

Handbook

Kingdom Core Churches

Latest Update
January 25, 2018

Contents

[Real Church Real Simple](#)

[Defining Vision, Purpose, Mission, and Goals](#)

[Pray The Vision](#)

[Three Point Strategy](#)

[Starting a Kingdom Core Church](#)

[House Church Meeting Format](#)

[One Disciple](#)

[A Case For Kingdom Core Curriculum](#)

Website:
KingdomCore.org

Real Church — Real Simple

Small Group Churches

There are many reasons that people like the House Church/Small Group style of Church.

Informal Atmosphere. The simple informal atmosphere of a small group provides the opportunity for people to relax and be themselves more so than in a public meeting.

Relationships. Small group gatherings allow for more participation and interaction of the members, which leads to real relationships.

Meeting Times. House churches are more flexible making church more accessible for people with conflicting schedules.

More Economical. House churches do not have the ongoing expenses of buildings, repairs, utility bills. Instead of building bigger and bigger buildings, growth is accommodated by starting new house churches. This frees up the tithes and offerings of members for other projects that more directly affect people's lives.

Opportunities. Because of more participation and interaction, small group setting provides the opportunity for or people's individual gifts to develop.

The Decentralized Church

As implied above, the House Church/Small Group church is not so much about where a church meets, it is about decentralization. Decentralization is breaking the bigger group into smaller parts. Therefore, the small group approach is not to be confused with lack of growth or stagnation. It is actually a means of growth by getting more people involved in the leadership and implementation of the vision and the purpose. Neither should decentralization be confused with being disorganized. God is very organized and provides us with many commonly held beliefs, goals, and methods. Organization makes things simple and simple is reproducible.

Through the Bible we see God counteracting man's tendency to consolidate and centralize with decentralization. Below are three examples.

Babel

God had instructed man to be fruitful, multiply and fill the earth (see Gen 1:28). But Babel was a rebellion against that directive.

Genesis 11:4 (NKJV)

⁴ And they said, "Come, let us build ourselves a city, and a tower whose top *is* in the heavens; let us make a name for ourselves, lest we be scattered abroad over the face of the whole earth."

In Babel we see centralization, "...*let us build ourselves a city...*" and; self-centered goals, "...*let us make a name for ourselves...*" and; it was in direct opposition to God's command to fill the earth, "...*lest we be scattered abroad over the face of the earth.*"

God's response was, of course, the confusion of their common language, which caused them to be dispersed into different people groups or nations.

The First Republic

When God brought the nation of Israel came out of slavery in Egypt, Moses was their leader and judge. But Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, saw that the burden on Moses was too much and offered advice that was timeless and godly.

Exodus 18:20-22 (NKJV)

²⁰ And you shall teach them the statutes and the laws, and show them the way in which they must walk and the work they must do.

²¹ Moreover you shall select from all the people able men, such as fear God, men of truth, hating covetousness; and place *such* over them *to be* rulers of thousands, rulers of hundreds, rulers of fifties, and rulers of tens.

²² And let them judge the people at all times. Then it will be *that* every great matter they shall bring to you, but every small matter they themselves shall judge. So it will be easier for you, for they will bear *the burden* with you.

God uses Moses to deliver Israel. But when God anoints or uses a person, the default human response seems to be to focus on the person God used instead of the God that anointed him. This tends to produce centralized leadership. The decentralization advice was two-fold.

First, Jethro advised teaching the people the statues and laws of God. He wisely understood that a people who knew the laws of God, could follow them and they would not need someone to be their judge.

Second, for those who did not know, did not understand, or refused to follow the law, Jethro advised spreading out the leadership responsibilities among godly men who would be responsible for specific segments of the people.

This form of decentralized government is the basic definition of a republic. A republic is a representative form of Government, where the leaders represent segments of the population based on commonly held laws or rules.

The New Covenant

In Israel, the priesthood had been reserved to members of the tribe of Levi, which is where we get the term Levitical Priesthood. In general, the priests were responsible to teach the law, carry out the temple ministry, and bring sacrifices before God to atone for the sins of the people. But through the New Covenant, the priesthood was moved away from a single tribe of Israel and entrusted to every person who received the Holy Spirit.

Hebrews 8:10-11 (NKJV)

¹⁰ For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: I will put My laws in their mind and write them on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people.

