

STUDY GUIDE FOR *PATIENT CATALYST*

LESSON 1 (Chapters 1-3)

Introduction: “Restoring What Has Been Lost” and Season One: The Engagement, A Time to Discern a Call

Chapter 1. “Restoring What Has Been Lost”

1. Which of the five seasons do you believe you and your church are in? What makes you think so?

Chapter 2. Asking the Right Questions

1. In your opinion, what are some of the most important questions for a pastoral candidate to ask during the engagement season?
2. If you are a pastor, what question(s) do you wish you had asked your congregation before you accepted their call?

Chapter 3. Understanding the Starting Point

1. What have you discovered about the revitalization “starting point” of your church? Does knowing the starting point of your church encourage or discourage you as you consider its revitalization?
2. How does recognizing the size culture of your church help you understand the revitalization process?
3. Regardless of the size culture of your church, what are some of the greatest challenges you face in its renewal? What are the greatest opportunities?

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LESSON 2 (Chapters 4-5)

Season Two: The Honeymoon. A Time to Build Trust

Chapter 4. Laying a Foundation of Trust

1. What is the purpose of the honeymoon season in the pastor-congregation relationship? Do you feel that your church understands this?
2. What are some of the ways the author lists to build trust in the honeymoon season?
3. What has been your most valuable honeymoon trust-building lesson?
4. The author relates his struggle to accept some of his church's traditions. What has been your experience with your church's traditions?
5. What have you learned from studying your church's historical documents?

Chapter 5. Avoiding Pitfalls

1. Which of the nine pitfalls do you think are the most critical for a revitalization pastor to avoid? Why?
2. If your honeymoon season is in the past, what would you do over again if you could? What would you do differently?
3. What specific counsel would you give a new pastor regarding the honeymoon season?

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LESSON 3 (Chapters 6-7)

Season Three: The Early Years, A Time of Change . . . and Conflict

Chapter 6. Catalyzing Change

1. Do you agree with the author that conflict between pastor and congregation is “almost inevitable” in this season of leading change? What conflict have you experienced?
2. In the dual role of “patient catalyst,” which role are you more comfortable with: chaplain or change agent? Why?
3. The author describes a continuum of leadership styles—from “charismatic” leader to “consensus-builder.” What is your leadership style?
4. How would you describe the “climate for change” in your church? How has it changed since you began your ministry?

Chapter 7. Leading Change

1. Professor John Kotter’s (*Leading Change*) first principle is to “establish a sense of urgency.” Is there or has there been a sense of urgency to change in your church? How did a sense of urgency help motivate your congregation to embrace change?
2. The second principle in leading change is to “create a guiding coalition” (or what the author calls a “de facto eldership”); that is, the leadership needed to discern, along with you, the vision and strategy forward. Describe that actual or potential guiding coalition in your congregation.
3. The third principle is to “discern God’s vision” for your church. How is vision different from a church’s mission?
4. Why is it important for a church to have a vision for its ministry? Where is your church in the process of discerning God’s vision?
5. If your church has already discerned and stated its vision, how effective has it been in guiding your church forward? How effective have you been in communicating it to the whole body?
6. Kotter’s fourth principle is to “implement the vision.” Which advice on implementing the vision (pages 81-85) do you find most helpful?

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LESSON 4 (Chapter 8)

Season Three (continued)

Chapter 8. Minimizing and Managing Conflict

1. Describe a time in your church when you experienced conflict. What were some of your emotions and reactions?
2. List some of the ways the author suggests to MINIMIZE conflict. Which of these have you found to be true and helpful in times of conflict?
3. List some of the ways the author suggests to MANAGE conflict. Which of these have you found to be true and helpful?
4. The author advises not to let conflict become personal; how realistic is this counsel? Can you recall an instance when you allowed conflict in your church to be felt as an attack on you? How can you prevent this from happening?
5. The author describes a church in revitalization reaching a “tipping point.” If that has occurred in your church, describe that tipping point for the others in your group. If it hasn’t occurred, describe when and how you believe it could happen and what it would look like.

