



Instructor's Guide

Raising the Morale of a Plateaued Congregation

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

Acknowledgements



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Raising the Morale of a Plateaued Congregation

Section	Time	Page	Brief Description
I. Introduction	5 min.	5	Introduce objectives, outline.
II. Lecture	20 min.	6	Facilitator presents information that will help participants assess their congregation and identify areas for growth and development.
III. Case Study	10 min.	9	Participants work individually to reflect on the information presented in the lecture and begin applying the concepts.
IV. Morale Inventory	15 min.	10	Participants share thoughts about the information presented and plan how they will utilize the new concepts in their church.
V. Wrap-up	5 min.	11	Close the module with your final comments regarding the topic.
Total Time: 55 min.			

The table above 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.

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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 notation of corresponding slides to help you facilitate the presentation.
- 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 (Raising the Morale of a Plateaued Congregation) and #2 (Credits).

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 guide leadership in raising congregational morale.

The outcomes of this module are to:

- Re-energize the local community of Christ.
- Lift an emotionally sagging congregation.
- Revitalize the leadership team.

Review the schedule for this module:

Introduction	5 mins.
Lecture	20 mins.
Self-Assessment	10 mins.
Action Planning	15 mins.
Wrap-up	5 mins.

Slides 1-2

Slides 3-4

Slide 5

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II. Lecture (20 Minutes)

High morale attracts people and spurs spiritual and numerical growth. Low morale precedes and is sustained in decline. When people start the silent vote of walking, morale declines even more.

Leadership can address and change the morale of a congregation.

What builds morale in your congregation?

- How do leaders infuse enthusiasm into a deflated atmosphere?
- What pumps new life into old structures?
- What increases excitement and expectancy?
- What brings people together in unity?

I. Building Trust

A. Make it a consistent practice to be faithful and reliable.

1. Return phone calls.
2. Respond to questions and concerns.
3. Keep promises.
4. Make sure your “yes” means yes.
5. Maintain boundaries to protect your integrity.

B. Work together on the priorities of the church board and the Sunday School Discipleship Ministries Board.

C. Building Trust: For example note a continuum of increasing power coming from increasing trust.

- Priest—when a minister comes to a congregation the responsibilities are public including ceremonies such as worship, weddings, funerals.
- Pastor—when a minister cares for people, the pastor garners the love and trust of the congregation.
- Prophet—when a minister has earned the trust of the people, the minister may become a change-agent, serving a prophetic role.

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Notes

- D. Do not confuse love for trust.
 - 1. Most congregations love their leaders.
 - 2. Leaders can mistake love for trust.
 - 3. Love is a gift given while trust is an earned relationship.
- E. The pastor of integrity will acquire increased amounts of good will and loyalty.

II. Contagious Expectation

- A. Develop a deep faith in the life-changing power of the Gospel.
 - 1. Sustain an undying optimism in God's ability to produce changes.
 - 2. Remind yourself of the relentless work of the Holy Spirit to teach.
- B. Anticipate God ministering through your leadership team.
 - 1. Most often when God and His people get together great things happen.
 - 2. God's Spirit constantly and consistently guides His people.
- C. Implement ministries that touch the hearts and lives of the unchurched.
 - 1. The scripture says Jesus went about doing good (Acts 10:38).
 - 2. When we engage in ministries of kindness and encouragement, we move next to the hearts of people.
 - 3. People tell of how God has provided and His people care.
 - 4. Goodness and kindness are contagious.

III. Keep the Unity

- A. Christians unite around the Spirit.
 - 1. The scripture points to the importance of unity: "Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace" (Eph. 4:3).
 - 2. Internal conflict devastates congregations.
 - 3. Sustaining unity and keeping peace describes what churches do.

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Notes

- B. Unity includes diversity.
 - 1. Unity is mistakenly thought to be agreement.
 - 2. Uniformity and unity are not the same.
 - 3. The church is to value differences and varying perspectives.
 - C. Problem-producing people are to be corrected.
 - 1. Establish norms of preferred behavior.
 - 2. Expect conduct to reflect Christian gentleness, kindness, humility.
 - 3. Ask, “How can we keep this from happening again?”
 - D. Agree upon methods for resolving conflict.
 - 1. Apply Matthew 18:15-17 as a pattern for dealing with difficulties.
 - 2. Assemble a team of people who will address unaltered behavior.
- IV. Multiply good experiences.
- A. Serve unselfishly—become other-concerned.
 - B. Strive toward excellence in ministry—efficiency turned inward is not excellence.
 - C. Plan and execute successful events.
- V. God-given achievement . . .
- A. Usually results from a high level of spiritual health.
 - B. Overcomes the danger of a stagnant atmosphere (institutionalism).
 - C. Is a sign of His presence, power and blessing.

¹⁵ “If your brother or sister sins, go and point out their fault, just between the two of you. If they listen to you, you have won them over. ¹⁶ But if they will not listen, take one or two others along, so that ‘every matter may be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses.’ ¹⁷ If they still refuse to listen, tell it to the church; and if they refuse to listen even to the church, treat them as you would a pagan or a tax collector. (Matthew 18: 15-17)

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III. Case Study (10 Minutes)

This exercise provides an opportunity for participants to reflect on the information presented and begin to apply it to a case study of a fictitious congregation. Starting with a case study will allow participants to gain comfort with the material in an impersonal scenario. This will give them greater confidence in

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the next step of the lesson, conducting a morale inventory of their local congregation.