¹¹ None of them shall teach his neighbor, and none his brother, saying, 'Know the LORD,' for all shall know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them.

Though there is still a need for leadership, teachers, discipleship, etc., this is the ultimate decentralization. Through the sacrificial blood of Jesus and in dwelling Holy Spirit every person can have the law of God written on their hearts and have a direct relationship with God. This is why we are called a “...*a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation...*” (1 Peter 2:9). The New Covenant is the ultimate example of decentralization.

Two Things: Purpose and Presence

As we have seen, God has given us a purpose, to fill the earth. Jesus reiterated that purpose after His resurrection when the disciples asked, “...is it now that you are restoring the Kingdom...?” (see Acts 1:6). He answered their question saying, “...shall receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you; and you shall be witness to me ... to the end of the earth.” (See Acts 1:8).

Jesus also said, “For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them” (Matt 18:20). He knew that we would need His continued help to keep us from losing sight of our purpose. That is why He gave us the Holy Spirit.

Therefore, qualifying as a real church doesn't have to be big and complicated to be real. But whether small and simple or big and complicated, it is safe to say that a real church should pursue kingdom purpose and the presence of Jesus.

Defining Our Vision

Vision, Purpose, Mission, & Goals

Vision, Purpose, Mission, and Goals are all related, and are often used interchangeably. In general, the word “Vision” is used to represent all four. However, there are specific differences that are important to understand.

Vision:

The ability to comprehend, understand or see.

Without vision, people perish (Pr 29:18). It is like the blind leading the blind and both fall into the ditch (Luke 6:39). Paul prayed for revelation, the eyes of our understanding to be enlightened (Eph 1:17-18). With clear vision, we comprehend the width, length, depth and height (the big picture) of God’s purpose. With vision, we are able to purpose, mission and goals working together toward the outcome or destination.

Purpose:

The reason something is done or created.
Intention or objective.

Purpose is a means of clinging to the Lord (Acts 11:23). We must continually remind ourselves of why we are doing what we do. We must be *armed* with purpose (1 Peter 4:1 NASB77)

To have purpose is to intentionally attach one’s self to the objective revealed through vision. Jesus’ purpose was to preach the Kingdom of God (Luke 4:43-44). He prayed for this and taught it to His disciples, “Thy kingdom come. (Matt 6:10). His purpose is our purpose, therefore...

Our purpose is to see the King and the Kingdom of God on earth.

There is a crown of righteousness laid up for all who love His appearing and His Kingdom (see 2 Tim 4:1-8). We should prepare our minds for action with our hope fixed completely on the grace that will be brought to us at His coming (see 1 Peter 1:13).

Mission:

A strongly felt aim, ambition or calling. An Assignment

Mission gives authority, direction and action to purpose. Jesus gave us a commission (commission) when He said,

¹⁸ And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth.

¹⁹ Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,

²⁰ teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, *even* to the end of the age." Amen. – Matthew 28:18-20 (NKJV)

- He has authority on earth (and in heaven)
- He delegated authority to us to make disciples of the nations.
- He told us how: Baptize (salvation) and teach (training).
- He told us how long: till He returns (...to the end of the age which is the appearing of the kingdom).

We are called to teach the nations to observe all that Jesus commanded (make disciples) until Jesus and the kingdom appears. Discipleship involves the transfer of mission from one generation to the next. This is why the hearts of the fathers must be restored to the children and the children to the fathers before the Day of the Lord can come (see Malachi 4:5-6). Jesus said: "And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all nations, and then the end will come" (Matt 24:14) and in Ephesians 6:15, we are instructed to strap on the boots of kingdom preparation. Thus, our calling to make disciples has an aim: to prepare the way for the kingdom. Therefore...

Our mission is to prepare the way for the kingdom by making disciples in the three institutions established by God.

Goals:

Goals are strategic plans and steps that are part of the mission, which can be measured, accomplished, and ultimately lead to the fulfilled purpose.

Long-term and Short-term Goals

Setting and accomplishing goals is the "doing" part. Goals may be general and long term or specific and short term. General/long-term goals serve to keep us on track much like purpose.

Our general goals include the applying biblical principles in the [three institutions established by God](#): Church, Family, and Civil Government.

