

Identifying Our Church's Uniqueness

Instructor's Guide



*Vibrant Church Renewal
USA/Canada Evangelism Ministries
Church of the Nazarene, International*

Acknowledgements

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Identifying Our Church's Uniqueness

The table below identifies each module section, the time allotted for each section, and a brief description of the section's objective. When you are familiar with this module, you may want to teach from this page rather than the detailed information.

Section	Time	Page	Brief Description
I. Introduction	5 mins.	5	Introduce objectives, outline.
II. Lecture	20 mins.	6	Facilitator presents information that will help participants identify their church's strengths and what their church can offer the unchurched.
III. Small Group Exercise	15 mins.	8	Participants work in teams to reflect on the information presented in the lecture and begin applying the concepts.
IV. Discussion	10 mins.	8	Participants share thoughts about the information presented and insights about how the information will assist in their leadership.
V. Action Planning/ Reporting	20 mins.	9	Participants begin preparing for their homework assignment: Interview people who have visited, returned, and continue to worship at your church to determine why they initially came, what caused them to return, and why they decided to continue attending the church.
VI. Wrap-up	5 mins.	10	Close the module with your final comments regarding the topic.
Total Time: 75 mins.			

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Preparation Checklist

Build enthusiasm for the training module. Vibrant Church Renewal requires buy-in from people in the church. Use announcements, fliers, posters, etc. to prepare participants for the topic and build their interest. Speak to key stakeholders in person to encourage their support of this initiative.

Review the material in this guide and make notes of specific areas for special emphasis.

- This guide includes a copy of corresponding slides to help you facilitate the presentation.
- The guide includes suggested narrative at points where instructions or transitions are important. The suggested narrative is the *italics*. Even experienced facilitators might want to use the suggested narrative to insure the key information is communicated. However, you may feel more comfortable using your own words as you become more familiar with the topic.
- Make copies of the participant handout for each person. This handout includes “fill-in-the-blanks” sections. The appropriate answers are underlined in this instructor guide.

Check the classroom for:

- Computer/projector
- Chalkboard or flip chart
- Sufficient tables and chairs for the participants
- Copies of the participant handout for each person
- Pens/pencils for participants

Arrange the room so that each church team sits around an individual table and you have ample room to move among the teams.

I. Introduction (5 Minutes)

Prior to the beginning of the session, adjust the projector and show slide #1 (Identifying Our Church’s Uniqueness).

Distribute participant handouts.

Let the participants know the material is theirs to keep and encourage them to take notes. The participant material includes:

- purpose
- objectives
- “fill-in-the-blanks” for the lecture
- application exercises

The purpose of this module is to raise the value of the local church in the minds of its key leaders.

The objectives for this module are:

- Articulate the strengths of the local church.
- Identify ways be which God might use His church in the community.
- Raise the self-esteem of members and leadership in the local church.

Review the schedule for this module:

Introduction	5 mins.
Lecture	20 mins.
Small Group Exercise	15 mins.
Discussion	10 mins.
Action Planning	20 mins.
Wrap-up	5 mins.

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Slide 1

Slides 2-3

Slide 4

II. Lecture (20 Minutes)

- I. Vibrant church renewal attempts to rediscover how God wants to work in your local church.
- A. Church Growth is not just about numbers, but the exploration of how to free God to minister through us.
 - B. God says, "I will build my church."
 - 1. Why then are most churches declining in America?
 - a. The church cannot relate to the world.
 - b. The church is afraid of the world.
 - c. The world does not see the church as relevant.
 - d. Although everyone acknowledges the spiritual many find substitutes for God.
 - e. The church focuses on meeting members' needs.
 - 2. Although Hades cannot prevail against the church, the church can unknowingly fail to become effective servants of God.
 - C. God has given His church unique characteristics that appeal to a lost world.
 - 1. God gives spiritual gifts to the church through persons.
 - 2. God provides resources sufficient to impact a community.
- II. Each church is unique.
- A. Large churches can become full-service churches, i.e. they can provide lots of ministries aimed at a variety of human needs.
 - 1. Senior adult ministries
 - 2. A significant youth ministry

Slides 5-9

Slides 10-12

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3. A singles ministry
- B. Small churches must find their niche in the church market.
 1. Small churches usually do 1-3 things well.
 2. Almost all small churches major on relationships.

Shopping centers have two big department stores at both ends of the mall. Specialty shops which sell the same items are found throughout the mall.

How do specialty shops stay in business between the large stores? What do they offer?

III. Small Group Exercise (15 Minutes)

This exercise provides an opportunity for the teams to discuss the information presented and how it applies to their church.

Work with the team members from your church to complete the six questions on this slide which are also on the back of your participant handout. You will have 15 minutes to complete the questions.

Remain available during the exercise time to answer questions. Announce to the group when five minutes remain. Again announce to the group when two minutes remain.

Slide 13

Questions:

1. What do we as a church believe our strengths to be? In other words, what do we do well?
2. How would we describe positively our congregation to a person who had never attended our church?
3. What percentage of people in our community knows we exist?
4. What do people in the community think of our church? What is our reputation?
5. How does God feel about our church?
6. Why has God placed us as a church in this community?

IV. Discussion (10 Minutes)

The discussion provides an opportunity for people to share their thoughts about the lecture and how their church is unique.

Call the group back together and open the floor for discussion. Encourage groups to share their answers to the questions they discussed during the exercise.

Two additional questions to start the discussion are:

What new ideas or thoughts did God reveal to you?

What new techniques will you begin using because of the discussion you've had today?

V. Action Planning/Reporting (20 Minutes)

For the next 20 minutes, participants prepare to take action to discover their church's uniqueness. Describe the "homework" exercise and then allow groups time to plan interviews with churchgoers and next steps for their group.

Participants can report the results of the activities at their next meeting if one is planned.

When we know what works—it's easier to build on our strengths! The homework assignment for this module is to interview people who have visited, returned, and continue to worship at your church to determine why they initially came, what caused them to return, and why they decided to continue attending the church. What ministries of the local congregation are beneficial to them?

Let's take about 15 minutes to discuss who you will interview, what questions you will ask, and how you will use the information gathered during your interviews. In your teams discuss and document how you will complete this assignment before we meet again. Use scratch paper to write interview questions and develop an action plan for your church. You will probably need to continue this discussion when you return home.

Move among the groups to answer specific questions. Listen for discussions that are not focused on developing a plan and guide them into developing a plan. Let the groups know when there are five minutes remaining and ask them to begin to conclude their discussions. Let them know when only two minutes remain.

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Slide 14

VI. Wrap-up (5 minutes)

This section provides an opportunity to close the module.

- Ask participants to share their thoughts about the module.
- Remind the participants to record their results and be prepared to share the progress at the next session.
- Answer any questions and provide encouragement for the next steps they have identified.

Slide 15