



DISCOVERY SESSION



Use the QR code to visit the **Discovery Session resources page**.

Here, you'll find video segments of the teaching and downloadable resources to equip you as you prepare to form your team and lead them into Retreat 1.

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Dear Pastor,

After more than eighteen years of evangelistic ministry, I felt God leading me into a pastoral position. The door of opportunity opened in North Little Rock, and after the affirmative vote, Johanna, Lizette and I prepared to move from what we had known (the ministry of full-time evangelism) into the unknown.

Then reality set in.

I had absolutely no pastoral experience. There was so much I didn't know and had never experienced. I felt so inadequate, fearful, and unprepared! Although I lacked administrative and pastoral experience, God blessed, and a church that had been plateaued for several years began to grow. As people were being saved, it became apparent that the discipling process my ministry as an evangelist left to the local church was now my responsibility.

The itinerant ministry schedule I kept as an evangelist was more event driven. But now we needed the spiritual results gained from those exciting and productive events to be sustained by creating a biblical process that included these elements:

- Leadership training
- Assimilation processes
- Lay ministry involvement
- Discipleship development
- A strategy to fulfill our mission

As we blended the Spirit with strategic planning, a church health template emerged that has become the Acts 2 Journey.

This Discovery Session will introduce you to the Acts 2 Journey cohort. Its biblically based, transferrable principles are flexible, adaptable, effective and have been used by hundreds of churches, regardless of size or location.



Alton Garrison

Assessing Current Reality

Like any organization, local churches have a life cycle—a predictable pattern of birth, growth, and even decline.

We need to discover where our church is on its life cycle without finding fault or blame.

The following exercise, which you will repeat with your team at Retreat 1, is designed to provide an opportunity for your team to discuss your church's current reality.

Completing this assessment in advance will help you to focus on facilitating discussion among your team members when they are invited to offer their own perspective at the first Retreat.

Assessing Current Reality Chart

In each **row** in the chart below, circle two statements that best describe your church.

ROW 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Positive, supportive attitude ▪ Uncertainty of future demands ▪ Visionary with high commitment level 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Strong sense of mission and purpose among every member ▪ High level of “ownership” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ High visibility and understanding of purpose and missions ▪ Common purpose throughout ministries of the church 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Lowering of members’ understanding of purpose ▪ New members do not sense church’s purpose 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Purpose is lost ▪ Mission is not understood
ROW 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Mutual dependency requires everyone to be involved or leave ▪ All members willing to work 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ High percentage of individuals’ time and identity committed to the church ▪ Volunteers easily found 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ New members quickly find a place to become involved ▪ High level of enthusiasm among membership for participation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Members assume others can get the job done ▪ More paid staff to “enhance” ministries ▪ Original members feel “We have done our part” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Programs eliminated for lack of participation ▪ Difficult to find volunteers ▪ 10 percent of members do 90 percent of work
ROW 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Minimal organization ▪ Spontaneity in decision making 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Function of ministry determines form ▪ Structure created in response to needs ▪ Traditions begin to form 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ New programs created to respond to new needs ▪ Delegation begins ▪ New roles and responsibilities created 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Few new programs added ▪ Forms of ministry begin to determine function ▪ Structure creates needs rather than responds to needs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Programs deleted for lack of funds ▪ Primary goal is preservation/survival
ROW 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Members are receptive ▪ Objectives are quickly accomplished 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Changes easily adopted and integrated ▪ Suggestions from all levels of membership 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ New proposals given serious consideration ▪ Church leaders responsible for initiating and implementing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Few changes proposed ▪ Few changes considered that radically depart from status quo 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ “We’ve never done it that way before” ▪ Rationalizations often made for why things can’t be done
ROW 5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Morale is high ▪ Self-esteem is in the process of being formulated 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Morale is higher ▪ Self-esteem easily affected by circumstance and short-term successes/failures 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Morale is highest ▪ Self-esteem at its highest level ▪ Confidence is contagious that goals can be reached 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Morale polarizes into groups of high and low ▪ Self-esteem develops uncertainties 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Few have high morale ▪ Frustration and/or despair by leaders in not knowing how to stop decline ▪ Self-esteem lowers
TOTAL					