Let's look at a church that is having problems with low morale: First Church. Work in small groups of three to five people to read and respond to the case study in the participant handout. You may choose to have a group member read the study aloud to your group, or you may each read it individually. You will have 15 minutes to read and then respond to the observations that follow. I will tell you when you have 5 and 2 minutes remaining.

Remain available during the reading and discussion time to answer questions. Announce to the participants when five minutes remain. Again announce when two minutes remain.

The case study follows as it appears in the participant guide:

First Church in Crisis

"There are so many Nazarenes over in Faith Church," said Bob a forty-six year old construction worker. "In fact, there are more Nazarenes in that 1,000 member church than in the five Nazarene churches on this end of the district. I think they don't want the commitment required in our church. They can go to that church and not put out any effort."

"I'm not so sure," said Barbara. "When we came to town we went over there. That church was alive! We seriously considered attending there. If we hadn't had strong ties with our denomination, we'd be going there today."

"We have been attending there," chimed in Roger. "While we consider First Church our church, we just can't handle all the negativity here. Some have mastered the art of complaining. I don't know how the pastor tolerates it. We just got tired of hearing it."

"I remember when Pastor Davis was here," noted Barbara. "We really had hopes of some excellent things happening. We were laying plans for growth. Our church building would have been

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built if the recession had not hit us. When the building plans were not completed, something went out of our congregation.”

“I think the problem is that we don’t have very many committed people. Just a few are doing all the work. When it comes to finances, some are sacrificing; others aren’t giving much at all.”

“I think we should go back to what we used to do ten years ago. At that time we were really growing. I don’t think our worship services are as reverent as they used to be. Our prayers meetings used to be three times the size they are now. And we were a smaller church.”

Discussion of the Case Study

Discuss the following observations in your small group:

- *A critical spirit has arisen in the congregation.*
- *People have checked out and are less involved.*
- *The negative people are now in power because, they are right, namely “something must be wrong.”*

How can our leadership better address our moral issues? What changes would result in greater enthusiasm and corporation? What could leaders do to heighten a feeling of fellowship?

If you were consulting with leadership from First Church, what steps would you suggest they take moving forward? Discuss your advice for them in your small group. Use this space to make some notes about your recommendations for this church in crisis.

If time allows, you can invite small groups to share their thoughts and discuss the case study as a large group before moving on to the next activity. Participants will benefit from hearing how other groups respond to the case study and what other suggest as possible steps toward raising the morale of “First Church.”

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IV. Morale Inventory (15 Minutes)

Conducting a morale inventory provides an opportunity for people to share their thoughts about the lecture and to apply what they have learned to their local congregation. By locating areas for improvement in the local church, leadership will feel empowered to make necessary changes. A shared perspective on the current morale will build capacity for improvement.

For this portion of the module, participants can work in the same small groups of three to five people as the previous exercise.

Instruct groups to use the remaining time to begin completing the inventory worksheet in the participant guide. If the work is not completed in the session, it can be continued at a subsequent meeting set by the group.

You may want to encourage participants to think beyond their personal experiences in the church and to imagine how others who are new to the church or less invested might respond to the inventory.

The inventory worksheet from the participant guide follows:

Score each of the following "morale indicators" for your local congregation on a scale of one to five.

5=All of the time 4=Most of the time 3=Some of the time
2=Rarely 1=Not at all

Morale Indicators	1	2	3	4	5
<i>Our church has a high level of "self-esteem."</i>					
<i>Churchgoers are proud of the impact we make in our community.</i>					
<i>People are enthusiastic about worship services and events.</i>					
<i>Newcomers are invited into fellowship circles.</i>					
<i>Lay leaders support the church's ministry and speak positively about it.</i>					
<i>People talk about the church's future plans and growth as opposed to dwelling on the past.</i>					

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<i>The congregation is increasing in size.</i>					
<i>The church has strong outreach programs that extend into the community.</i>					
<i>Internal communication is accurate and complete.</i>					
<i>There is a feeling of economic well-being regarding church finances.</i>					
<i>The physical care of the building meets the needs of the church.</i>					
<i>Church leadership has a vision for the future that goes beyond "either/or" thinking.</i>					

Now, pick two or three of the morale indicators above where your congregation's score shows room for improvement. Complete the table below to begin planning a response—both personally and as a leadership team—to raise morale in your church.

<i>Area for improvement</i>	<i>Actions I can take personally to improve morale in this area</i>	<i>Actions we can take as a leadership team to improve morale in this area</i>
1.		
2.		
3.		

VI. Wrap-up (5 minutes)

This section provides an opportunity to close the module.

- Ask participants to share their thoughts about the module.
- If time allows, they may share the results of their “morale inventory” with other groups.
- Answer any questions and provide encouragement for the next steps and improvements groups have identified.

Slide 15

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