". But make no mistake: I was very frustrated with the religious leaders. They had become judgmental toward "sinners" and had no heart for those who were lost without God. Their apathy had spun their hearts into a carefully constructed cocoon, one that had insulated them from the very people that I had come to touch, heal, restore, and save.

So here's My concern as I look at your church. It feels like it has become more of a cocoon when it needs to be operating like a lighthouse. I want your church to have the inclusive heart of Matthew, not the exclusive heart of the Pharisees. It's like you have lost sight of what game you are playing. It's not about buildings, committees, rules, rituals, or by-laws. The game I want you to be playing is disciple-making. First and foremost, that is your mission as a church. It's got to be about the "tax collectors" in your world. Who are the "sinners" that you need to build friendships with? Whether it's your home, your workplace, your community sports team, the local Starbucks, or the local rec center...who in your world needs God's love? That is your mission; that is the game I want you to play.

Does any of this strike a chord with you? Does it hit a little too close to home? John Kaiser, in his very helpful book *Winning on Purpose*, uses the "game" imagery to challenge churches to consider how well they align with God's scorecard. He has this to say:

Congregations don't win by sporting the largest auditorium any more than sports teams win by congregating in the largest stadium. Congregations and teams win by reaching the goal...Success is achieving an intended outcome. Success in God's Church is achieving the outcome God intends. Another word for this outcome is mission. (p. 19)

So, what does it mean to win on purpose as a church? Let's explore that a little further by the framing of several key questions. Kaiser argues that shared ownership around the answers to these questions will help a congregation find and maintain vitality for years to come.



What game are we playing?

Is church about meeting the needs of those currently in the congregation or is about “them”? Are we helping move people closer to Christ or are we more concerned with other, peripheral issues? Are we more like a cocoon or a lighthouse? Are we more like Pharisees than we are like Matthew?

What does it mean to win? Do we really want to win?

This seems like an odd question when we think of “doing” church. But at the end of the quarter, or at the end of the year, or at the end of the next three years, what would we like to believe God could do in our midst? How important is it that we attract new people, start new groups or ministry initiatives, or baptize folks? Are we healthier and more vibrant as a congregation this year compared to last year?

How is the game played? What positions need to be filled? What position do I play on the team?

Here’s the real question: “Are we clear on how we want to do church and do we have the right people in the right positions?” Do we have a sense that we are in agreement on what is “in-bounds” and “out-of-bounds” regarding ministry priorities? We can’t do everything as a church, so what will our emphasis be?

Who leads the team? Should someone be held accountable for how the team is doing?

This a tricky one. Who leads what around here is an important question to sort out and to gain clarity on. What does accountability look like for the pastor, for the board, and for key ministry leaders? Are there consequences for consistent unperformance? And how clear are we on what outcomes we are shooting for as a church?



Do we have the resources needed to compete and improve? What does training look like?

Improvement takes a plan. When a congregation has a clear plan for the future it has made decisions about what it will and will not do. A plan means that we know what kind of resources, structures, and training we will need to accomplish what God is calling us to become.

So, let's return to our original thought. Based on your answers to the questions that have been listed on the following page, what would Jesus say to you about the health, direction, and priorities of your church? What would He commend you for, what would He affirm, and what would He challenge you to intentionally change in the next year?

20
minutes

Learning Activity: Assessing My Church

Facilitator Instructions: Give everyone 5-10 minutes to fill out the chart on the next page. After everyone has done some brainstorming, pair them up to discuss what they've written.

Instructions: Use the questions for the previous page to get you thinking about your church. The grid on page 10 has been provided to give you a place to capture some of your thoughts about the health and direction of your congregation. First, give yourself a score for each of the questions using the following scale and then re-read each question in the article to spark your thinking about areas of growth and opportunity for your church:



1= We're pretty foggy about how to answer this question

3= We have some clarity on how to answer this question

5= We're consistently clear on how to answer this question

Question	Score	Reasons for the score and issues that we might need to address
What game are we playing?		
What does it mean to win?		
How is the game played?		
Who leads the team?		
Do we have the resources needed to compete and improve?		



5
minutes

Homework and Wrap-Up

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

Homework Assignment:

1. **Option A:** To help your congregation “see and feel the need for a transformation” as Kotter describes in this chapter, you can create your own video like the one of the unhappy customer in the “Change of Heart” story or you can make a visual aid similar to the “stack of gloves”.

First, come up with a checklist of membership cards that people commonly carry in their wallets, such as auto club, library, insurance, or health club. Interview at least six people from your neighborhood, telling them that you are trying to learn about what organizations are providing valuable services and why. Ask them if they have a membership card for each organization on your list. For each yes answer, ask the person to tell the most important reason they are a member. Add to the list “Member of a local church” and if they indicate that they are, ask why. If the answer is “no”, feel free to ask why not if they are receptive.

If the person is open, feel free to ask if they know of your church and what their impression of it is. You can video tape the interview, take a snapshot of each interviewee to use as a “stack of gloves” visual aid, or simply make a display of various kinds of membership cards.

Show the video to your small group or church, or go through the photos or membership cards, possibly in a PowerPoint presentation, reading aloud the name of the interviewee, what their membership card is, and their reason(s) for being a card-carrying member. Discuss why your church is like each of these clubs in your sermon or as part of a small group discussion. For example: “Our church is much more than a club, but there are needs that these clubs meet that motivate people to join them that are similar to some of the needs our church meets. Could we say our church is like the auto club because you can call us for a lift if you run out of gas—spiritually or physically?”

Option B: Print out some business-size cards with the name of your church and its information on one side. Pass out one card to each person and ask that they turn them over and write at least one important reason for being a card-carrying member of your church. If used in a small group, you can discuss what each person wrote. If used in a church service, instruct the people to put the card in their wallet or purse for future reference when someone asks them why they go to your church or as a reminder to invite someone to visit. Alternately, you could ask people to write up two cards and collect one to read through with your leadership team to see what people would tell others about their membership in your church.

2. Read *Managing Transitions* by William Bridges and complete the Book

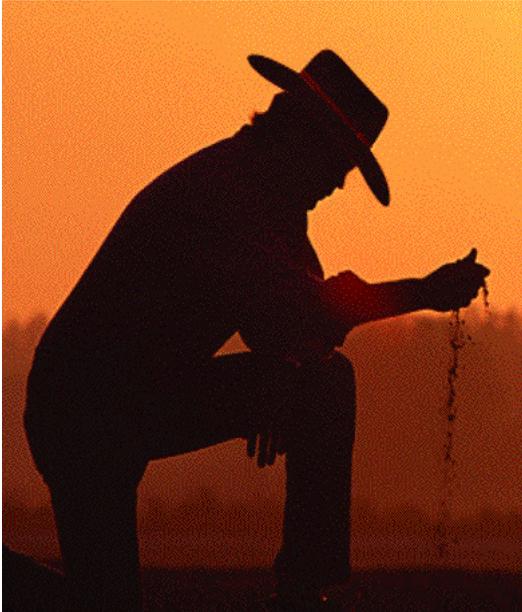


6. What would it look like for you to set up a “Transition Monitoring Team” per Bridges’ suggestion (Appendix C)?

7. How were you personally challenged by *Managing Transitions*?

8. What are your five most important take-away insights from the book?

9. What are two of your favorite quotes about managing transitions from the book?



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?