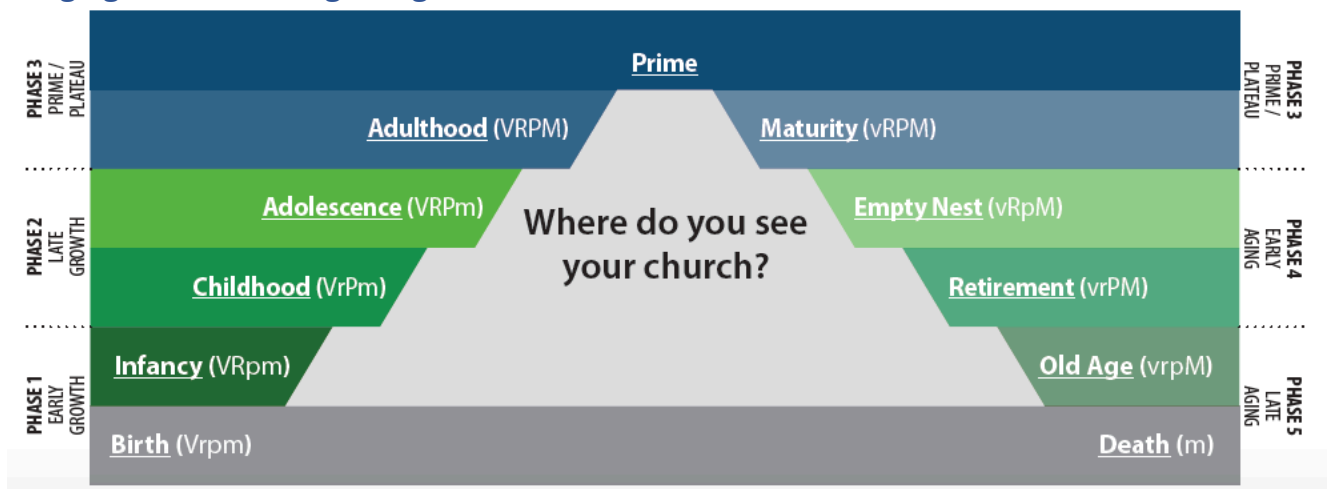
_____ is the current understanding of God’s preferred future for a congregation that is cast by leadership and owned by membership.

_____ refer to activities to include people in the life of the church such as evangelism, outreach, assimilation, and discipleship.

_____ are the functional attempts to provide projects, ministries, services, activities, and training for people connected to the congregation.

_____ refers to the systems and structures that work to undergird the fulfillment of vision, and the implementation of relationships and programs. It includes the administration of resources, day-to-day operations, and overall efficiency.

Congregational Life Stage Diagram



“The Life Cycle and Stages of Congregational Development,” George Bullard, 2001. Used by permission.

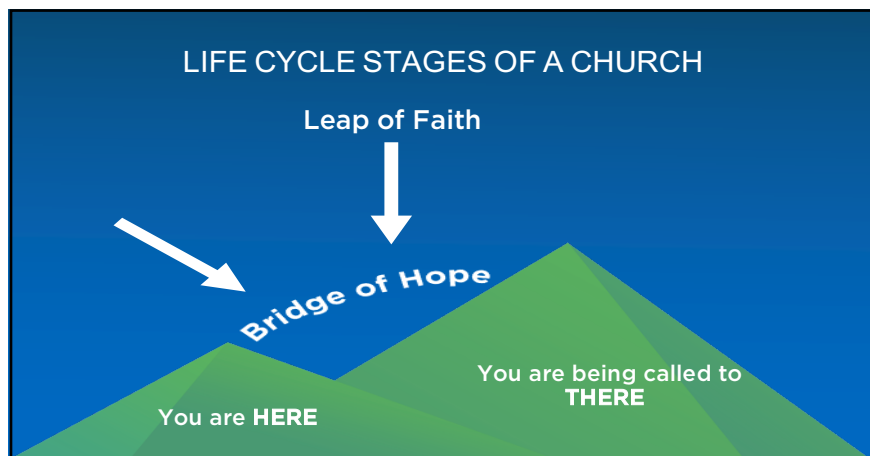
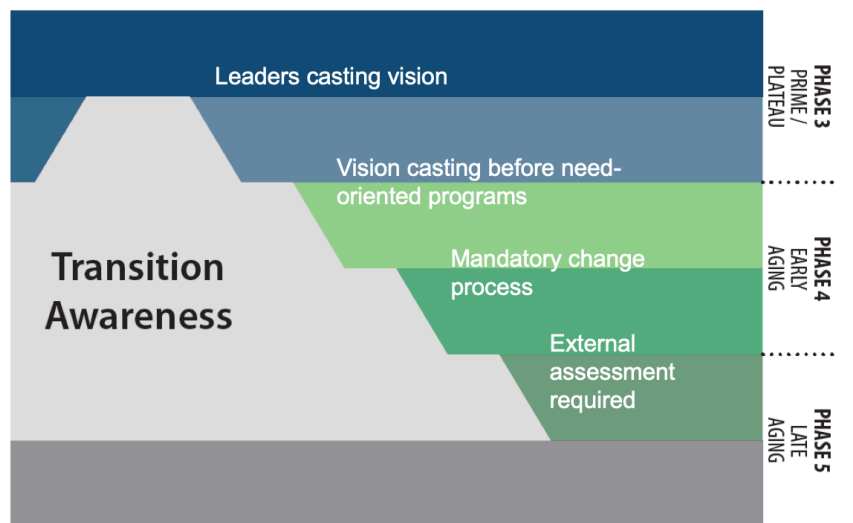
PHASE 1 EARLY GROWTH	Birth	Vision is the driver; relationships, programs, and management are not fully developed.
	Infancy	Vision and relationships are dominant.
PHASE 2 LATE GROWTH	Childhood	Vision and programs are the focus. (Shift focus from Relationships to Programs)
	Adolescence	Vision, relationships, and programs are emphasized. It is often a time of growth.
PHASE 3 PRIME/ PLATEAU	Adulthood	Vision, relationship, programs, and management are all fully developed.
	Maturity	Vision is no longer dominant. Relationships, programs, and management are the focus.
PHASE 4 EARLY AGING	Empty Nest	Vision and programs not dominant. Management drives the direction of the church.
	Retirement	Vision and relationships are minimized as the church renews its focus on programs.
PHASE 5 LATE AGING	Old Age	Management is the only factor that is still dominant or fully developed.
	Death	The congregation ceases functioning as a spiritual and vibrant faith community.

After you finish adding the circled statements in each column of the Assessing Current Reality chart, here's how to determine your place on the life cycle diagram:

- Column 1 = Phase 1,
- Column 2 = Phase 2,
- Column 3 = Phase 3, etc.

The column with the largest number determines the church's phase on the life cycle.

If each person has reached a different conclusion about the church's current reality, discussion should occur until consensus can be determined. For the next 15–20 minutes, have everyone share where they see the church. By the end of the discussion, teams should come to an agreement regarding the church's current reality.



Three Steps for Initiating Change

1. Explore the true _____.
 - _____ is better than _____.
 - Your _____ for the urgency is the single biggest reason your team will accept change.
2. Build the right _____.
 - People who _____, _____, _____, and _____
3. Ask the best _____.
 - What is our _____?
 - To fulfill our vision, what must our _____ be?
 - What _____ will it take to fulfill our vision?
 - What should we _____ doing?
 - What should we do _____?
 - What should we _____ doing?
 - When will we _____?

On the Discovery Session resources page, download a gifts assessment to help you get to know the gift mix of the Vision Team you select. The gifts assessment centers on four areas:

A – Abilities

C – Calling

T – Temperament

S – Spiritual Gifts

Five Levels of Leadership

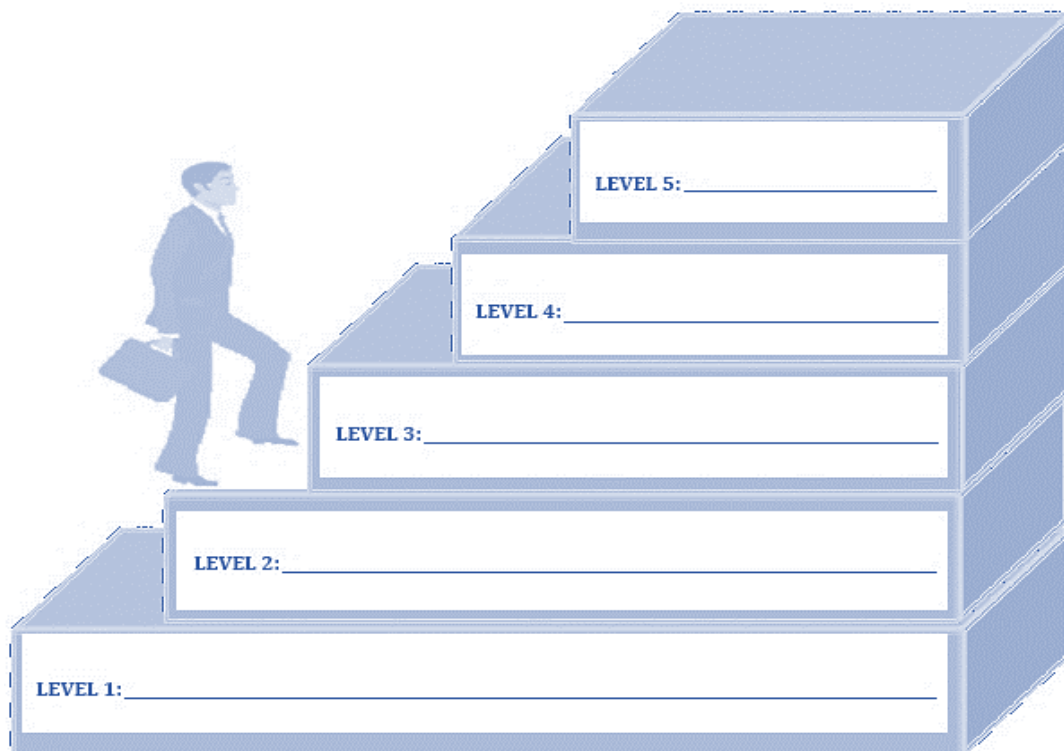
In *Developing the Leader Within You*, John Maxwell defines leadership as influence and outlines five levels of leadership that must be mastered to achieve the highest level of influence.

Level 1: Position (Rights)

- People follow the leader because they have to.
- The pastor's influence is based on the authority of the pastor's position or title.
- People will do no more than is required.
- Activity at this level can be self-centered.
- You can't lead change at this level.

Level 2: Permission (Relationships)

- People follow the pastor because they want to.
- The pastor's influence grows as trust and respect deepen.
- People believe the pastor is competent and believe the pastor cares.
- Activity at this level can be fellowship centered.
- You will struggle to lead change at this level.



LEADING TRANSFORMATION

To move from LEVEL 1 to LEVEL 2:

- ◆ Demonstrate competence.
- ◆ Grow spiritually, physically, and relationally.
- ◆ Do not use force to control.

To move from LEVEL 2 to LEVEL 3:

- ◆ Build a solid leadership team.
- ◆ Create a shared vision and a plan of action.
- ◆ Acquire and allocate resources.

To move from LEVEL 3 to LEVEL 4:

- ◆ Put people over programs.
- ◆ Intentionally invest in developing others.
- ◆ Be willing to make tough calls.

To move from LEVEL 4 to LEVEL 5:

- ◆ Be consistent.
- ◆ Share knowledge and wisdom.
- ◆ Create a succession plan.

Level 3: Production (Results)

- People follow the pastor because of what is being done for the church.
- The pastor's influence expands as the pastor accomplishes church goals.
- The pastor communicates vision, and the congregation sees fruit.
- Activity at this level can be task centered.
- You can successfully initiate and lead change at this level.

Level 4: People Development (Reproduction)

- People follow the pastor because of what is being sown into individuals.
- The pastor's influence soars as people are empowered.
- The pastor intentionally invests in developing and mentoring leaders.
- Activity at this level can be program or meeting centered.

Level 5: Personhood (Respect)

- People follow the pastor because of who the pastor is and what the pastor stands for.
- The pastor's influence extends beyond the pastor's lifetime.
- The pastor is honored and respected because of his or her commitment and consistency over many years.
- Activity at this level can be succession centered.

Where Most Pastors Start: Level 1

Many pastors have the authority to lead, but at this level they do not have the respect or buy-in necessary to lead a major change initiative.

Where Most Pastors Get Stuck: Level 2

When pastors are accepted and well liked, they believe their role is to make everyone happy; they ultimately sacrifice progress for peace and become more interested in delivering good news than truth.

Where Pastors Must Be to Lead Transformation: Level 3 and Beyond!

It is only when pastors reach at least level 3 leadership that they have the skills, influence, "wins," and courage necessary to lead a successful transformation effort.

The Acts 2 Journey Cohort: Overview

RETREAT

1

**“Why do we exist?”
and “Where are we going?”**

The team focuses on congregational realities; embraces its mission; and develops the unique, motivating, and guiding vision statement.

RETREAT

2

“How should we behave?”

