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## ARTICLE

### Session 3: Doing God's Will

#### PREPARATION

Read Scripture and background information. Reflect on the questions in the participant's book. Review links suggested in the lesson outline below.

#### Deepen Your Spiritual Life

One spiritual practice is to read the same Scripture passage for several days. Read Luke 18:30-19:27 (Day 3) several times, reflecting and writing ideas that come to you. What are the talents present in your congregation (financial, property, location in the world, spiritual gifts, professional skills, hobbies and interests)? How are the talents of your congregation invested? What keeps you (individually and corporately) from fully investing these talents? What do your reflections reveal about dealing with people you don't like? What do your reflections reveal about dealing with issues in the community? What do your reflections reveal about dealing with power inside and outside the congregation?

#### Train of Thought

Jesus initiated a new paradigm and redefined the mission for the people of God. A primary work of the congregation is to discover the vision that allows it to fulfill its mission. Understanding the current paradigm, the mission of the church, and how to deal with change readies the church to move forward.

#### Desired Outcomes

As a result of this session, participants should be able to:

- Understand congregations as systems filled with processes.
- Realize that the sub-optimization of even one process sub-optimizes the whole system.
- See that just tinkering with the wrong system will not yield better results. New results demand new systems.

#### Lesson Supplies

- [Handout](#) with definitions of "systems" terms
- [Posters defining key concepts](#)
- Worship center, candle, matches, extra Bibles
- [Notes](#) for guiding your group through Session 3
- [Background material and examples of resistance](#)
- Review a Bible commentary for scholarly information about Luke 9:10-17.
- Understand the big picture of the culture, geography and paradigm of Jesus' time with photographs, maps, and new archeological finds in [Daily Life at the Time of Jesus](#) by Miriam Feinberg Vamosh (Abingdon, 2001). [Click here for a review of the book.](#)

#### EXPLORATION AT GROUP SESSION

*Total time: 50 minutes*

Light the candle in your worship center, to remind all of the Presence of Christ as you meet. Follow up on prayer requests as appropriate. Pray together the prayer on page 27 of the participant's book.

#### Bible Study Focus Verses: Luke 9:10-17

This way of exploring the text can be done in 20 minutes if carefully timed. Prepare to share what you learn in 2-3 minutes. Ask participants about insights or questions they noted in their Bible study books. Ask participants to find the

focus Scripture in their Bibles.

### **Explore the Text**

Start by exploring what the text actually says. The goal is to be as objective as possible, searching for facts. Ask participants to work in pairs to discover what the text says. You might ask, "What happens in this story as Luke tells it? What did it likely mean to the people who were present? What does Luke seem to be saying about God?"

### **Information**

Provide additional information from your advance reading in a brief (2-3 minute) lecture.

### **Apply the Text**

Ask participants to work in pairs again, reflecting on the meaning of this passage for today. What elements of the story are the same or different now? What is the meaning of the passage for you? How do you feel about what it says or implies?

### **Transition to Our Time**

"A Reflective Moment Along the Way" in Session 3 invites people to recall their own life journey as a connection of processes. Ask people to share insights that came from thinking of their lives this way. For participants unfamiliar with systems and processes, remind them that this is like learning a new language for their experience.

## **DISCOVERY – APPLYING IDEAS TO THE CONGREGATION**

*Total time: 45 minutes*

### **Discussion Questions** (30 minutes)

The examples of systems on page 31 in the Bible study focus on non-religious systems so that participants can practice thinking about systems and processes. Ask for their comments to questions on page 31, and make a transition to the Discovery Exercise on page 32 by asking, "How does understanding systems affect our understanding of the church?"

The Discovery Exercise on page 32 looks at the sub-processes that make up processes that make up systems. If this gets a little complex and confusing, that's okay. One of the main purposes of this exercise is to show how many processes and sub-processes exist in even the most simple of systems. In an organization as complex as a church, the number of systems, processes, and sub-processes is staggering. A systems understanding of ministry optimizes our potential for ministry. This exercise is intended to help people see the congregation as a system that is filled with processes. If people begin to feel frustrated by the scope of the exercise, encourage them by reminding them that this exercise is not intended to design anything specific or get a "right answer," but to broaden understanding. Click here for an outline of the way one group did this exercise.

### **Feedback & Evaluation** (5 minutes)

Affirm the group's work together, highlighting examples of listening and of willingness to work with new ideas. Ask, "What have we learned in our time together? What questions do you have?"