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LESSON 5 (Chapter 9)

Season Three (continued)

Chapter 9. The Primary of Preaching

1. Do you agree that preaching is the primary task of local church ministry? Why or why not?
2. Describe your own sermon preparation process. How much time do you spend? What have you learned about sermon preparation that might be helpful to others in the group?
3. How do you define gospel preaching?
4. Who is your primary target audience in your preaching? What is your message to those who are not in that target audience?
5. List the various steps the author identifies in extemporaneous preaching. Is this helpful as you consider your own sermon preparation? Why or why not?
6. What steps are you undertaking to improve your communication of the gospel to your congregation?

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LESSON 6 (Chapters 10- 11)

Season Four: The Fruitful Years, A Time to Flourish

Chapter 10. The Renewal of Mission

1. Do you agree that the “attractional” (Willow Creek) model of church ministry is no longer valid? In all honesty, how much does that model still influence your church’s thinking and functioning?
2. What have been the greatest obstacles for your church in discovering its mission?
3. If your church ceased to exist, would anyone in the surrounding community miss it? Why or why not?
4. How are you personally modeling mission in the local community in your own life? What ways have you found to live out your faith in your local town or city?
5. What local community needs has your church discovered, and how are you attempting to meet them?

Chapter 11. The Renewal of Worship

1. How would you describe your church’s worship service? Traditional, contemporary, blended, or something else?
2. If you could change one thing about your worship service, what would that be?
3. How would you define your “philosophy” of worship? How does your actual worship service reflect that philosophy?
4. What has most shaped your understanding of Christian worship?
5. Was the author’s discussion of the four-fold pattern of worship helpful? Why or why not?
6. How have you been able to elevate the sacredness of your worship service and eliminate trivial elements?
7. How have you been able to increase your congregation’s participation in worship?

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LESSON 7 (Chapters 12-16)

Season Four (continued)

Chapters 12-14. Renewal of Organization, Leadership, and Staff

1. How would you describe your current church organization? Is it a help or a hindrance to the healthy functioning of your church? Explain.
2. If you could change your organizational structure, what would it look like?
3. Is there some form of eldership in your church? If so, describe it.
4. What has been your greatest challenge in recruiting church leaders?
5. How widespread is the understanding of spiritual gifts in your church? Does your church function on the basis of spiritual gifts?
6. What have been the biggest challenges your church has faced in recruiting and managing staff members?

Chapters 15-16. Renewal of Membership and Stewardship

1. What does the membership process look like in your church? What is required for someone to become a member? How are people removed from membership?
2. What steps is your church taking to strengthen the discipleship of those wanting to join?
3. How do you deal with transfer growth (sheep stealing) either to or away from your church?
4. In what ways have you seen biblical financial stewardship develop in your church? What have been the most important factors in cultivating it?
5. As your church continues to be revitalized, what have been your biggest stewardship challenges?

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LESSON 8 (Chapters 17-18)

Season Five: Transition, A Time for Departure or Reinvention

Chapter 17. Why Am I Restless?

1. How has your role as pastor changed over time? What has it been like to adjust to these changes?
2. In what ways has God affirmed your call to your church? What have been some factors that have helped you remain faithful to your call?
3. How will you know when it is time to leave your current ministry position?

Chapter 18. Reinvention for the Long Haul

1. List some of the boundaries that you have established for yourself, your family, and your leaders. How have you communicated these to your church?
2. Do you tend to view your work and life in terms of a rhythm? If so, what does the rhythm look like in the course of a day, a week, a month, a year?
3. How do you and your family observe the Sabbath? What have you done to help your congregation observe it?
4. What spiritual disciplines are most important to you in maintaining a vital relationship with Jesus Christ?
5. What do you do to maintain healthy relationships in and outside the church?
6. What do you do to maintain your physical health? Your financial health?