The team discovers the church’s individual DNA and the values that will determine how the church utilizes its resources.

RETREAT

3

“How do we achieve our goals?”

The team constructs a strategic plan based on the Acts 2 template: (Connect, Grow, Serve, Go, and Worship).

RETREAT

4

“Launching the vision”

Each team presents its three-year strategic plan and receives instruction on practical ways to communicate vision.

Each cohort is made up of multiple churches that have committed to attend four weekend retreats over the span of 9 to 12 months. They have also committed to the participation of the lead pastor (and spouse), and a team that consists of other church leaders and key influencers (5 to 15 members is ideal). In the time between the retreats, the church teams meet regularly on their own to work on the assignments given at each retreat.

The quality of leadership by the lead pastor throughout this transformation journey is critical! This is why each retreat weekend has two components:

- **Friday** afternoon or evening (approx. 3 to 4 hours) is dedicated to provide teaching to lead pastors and their spouses about important aspects of their leadership development related to time management, conflict resolution, leading change, and building teams. This will better equip them to lead their team through the process outside the retreat because the facilitators are not present at those meetings, and the church team needs to begin looking to their lead pastor for leadership in these areas rather than depending upon the A2J facilitators.
- **Saturday** is for the lead pastor and their team to attend and receive instruction on the keys for successful congregational transformation.

Our Current Life Cycle Stage: _____

1. **Birth:** The Birth stage is driven by the expression of a passionate God-given Vision concerning the life of the newly emerging congregation. Relationships, Programs, and Management activities are happening, but they are not fully developed at this stage. Leadership is expressed through vision, and assists in fueling the forward progress of the congregation.
2. **Infancy:** Vision and Relationships are dominant. The expression of discipleship patterns that focus on worship, spiritual development, and the formation of warm and rich relationship patterns or a sense of true community in the congregation characterize infancy. During Infancy the passion of the congregation to fulfill its vision will increase as people discover their role in this exciting spiritual and strategic journey. Out of this passion people readily volunteer to do the work of the congregation because their congregation has the character of a movement they very much want to enhance and empower. Healthy patterns of worship, evangelism, discipleship, leadership development, and ministry and missions are established during this stage.
3. **Childhood:** This stage focuses on Vision and Programs. Childhood is initiated by the realization that the congregation is succeeding, but that its programs, ministries, and activities are unorganized and not developed in a form that will allow the congregation to reach its maximum potential. The energy that was going into the development of deep, meaningful Relationships is now focused on developing and implementing the Programs structure for the congregation.
4. **Adolescence:** During this stage, Vision, Relationships, and Programs are all emphasized. It is often a time of a great crescendo of qualitative and quantitative growth. The congregation is able to relax following five to six years of program development and implementation. People can enjoy their relationship with God and one another. It is also a time of some chaos as people begin to multiply the dreams they have for the future of the congregation, and the core dream or vision of the congregation may appear fuzzy.
5. **Adulthood:** Vision, Relationships, Programs, and Management—are all fully developed. The congregation is ready to soar as a fully development spiritual community with great resources and the proper balance or alignment of these resources.
6. **Maturity:** Maturity is when Vision is no longer dominant or fully developed. The congregation is no longer living out the vision that God has given them. They are, instead, living out the patterns of Relationships, Programs, and Management they have developed. Without the fueling and driving aspects of Vision, the congregation is being motivated by Management. At the same time, Maturity may be a very high quality stage in the life of the congregation. There continues to be a crescendo of quality, even if Vision is diminished. Often congregations will plateau numerically during Maturity.
7. **Empty Nest:** Empty Nest is when Vision and Programs are no longer dominant. The congregation is experiencing disintegration of the quality and quantity of programs, ministries, and activities. Management is driving the direction of the congregation. Relationships, while still vital, are turning increasingly inward in their focus.
8. **Retirement:** Retirement is when Vision and Relationships are no longer dominant or fully developed. Management is driving the direction of the congregation. Programs are once again dominant as congregations seek to revitalize their programs, ministries, and activities.
9. **Old Age:** Old Age is when Vision, Relationships, and Programs are no longer dominant or fully developed. Management is the only factor that is still dominant or fully developed. As such the habit or pattern, generally at a mediocre level, drives the direction of the congregation.
10. **Death:** Death is when a congregation ceases functioning as a Christ-centric faith community with regular worship, discipleship, and fellowship activity