### **Sending Forth** (10 minutes)

Share prayer requests and close by praying the prayer on page 27 with which you opened the session.



faithquest@gbod.org

**BUILDING LEADERS FOR TODAY'S CHURCH**

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## Definitions for the Journey

**System:** The combination of parts that forms a whole.

**Examples:** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Systems Thinking:** A way of thinking about how things are organized.

**Examples:** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Optimization:** When all parts of a system work in harmony toward an aim.

**Examples:** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Suboptimization:** When each part of a system works toward its own aim.

**Examples:** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Flow:** Movement of parts of a system.

The movement is described by its pattern, speed, breadth, and depth.

**Examples:** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Constraint:** Anything that limits a system in moving toward its aim.

**Examples:** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Aligned:** All the parts of a system are moving toward a common goal.

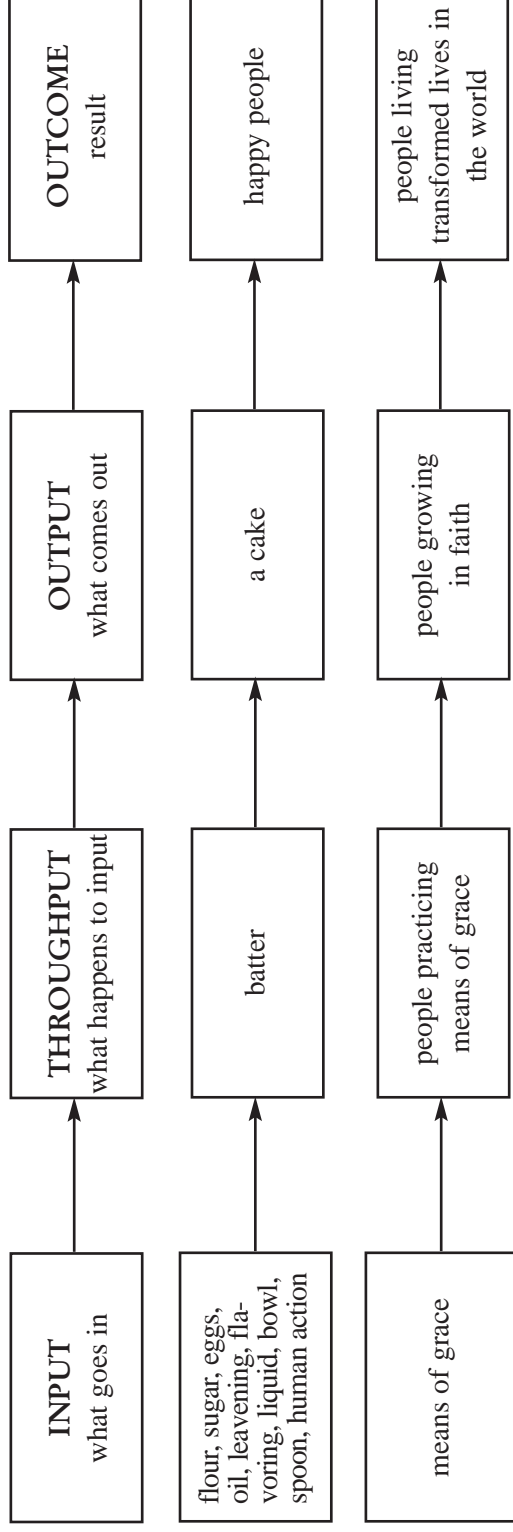
**Examples:** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Unaligned:** All the parts of a system are serving individual and unconnected goals.

**Examples:** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

# Processes

A series of actions that repeatedly come together to transform inputs into outputs and results.



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# SYSTEM

- **The way parts are put together that leads to a particular result.**
- **FaithQuest aims to help congregations think about the way parts are put together, discover new ways to put parts together, and improve the system for making disciples of Jesus Christ in a particular location.**

# **OPTIMIZATION**

- **When all parts of a system are working well**
- **Each part of a system working in harmony with other parts**
- **Each process in a system moving toward the aim**



## Resistance to Change

Review the section about “Resistance to Change” on page 16 of the *FaithQuest Bible Study*.

There has been a great deal of new information introduced in three lessons.

Anticipate a bit of resistance to the new information and to the implication that there is a new way to look at your congregation. Be aware of your own resistance as well as resistance that manifests in the participants.

### Here are some ways resistance might be revealed:

- Objection to the concepts, expressed in comments such as, “Systems language is fine for businesses, but it’s not appropriate for the church.”
- Objection to the language — expressed in comments such as, “These ideas aren’t in the Bible.”
- Objection to the **FaithQuest** journey. A participant in one group said, “I thought this was a Bible study, but it seems to be an organizational study.”
- Defensiveness expressed in comments such as “Our church is working well; why are we doing this?”
- Opting out — “I don’t have time for this.”

**WARNING:** Take all comments seriously, honoring the individuals. Be aware of resistance to change, and trust your intuition about the real issues behind the comments at this point.

### Some ideas for leading through resistance:

- Love God’s people (including yourself) with God’s love and God’s patience.
- Listen carefully to comments, questions, and concerns.
- Remember the mission of the church and the visions of the congregation.
- Remind people (and yourself) that you are learning together and are on a journey together.
- Suggest that the group turn to page 16 of the *FaithQuest Bible Study* and read the section on “Resistance to Change.”
- Take yourself “lightly” as you seek God’s direction.



## Paradigm Thinking for 21st-Century Leaders\*

### Challenge All Assumptions

**Example:** A congregation may assume that visitation of the sick and shut-in is the role of the pastor and not a necessary or appropriate role for laypeople. A church may challenge this assumption by asking the pastor to think about ways in which laity could create a visitation ministry. From this could come a team of trained individuals to visit the sick and keep contact with those who are unable to be with the congregation on Sunday morning. The team might then consider ways to reach out to visitors or to people in crisis. Through challenging an assumption, the team could expand its ministry and better support the pastor.

### Explore Alternatives

**Example:** One local church became aware of a decline in Sunday school attendance. After exploring a variety of alternatives, church leaders decided to move their church school to Wednesday night. As a result, the church had a huge increase in attendance. This opened the door to offering classes for parents, childcare, and a family meal. The church has now become a major center for activity in the community.

### Adopt Other Points of View

**Example:** On noticing an increase in the number of youth in the neighborhood, one pastor encouraged the congregation to create a youth ministry program. They responded with great resistance. The pastor could not understand why, until he attempted to see the situation through the eyes of the congregation. He realized that they were afraid of the youth, and members were concerned for their personal safety and the well-being of the church building. Instead of initiating a youth program, the pastor began to find ways to help the congregation understand the youth and to build bridges among the generations. Eventually, a youth program developed out of the relationship that was built between the youth and the congregation.

### Read Extensively Outside Your Area of Expertise

**Example:** A pastor in a local church was concerned about the way members of the church treated one another, so she began to read about family systems and structures. She soon discovered new ways to help the congregation treat one another better. Another pastor wanted to help the church run more effective meetings and prepare better church leaders. After reading about how successful business leaders trained teams, she learned ways to help her church leaders perform their leadership roles more effectively.

### Find Success in Every Attempt

**Example:** A conference youth leader was responsible for a large youth event that unexpectedly lost several thousand dollars. The next day the youth leader, feeling like a failure, called the bishop and offered his resignation. After a long pause, the bishop responded, “Do you really think I’m going to let you quit after we just invested all this money in making you a better leader?”

\* The idea of paradigm thinking appears in Session 8 of the FaithQuest Bible Study.



## **Definitions & Illustrations of Paradigm Thinking**

### **Challenge All Assumptions**

- To assume something means to take it for granted.
- Assumptions are nonverified and are nonverifiable until after the fact.

### **Explore Alternatives**

- For every action/activity in our churches, we have a variety of alternatives.
- There is no guarantee that, because something was effective in one time or place, it will be effective again.
- In an age of constantly shifting paradigms, we can't afford not to explore options.

### **Adopt Other Points of View**

- Paradigm thinking requires the ability to see from various perspectives.
- It costs little to see things from other people's points of view, but the benefits can be priceless.

### **Read Extensively Outside Your Area of Expertise**

- When we enter unfamiliar territory, we see many new things, and we process them differently. Reading information that is outside our areas of expertise pushes us to see things in a new way.
- It is human nature to see the world through filters (mental maps).

### **Find Success in Every Attempt**

- To know the full beauty and value of the stone, one must view it from all sides.
- When we seek success in every attempt, and when we measure any learning as success, then we never fail.