General Goals

- 1. Multiplying Network of Kingdom Core Churches** (Matt 16:18-19)
- 2. Bring Kingdom Principles to Civil Government** (Rom 13:1-4)
- 3. Build Strong families** (Luke 1:17; Gen 18:19)

Short-term goals are more specific, can be accomplished more quickly and are thus more easily measured. Below are some examples of short-term goals, based on the general goals above.

Goals for Kingdom Core Churches

- Make disciples who possess Christlike character
- Build meaningful relationships
- Experience the presence of God in our gatherings and individually
- Reach out to others and touch them with the Kingdom of God
- Provide Kingdom Core Training and cycle through the curriculum on a regular basis
- Birth new churches
- Plan Activities for civil government and families

Goals for Civil Government

- Teach the biblical basis of freedom and civic responsibility
- Facilitate voter registration and voting
- Participate in political organizations
- Find and support Christians to run for public office

Goals for Strengthening Families

- Teach biblical parenting skills
- Teach biblical marriage practices and attitudes
- Family Retreats & Activities

Vision Statement

Vision (what we see) includes our purpose (objective), mission, and strategic goals. Based on the definitions provided above, we will define “vision statement” as: *A brief statement of what we see based on purpose, mission, and goals.* Therefore our vision statement is:

Preparing the way for the return of Jesus and the appearing of His kingdom by teaching churches, families, and civil governments to observe what Jesus taught.

Pray The Vision

Once we have established vision, purpose, mission, and goals, those things should become the central part of our prayer lives. Through prayer, we acknowledge our need for God's help and activate His power to accomplish our work by putting words into the spiritual atmosphere. Unless the Lord builds the house, our labor is in vain (see Ps 127:1). Jesus modeled this concept. He preached the Kingdom of God and then He taught His disciples to pray for it. In other words, He taught them to "Pray the Vision."

Why We Pray

Prayer Defined.

In the most basic sense, prayer is talking to God. It may include...

1. Worship and adoration
2. Seeking forgiveness through confession of sin
3. Seeking the powers of heaven to accomplish the goals and purposes of God on earth. This would include...
 - Petitions
 - Declarative Statements and Decrees

Praying the Vision.

When it comes to *Praying the Vision*, we are primarily dealing with #3 above.

Prayer Employs the Angels.

The angels are workers on our behalf...

The angels hear and take action.

Hebrews 1:13-14 (KJV)

¹³ But to which of the angels said he at any time, Sit on my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool?

¹⁴ Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?

For this reason, Prayer should be 1) Verbalized, and 2) According to God's will.

Prayer is Work.

Prayer need not be hard work, but it is work nonetheless.

Words describing the desired outcome need to be spoken and put into the spiritual atmosphere. For this reason, prayer is not based on feeling or emotion, but on purpose and responsibility, much like going to work and doing our job. Praying the Vision is training for the job of prayer that is before us.

Praying According to Vision, Purpose, Mission, and Goals

The prayer points below can and should be used, but they are by no means exhaustive. Use them to get started and let the Holy Spirit lead you in your prayers. Before praying each section, go back to [Defining Vision, Purpose, Mission and Goals](#) and read the corresponding definitions. Then use the points to below in prayer.

Vision:

The ability to comprehend, understand or see.

- Pray for the ability to comprehend and possess the big picture of God's plan (Eph 3:18).
- Invoke John 3:3 by declaring to be one who can see the kingdom of God because you are born again.
- Read Acts 2:17 and declare: "The Holy Spirit is poured out upon me, my family, and the church. We shall prophecy, see visions, and dream dreams."
- Ask for wisdom and understanding (James 1:5 and Proverbs 4:7)
- Pray Ephesians 1:17-21 and 3:16-18
- Pray for eyes to see and ears to hear (1 Cor 2:9-10)
- Pray for the ability to see what the Father is doing so we can do likewise (John 5:19-20)

Purpose:

The reason something is done or created.

Intention or objective.

Our purpose is to see the King and the Kingdom of God on earth.

- Pray for the Kingdom of God to come (Matt 6:10; Rev. 22:17, 20).
- Pray for the characteristics of the Kingdom to manifest through us on earth (Rom 14:17)
- Pray for and proclaim purpose, intentions and objectives by describing the Kingdom:
 - Declare that the coming kingdom of God is with us now (Matt 4:17)
 - The Lord will use us to make the knowledge of the glory of the Lord known until Jesus returns and it covers the earth (Hab 2:14)
 - We will rule and reign on earth with Jesus (1 Cor 6:2)
 - I was called to inherit a blessing (1Peter 3:9)
- Pray that we love His appearing, declaring there is a crown of righteousness laid up for God's people (see 2 Tim 4:1-8).
- Pray that being resolute in purpose, we will remain true to the Lord and not be sidetracked. (Acts 11:23)
- That we prepare our minds for action with the hope of His coming as our goal (see 1 Peter 1:13).

