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ARTICLE

Session 8: The Road to Transformation

PREPARATION

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

Train of Thought

Christian spiritual leaders hold the community of faith to the vision of transformation. Over time, the paradigm of the community shifts to something radically new and different.

Desired Outcomes

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

- Deepen understanding of the role of conversion, baptism, and community in transforming activity-centered congregations.
- Reinforce the idea that the church exists to serve a diverse world.
- Use paradigm-thinking skills to increase change readiness.

Lesson Supplies

- [Posters](#)
- Candle, matches, Bibles
- Review and choose handouts for leading discussion of the discovery exercises.
- Write the following words across a piece of newsprint: *Story Only, Spiritually True, Allegorical, Literally True*
- Copies of [biblical point of view paragraphs](#) for Bible Study.

EXPLORATION AT GROUP SESSION

Total time: 50 minutes

Light the worship candle with these words: "This light reminds us of God's love among us. God's love brings illumination to our souls and minds. During *FaithQuest* sessions we practice what John Wesley called Christian Conferencing — speaking and listening with holy love." Ask participants to turn to page 69, "A Reflective Moment Along the Way." Ask each one to share briefly their favorite Bible passage. Then ask, "What is one insight you have gained about another participant by listening to their comments?" Then ask participants for insights or questions from this session's assigned reading in Acts.

Bible Study Focus Verses: Acts 9:1-19a

Within Christianity there are diverse interpretations of Scripture that have developed a tolerance for a wide variety of viewpoints — and even a desire to know what is behind another person's position.

Read Acts 9:1-19a aloud. Tell the group that Christians have interpreted the content of the Bible across a spectrum of possibilities. Refer to the words you have written on newsprint.

story only spiritually true allegorical literally true

Distribute the biblical points of view paragraphs. Guide the group in exploring

each point of view, asking such questions as:

- What is this point of view actually saying?
- What values is this position trying to uphold?
- What are some problems with this view?
- What are some implications of this view?

If some people strongly identify with one point of view, ask them if they wish to explain or defend their understanding. If no one in the group holds a particular position, ask someone to represent the viewpoint as carefully as possible. There is no need to prove or disprove any position.

Changing one's understanding of Scripture texts is a normal result of a variety of life experiences and a growing faith. Ask, "How has your understanding of this passage (and the Bible) changed over the years? How have the changes influenced the growth of your faith?"

If a Sunday school class in your congregation would like to explore ways of interpreting scripture, take a look at [In the Beginning](#), a four-week study from the task force on Science and Theology that relates different ways of looking at creation.

Transition to Our Time

Conclude the Bible study time by praying together the prayer on page 67 in the study book.

DISCOVERY — APPLYING IDEAS TO THE CONGREGATION

Total time: 45 minutes

Discussion Questions (30 minutes)

Session 8 provides tools for individuals and congregations to become more change-ready. *FaithQuest* calls this set of tools *paradigm thinking*. The questions for discussion on page 72 help people develop personal and congregational paradigm thinking. A [handout](#) provides paradigm thinking definitions and examples. A [worksheet](#) provides a grid for individuals and congregations to reflect on paradigm thinking. Use the "[Quality and Customers](#)" [worksheet](#) by asking, "When did we apply the rules? How can we do it better?"

The Discovery Exercise on page 73 brings the concepts of customer and quality from Session 7 together with faith practices. Use paradigm thinking and a worksheet to practice this application of concepts to the congregation.

Feedback & Evaluation (5 minutes)

Conclude the session with affirmation of specific ways the participants have practiced Christian conferencing. Ask, "What have we learned in this session?"

Sending Forth (10 minutes)

Share prayer concerns. Ask participants to practice the *FaithQuest* concepts of listening and learning during this week. Each *FaithQuest* participant should ask four members of the congregation, "How did you come to know God?" Ask them to make notes about the key elements of each response for next week's session.

Close with these words: "Take the light of God's love in your heart into your homes and places you go this week."



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MICROPARADIGM

- **Assumptions, rules, opinions, or ideas over which one has control**
- **Personal paradigms**
- **Similar to mental maps (the way we perceive and understand), but not the same**

PARADIGM THINKING

- *A way to become
“paradigm ready”*
- **Thinking patterns for
learning organizations**



Definitions & Examples 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.



Paradigm Thinking

Helpful “rules” for proceeding	Personal application	Previous local church change	Current issue facing local church
Challenge all assumptions.			
Explore alternatives.			
Adopt other points of view.			
Read extensively outside your area of expertise.			
Find success in every attempt.			

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Quality and Customers

Wesleyan “means of grace” or spiritual practices are listed in the circle of the chart below:



Ask two people to work together to consider one of the “means of grace.” They can look through the microparadigm lens of quality and customers to discover new ways of thinking about faith-forming community. The worksheet below might help.

Means of grace: _____ Who are the customers?	What would 3 levels of quality do for them?
Workers (provide service)	Level 1: Level 2: Level 3:
Owners (own the “business”)	Level 1: Level 2: Level 3:
Beneficiaries (individuals who benefit directly)	Level 1: Level 2: Level 3:
Suppliers (provide raw materials)	Level 1: Level 2: Level 3:
Community (group who benefits directly)	Level 1: Level 2: Level 3: