



## Description

Loving relationships are the heart of a healthy, growing church. Jesus said people will know we are his disciples by our love. Practical demonstration of love builds authentic Christian community and brings others into God's kingdom.

## About This Resource

### Natural Church Development

This is an implementation handbook for churches and leaders in the Natural Church Development (NCD) Process. NCD is based on an international research project that initially analyzed the health of 1,000 churches in 32 countries among 18 languages. The research discovered 8 Quality Characteristics of healthy, growing churches. These universally valid principles transfer to individual churches, having a positive relationship with both the quality and the quantitative growth of the church.

Since the NCD Process began, more than 40,000 churches have been measured as of 2006. More than 20,000 churches in the United States have been surveyed. The average growth rate of these churches is 51 percent at the time of their third survey after 31 months.

The NCD Institute released a series of measurable Subcategories in 2006 for each of the Quality Characteristics. Churches that complete the survey receive a breakdown of their measurements for each.

### How To Use This Guide

When a church's Minimum Factor has been analyzed, leaders can read through this analysis to investigate questions and action steps to improve each subcategory of the Quality Characteristic.

### Additional Resources



This symbol indicates that there is more information available for study on CoachNet®.

Members of CoachNet can go to the CompuCoach® section, located at [www.coachnet.org/v.4/module/CompuCoach](http://www.coachnet.org/v.4/module/CompuCoach). They can then type in the Reference Guide number, located next to the mouse, in the CompuCoach QuickFind ID box. The information is then pulled from CoachNet's database of resources.

For further information about NCD and its Quality Characteristics, please read:

**Schwarz, Christian A. *Color Your World With NCD*.** (St. Charles, IL: ChurchSmart Resources 2005). This book explores the principles of NCD and applies them to individuals, helping people to experience all that God has designed them to be.

**Logan, Robert E. & Clegg, Thomas T. *Releasing Your Church's Potential*.** (Carol Stream, IL: ChurchSmart Resources 1998): This resource unpacks each of the 8 Quality Characteristics with evaluation questions and practical worksheets. Provides a practical framework for change. Audio presentations provide stories and motivation.

## How To Use This Resource

This diagnostic guide assumes that your church recently completed the NCD Survey and you want to discover key issues in your church's Minimum Factor. If you are the pastor or leader of the Church Health Team responsible for the NCD implementation process, follow these steps:

### **1: Diagnose your church**

Do not rush through this critical stage in the NCD process. Careful diagnosis allows the church to develop a plan to increase its health (and score) by addressing the root causes and not just the symptoms.

A church may engage an NCD coach to assist in the process. You will also want to draw together a Church Health Team. Once you have completed the results, you are ready to plan and implement change with the help of this handbook.

### **2: Study your Minimum Factor.**

Read through the training and questions in this handbook. Note that each Minimum Factor contains four Subcategories. These Subcategories correspond to your NCD survey results. Note the section at the end of a Minimum Factor is called Applying Growth Forces. Work with these principles to summarize your findings.

### **3: Note the questions you do not have an answer for. Make sure no questions are unanswerable.**

If you find a question particularly helpful, chances are it's a good one to share with others. Note the questions that you do not have answers for, and then work to make sure they get answered.

### **4: Look up the QuickFind IDs on CoachNet.**

Each of the ID numbers listed is accessible through CoachNet's CompuCoach system. You can download or print these additional resource guides.

### **5: Complete the Action Guide at the end of the chapter.**

Each section concludes with an Action Guide for you to take the necessary steps toward implementing change. Based on your findings from the Minimum Factor section, complete this guide so that you are equipped with a detailed set of priorities.

### **6: Evaluate your progress by distributing these questions.**

Ask the members of your church or denomination to answer the questions in this handbook for themselves. Distribute the pages and have members respond to the questions. Hold seminars or training events to implement the principles.<sup>1</sup>

When you have properly implemented and evaluated the changes to increase your Minimum Factor, you can expect your church's health to increase.

<sup>1</sup>CoachNet members have permission to reproduce the diagnostic questions for use within only one local church. Please do not distribute to others.

## Affirmation and encouragement

**Key Question: How are people encouraged and affirmed in the congregation? To what extent is this actually happening?**

### Giving and receiving love

- 📖 CCI790 **It's not hard to create an atmosphere that encourages the giving and receiving of**
- 📖 CCI794 **love. It starts with some good teaching and modeling. From there it can progress to opportunities to express encouragement and affirmation to one another.**

- Do you personally receive affirmation and encouragement from your members on a regular basis? How and when do you give affirmation and encouragement to people?
- When people do something for the first time, is affirmation expressed, or is there criticism or silence? How does your church respond to people who try and fail at a new ministry or responsibility?
- How and when do you celebrate 'wins' or accomplishments? What opportunities are given for people to publicly give and receive affirmation and encouragement?
- How else do people experience the love of others in the congregation?

### Systems that promote loving relationships


- 📖 GD5975 **Church systems squelch or encourage loving relationships in direct proportion to what they affirm publicly..**

- What kind of time does church staff set aside for developing relationships with each other, with others in the church and with unchurched people as part of their staff time?
- What systems, programs or ministries in your church promote relationship building?
- Who in your church has championed loving relationships over programs and accomplishments?
- What does your church/staff do that hinders loving relationships?

## Atmosphere of joy and acceptance

**Key Question: How is joy and acceptance experienced and expressed in congregational life?**

*Creating an atmosphere of joy and acceptance*

 GD9246 **Loving relationships that develop and grow throughout the week will have a profound effect on the level of joy and trust in a congregation.**

- What are indicators to you that your church provides an atmosphere of joy and acceptance?
- What are indicators to you that joy and acceptance are lacking in your church?
- What have you done to foster an atmosphere of joy and acceptance?
- How and when have you incorporated people in your church who may appear or act differently than the accepted norm?

## Deepening relationships

**Key Question: To what extent have people progressed from friendly relationships to interdependent Christian community? Give examples.**

### Positive relationships

 GD5975 **The ministry of a local church is often judged on the relationships of its people.**


- How often do you personally have church members or attenders over to your home? What is your read on how often members go to each other's homes?
- Where have you seen positive relationships develop?
- Where are there strained relationships in your congregation?
- What have you done to foster positive relationships in the church?
- How and where have you provided specific guidelines for your people to love others within and outside the church?

### Interdependence

**We must learn to lean on each other and drop those barriers erected to protect our "independence."**

- To what extent do you personally have interdependent relationships in the church? Or do you find yourself "alone at the top?"
- What factors inhibit interdependent relationships in your church?
- What factors promote or encourage interdependent relationships in your church?

### Authentic Christian community

 GD6039 **Authentic Christian community is more than nice smiles on Sunday morning. Knit together by the Spirit of God, we reach out and welcome others.**

- How have you seen people supporting one another in your congregation?
- How easy do you think it is for newcomers to feel like they are full-fledged members of the congregation? Why?
- How have you helped people progress from friendly relationships to interdependent Christian community?
- How does your church show love to people outside the church?

## Conflict resolution

**Key Question:** Using an example of conflict resolution in your church's (recent) history, how would you evaluate the ability of the congregation (including yourself) to deal with conflict in a healthy manner?

### Identifying and responding to conflict



GD8109

**Confidence that you can resolve conflict in the congregation comes as your pastor understands how to manage conflict well.**

- To what extent are the people in your church able to face up to conflict in the church?
- What would lead you to believe that conflict is usually avoided?
- What would lead you to believe that conflict is usually identified and responded to?
- When was the last time that your church received teaching on conflict resolution?

### Process for resolving conflict between individuals

**Unresolved individual can escalate into larger congregational conflicts.**

- When two individuals in the church have faced conflict what process was used to resolve it?
- To what extent was the solution a win-win for both parties? Or a win-lose?
- What do you think was handled well? Handled poorly?

### Process for resolving congregational conflict

**Church conflict can be complicated and very draining. It's usually best, therefore, to seek the guidance of objective and trustworthy outsiders to help you see things clearly and resolve them well. This is especially important when you are drawn into the conflict and/or personally affected by it.**

- When the church has faced conflict that involved two or more groups of people what process was used to resolve it?
- To what extent was the solution a win-win for both parties? Or a win-lose?
- What do you think was handled well? Handled poorly?

## Applying Growth Forces

**Key Question:** How are you exercising the biotic principles underlying Loving Relationships in your ministry?

### Principle of Interdependence

**Definition:** Individual units are connected to each other in a larger system. Changes in one ministry will affect other ministries in the church and community. Each ministry is not an isolated system. They are interconnected. Strengthening those connection will enhance the ministries. Loving relationships are the glue that holds the church together. When relationships break down it has profound implications for the progress of the ministry.

- Where have you seen interpersonal conflicts affect the progress of ministry?
- How have you maximized positive relationships in order to further ministry?

### Principle of Multiplication

**Definition:** Healthy organisms do not grow endlessly, but reproduce themselves. By reproducing ministries there is more potential for growth. More individuals will also have the opportunity to step into leadership. Loving relationships should produce more loving relationships. Some churches would consider themselves very friendly when actually they are only friendly to each other. They have no room for more relationships in their lives and so they have stopped multiplying loving relationships.

- What opportunities do you provide to help people develop personal relationships with other people in the church?
- What specific opportunities do you provide for reconciliation in the church family?
- How do you encourage people to reach out to unchurched people in love?

### Principle of Energy transformation

**Definition:** Momentum or energy already flowing, whether positive or negative, can be redirected to accomplish God's purposes. Negative energy in the form of discontent can be used to motivate people to change. Positive energy from positive relationships can be used to mobilize people for on-going ministry.

- How do you see people's relationship with Christ transforming their relationships with others?
- How have you use these examples to strengthen the body?

## Applying Growth Forces (cont.)

### Principle of Sustainability

**Definition:** Resources should be used to achieve your desired results and increase the capacity for further ministry. Focus on the fruit (results) and the seed (future growth). Loving relationships can follow the sustainability principle by encouraging us personally, mobilizing us for ministry as we challenge each other, and providing a solid base for reaching out to others and drawing them into the Kingdom.

- What benefits has your church experienced from loving relationships that would motivate you to encourage loving relationship in the church?
- How have you used the love expressed in the church to mobilize people?

### Principle of Symbiosis

**Definition:** Different ministries can cultivate cooperative relationships so the mutual benefit is greater than operating separately. Symbiosis is an intentional cooperative relationship between two or more ministries.

- How are loving relationships encouraged in each ministry of the church?
- How do the ministries in the church promote and encourage loving relationships?
- How might the ministries in the church detract and discourage loving relationships?

### Principle of Fruitfulness

**Definition:** Each ministry needs to produce discernible results in line with its intended purpose.

- Name tangible ways that people show the love of Christ to others in your congregation.
- Name tangible ways that people show the love of Christ to others outside your congregation.
- How does this meet (or not) your goal/expectations of loving relationships in your church?

## Action Guide

By now you will have spent time evaluating various aspects of Loving Relationships in your ministry setting. Spend some time in the presence of the Lord with what you have discovered. Repent for areas you have neglected and ask for God's empowerment for the journey ahead. Keep in mind that these score are indicators of health. They should inform your ministry but God is the one who leads you forward.

What are the strengths that you have in Loving Relationships?

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What are the key issues to address in order to increase health and release greater potential?

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Who needs to be involved in the action planning process? How will we move forward?

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## Action Steps

Today's Date	Action	Target Date	Person Responsible