Mission:

A strongly felt aim, ambition or calling. An Assignment

Our mission is to prepare the way for the kingdom by making disciples in the three institutions established by God.

- Ask for God to connect you with those whom you can lead to Jesus. (2 Tim 2:2)
- Pray for the establishment of new churches and study groups. (Luke 4:43)
- Pray for your brothers and sisters to be like-minded regarding kingdom purpose and mission (see Phil 2:2)
- Pray for individuals you are associated with in the mission. (Rom 1:9)
- Make Declarations in faith
 - I am preparing the way for the kingdom of God to appear (Matt 3:3)
 - I have the authority to make disciples and teach them to observe what Jesus commanded (Matt 28:18-20; Eph 1:21)
 - I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me (Phil 4:13)
 - His yoke is easy and His burden is light (Matt 11:30)
 - Jesus is with me, even to the end of the age (Matt 28:20)

Goals:

Goals are strategic plans and steps that are part of the mission, which can be measured, accomplished, and ultimately lead to the fulfilled purpose.

Our general goals are to bring Christian discipleship into the three institutions established by God by:

- 1. Multiplying Network of Kingdom Core Churches** (Matt 16:18-19)
- 2. Bring Kingdom Principles to Civil Government** (Rom 13:1-4)
- 3. Build Strong families** (Luke 1:17; Gen 18:19)

- Pray that the church will accomplish its goals.
 - Build Christlike character into individual members (Rom 5:4; Phil 2:22; Rom 12:1-2)
 - For finances and that the blessings associated with tithes and offerings would be poured out (Malachi 3:6-12; 2 Cor 9:7-8)
 - Develop meaningful relationships that demonstrate God's love. (John 13:35)
 - Pray for a hunger for the Word and training (1 Peter 2:2; 2 Tim 3:16-17)
 - The presence of God with power in meetings and His presence to lead us (Luke 5:17; Ex 33:15)
 - New Churches/study groups (Matt 24:14; Matt 16:18)
 - For church leadership -wisdom, protection, etc. (1 Thess 5:12; James 1:5)
- Pray that Christians will speak into and participate in civil government...
 - Pray for corruption and evil to be exposed in government (Eph 5:11)
 - Pray for the righteous to hold positions of authority in Government (Prov 29:2)
 - Pray for God to guide existing leaders (Romans 13:1-4)
 - Pray for government to take a stand for righteousness regardless of the raging of the ungodly (Read Psalm 2 and declare it over the nation)

- Pray for Families
 - Parents to have wisdom in training their children (Eph 6:1-4)
 - Marriages to be strong - pray against the schemes of the enemy to destroy marriage (Heb 13:4)
 - Pray for hearts of the fathers to be restored to children and children to fathers so there can be a transfer of wisdom and anointing to the next generation (Luke 1:17)
 - Pray for specific family members by name

Three Foundational Institutions of God

Our strategy involves building churches according to a model that facilitates ministry publicly and from house to house (see Acts 20:20). Decentralization of leadership and more member participation in small private settings encourages discipleship (see 2 Timothy 2:2) resulting in mature believers who are equipped to do the work of ministry (see Ephesians 4:11-16) in the three institutions established by God.

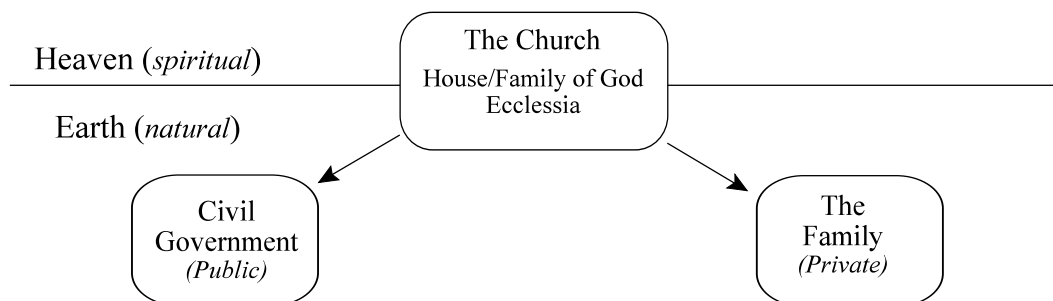
Family (1 Tim 3:5; Luke 1:17)
Teach principles of successful families

Church (Matt 16:18)
Teach Foundational Principles of Christ

Civil Government (Romans 13:1-4)
Teach Christian values in the political arena

Each institution supports the other, but the church operates in both heavenly and earthly realms. It is both God's governing body (ecclesia) and it is God's family (house). As such, the church is primary and is a training institution for the other two institutions ordained by God: Civil Government and The Family.

Three Institutions Established by God



General Steps for Starting a Kingdom Core Church

Basics for leaders

The following assumes the person(s) seeking to start a church is qualified and called. Using this or other related material, such as Kingdom Core Curriculum, does not imply endorsement, certification, ordination, or any official association with other churches using the same material.

1. Embrace and Internalize the kingdom vision.

- Read and become familiar with Kingdom Core Evangelism
- Read the definitions of vision, purpose, mission, and goals
- Pray the corresponding prayer guide regularly

Deepen the Decentralization Concepts in your heart by studying...

- The Mystery of Iniquity
- The Decentralized Church
- Small Group Churches in Scripture

It is recommended that the entire Kingdom Core Curriculum be completed, but the lessons above should be revisited as a refresher for starting a church.

2. Make an outreach list and develop it.

- Make a list of those who you will invite.
- Pray over the list daily
- Give them the *Real Church Real Simple* brochure
- Talk to them over a period of time about the house church concept.
- Host a dinner in your home or a picnic, etc. to help establish relationships with your list. Use this time to have informal discussion and answer questions.
- When you have a few who are willing to come, set the date for the first meeting.

3. Before the first meeting

- Establish your basic meeting format based on accomplishing the goals (see suggested format)
- Plan the introductory lessons you will use to start with
- Define the start and ending time
- Continue praying for the list (Ephesians 1:17-19)

4. Have the meeting.

- The leader is largely a facilitator- not so much a teacher or lecturer.
- Follow the format (as the Holy Spirit leads)
- Encourage balanced participation. Seek to draw out those who are shy and prevent “over talkative” people from dominating.
- Keep the meeting moving. Start and end on time.

(See *House Church Meeting Format* on next page)

House Church Meeting Format

Meal (optional - maybe monthly)

Call Meeting to Order

Discussion and Testimonies

- Goals Accomplished, etc.
- Transition into “Word”

Word

- Set a schedule to cycle through Kingdom Core Curriculum and other materials, as the leader and group desires)
- Assign next lesson’s reading (Possibly assign different people to summarize at next meeting)

Presence and Prayer Time

- Worship*
- Pray the Purpose, Vision, & Goals
- Pray for the Missions we support (Focus on one for each week)
- Personal Needs, etc

Offering

Announcements

- Goals & Plans
- Next gathering, etc.

+++++

*Worship with musical instruments and singing is optional (depends on the chemistry and talents of the group). Worship with music will be a major component of the corporate gatherings.

One Disciple

Discipleship

A primary purpose of church gatherings is discipleship, i.e., the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry. Missing this simple fact has led many Christians and churches off track. When we see the church as the place for soul winning, we begin seeking ways to attract non-Christians to our “church events.” This is can become the first step toward compromise if the goal shifts from discipleship to making people comfortable and keeping them coming to our church events. As a result, there may be a tendency to scale back on prayer, true worship, training and equipping, which is the true purpose of church gatherings.

Evangelism

Evangelism is meant to be outside the church. Our everyday lives on the street or in the workplace is where evangelism and soul winning takes place. Christians living their beliefs in everyday life is much more powerful than a lecture given to people sitting in rows on Sunday Morning.

The gospel message is not always comfortable. However, that does not mean we should be obnoxious or offensive. The uncomfortable gospel can and should be prefaced with acts of kindness or some other demonstration of the Spirit and Power. There is nothing like a healing touch from Jesus to prepare a heart for the message of repentance and the lordship of Jesus. As Paul said,

And my speech and my preaching *were* not with persuasive words of human wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, that your faith should not be in the wisdom of men but in the power of God. — 1 Corinthians 2:4-5 (NKJV)

In starting a small group church, a few Christians will begin gathering on a regular basis to establish common vision and goals. If relationships with unbelievers exist and they are open to attend, that is fine - so long as it does not compromise the focus of the gathering as described above. Members of a church should consider whether or not a person is ready for the “church atmosphere” before they invite them.

One Disciple

A primary purpose of church gatherings may be discipleship and equipping, but the practice of discipleship extends beyond the church meeting. It should be the goal of every church member to reach out to the lost, demonstrate the living Lord, win them to Jesus and begin a discipleship relationship. Discipleship is a lifestyle.

What if every person had one disciple and was training that disciple to have one disciple? Each one reach one. It is simple, but getting past our own fears and comfort zones, and beginning to reach out, can be difficult for some. Most of us are timid about opening the subject of the gospel with people we know, not to mention those we don't know. However, It has been my experience that venturing into this area with a clear plan quickly moves from fear to fun and creates a great sense of satisfaction.

Kingdom Core Curriculum is a foundational tool set designed to be used by anyone who wants to be a disciple or make one.

A Case For Kingdom Core Curriculum

A New Paradigm

When we see the mess our world is in, we can blame education, the culture, or something else, but first we must look ourselves. By offering no real vision or sense of purpose, the church has become irrelevant and lost its ability to influence the culture. The sugar coated watered down version of Christianity appeals to some, but most are not impressed.

Like Esau, the twin brother of Jacob (Israel), the church in general has been more concerned about the blessing instead of the birthright. Our birthright is to rule the earth, but that message has been replaced with “leave the earth.”

A few years ago, our survey showed that 97% of people answered “True” regarding this True/False question: “God wants us to go to heaven and live there forever.” The correct answer is “False.” The Bible starts with man on earth and ends with man on earth and does not teach that we will spend eternity in heaven. Actually, if we were only intended to go to a spiritual realm after our life on earth, then the redemption of our bodies (Romans 8) and the resurrection would not be necessary!

But the Bible teaches a complete salvation, involving spirit, soul, and body (1 Thess 5:23). The over spiritualization of salvation, which often relegates salvation to spirit alone, is at the root of the ineffectiveness of the Church. This idea has given rise to the hyper-grace movement that places little or no emphasis on repentance, holiness, judgement, or good works.

This easily translates to the spectator/entertainment style of Christianity often seen in the mega-church model which has become the standard by which we measure our success. In the vast majority of cases, even small churches operate by this model - and experience perpetual frustration. It is simply how we have been trained to do church. Many are trapped in this “*seeker-sensitive, stack people up at the rapture bus stop and keep them happy until we all leave*” version of Christianity. Some of these people are genuine believers who do the best they can and find ministry outlets in spite of the environment they are in. Others are simply content to remain immature and exist on the milk of weekly sermons.

But I sense that there is a growing discontentment. Many people are tired of sitting in rows and being preached at on Sunday. There is a generation looking for sense of purpose and direction that is relevant to this world. Unfortunately, “becoming relevant” has often meant accepting worldliness and becoming more like the world, but this is not the relevance spoken of here. We are speaking of a vision, based on the age-old foundations of scripture, that provide real answers to the world’s problems.

There is a segment of Christians, though still relatively small, who have gotten involved in the political arena. This remnant is in part a manifestation of discontentment and the hunger to be relevant in this world. But most of them are still trapped in the cultural model of church. A new paradigm of purpose is needed. This is what we are starting Kingdom Core Churches and developing the Kingdom Core Curriculum. It is a paradigm shift.

Paradigm shifts are not easy. This is because the shift first requires that one way of thinking be unlearned before the new way of thinking can truly be owned and put into practice. Many people simply are not open to the idea of “having been wrong.” It requires moving out of what is comfortable and breaking new ground. It requires an intensive re-education effort. This is the purpose of [Kingdom Core Curriculum](#).

Other Thoughts and Notes

These are general concepts with the details being worked out as things move along.

Leaders may be asked to participate in...

Conference calls to review material and plans and general direction.

Leaders' meetings on internet video (training, sharing insights, etc.).

Churches

Should plan to attend corporate events like mini-conferences with more than one session periodically, maybe one Saturday every two or three months.

Other Goals:

Spread house churches to every county and multiple towns

Get involved in the political structure of each county