

Greater **Sydney** Conference

Growing in **Discipleship**

Connecting
Serving
Worshiping
Sharing
Growing



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Five Growth Areas and Life-Cycles
Tool

Five Growth Areas

Your Church – Assessment

Take some time to work through the following 50 questions (it should take about 15 minutes). Circle the answer that comes to mind without having to think too much about each question. This assessment is more to give an indicator to get started than it is a precise measurement of your church. Some questions ask your opinion in regard to the culture in your congregation. While you may not feel qualified to answer on behalf of your congregation take your best guess as this will still be helpful.

Natural Church Development

If your church has completed a Natural Church Development profile in the last year, you will find it useful to look at the NCD scores in relation to this tool.

In terms of the framework being used in this guide your NCD scores will somewhat correspond to the following areas:

Loving Relationships = Connecting

Inspiring Worship = Worshipping

Passionate Spirituality = Growing

Need's oriented evangelism = Sharing

Gifts oriented ministry = Serving

In reality we can never really assess where a church is up to in terms of discipleship as we don't know everyone's spiritual practises and in any case the church is a fluid body that is always changing. However your perceptions, combined with those of your leadership team, will give you a starting point to guide your discussion as you move forward in creating your discipleship process.

- Answer the following statements as they apply to your church.

5=This is exactly us
4=Very much describes us
3=Often
2=To some extent
1=Hardly
0=Not at all

- When your leadership team have each added their totals average them to determine a score for each growth area.

Growth area 1: Connecting with one another (home and church)

1	Our church is an encouraging environment where people are built up	0	1	2	3	4	5
2	The church provides opportunities for the developing and deepening of relationships	0	1	2	3	4	5
3	Our church resolves conflict in a biblical manner	0	1	2	3	4	5
4	People in our church deal constructively with criticism	0	1	2	3	4	5
5	Our church members are equipped for leading healthy relationships especially marriage.	0	1	2	3	4	5
6	Members of our church regularly use their time and resources to care for the needs of others	0	1	2	3	4	5
7	In our church we can be honest with at least a small group about the feelings, beliefs, doubts, pains and hurts beneath the surface of life	0	1	2	3	4	5
8	Our church has a lot of groups who gather regularly for fellowship and accountability	0	1	2	3	4	5
9	The members of our church regularly pray with and for one another	0	1	2	3	4	5
10	Strategies have been developed for showing love to people who are not part of our congregation.	0	1	2	3	4	5

Relationships Total

Growth area 2: Growing in Understanding God and what He wants to do in and through us.

1	I think most people in our congregation have daily habits in place to help them grow spiritually.	0	1	2	3	4	5
2	The importance of Bible reading, prayer and other spiritual disciplines are regularly emphasised in our church.	0	1	2	3	4	5
3	I would think that most members of our congregation have people who hold them accountable for their spiritual growth	0	1	2	3	4	5
4	Opportunities are available in our church to share experiences with God	0	1	2	3	4	5
5	We have a process for helping new people engage in spiritual growth practices like bible reading and prayer.	0	1	2	3	4	5
6	I think most people in our congregation are honoring God with their finances, time and abilities.	0	1	2	3	4	5
7	Our church cares about each members spiritual growth	0	1	2	3	4	5
8	I believe our church moves people to experience God's love	0	1	2	3	4	5
9	In our groups, classes and sermons our church engages with Scripture in creative ways that connect with life	0	1	2	3	4	5
10	Most people in our church could easily explain how their faith relates to everyday life	0	1	2	3	4	5

Growing in God's word Total

Growth area 3: Worshipping together and as a lifestyle

1	I think most people in our congregation believe they are living for God's glory.	0	1	2	3	4	5
2	Most people in our congregation would see worship as a lifestyle rather than only an event.	0	1	2	3	4	5
3	Most people in our congregation engage in the worship times of our church	0	1	2	3	4	5
4	I think most people in our congregation would engage in times of private worship and or family worship	0	1	2	3	4	5
5	I would say most people in our congregation have a deep desire to spend time in God's presence	0	1	2	3	4	5
6	I think most people in our congregation would see how they manage their finances, time and abilities as acts of worship	0	1	2	3	4	5
7	Prayer, time and thought is put into our worship service in an effort to engage our congregation in a time of honouring God	0	1	2	3	4	5
8	The worship service in our congregation is an inspiring experience	0	1	2	3	4	5

9	Our congregation is more about honouring God than it is about our own needs being met.	0	1	2	3	4	5
10	The way our congregation worships impacts the rest of the week	0	1	2	3	4	5

Worship Total

Growth area 4: Serving in our homes, church, community and world

1	Most people in our congregation are actively using their spiritual gifts for God's service	0	1	2	3	4	5
2	Our church is engaged in serving the community in a significant way	0	1	2	3	4	5
3	Most people in our congregation have identified their spiritual gifts and are serving in their area of giftedness	0	1	2	3	4	5
4	An attitude of servant-hood is promoted in our congregation	0	1	2	3	4	5
5	There are lots of opportunities for our congregation to get involved in serving	0	1	2	3	4	5
6	Our congregation is more outward than inward focused	0	1	2	3	4	5
7	Our leadership team is aware of the needs of our community	0	1	2	3	4	5
8	In our congregation all age groups are encouraged to serve	0	1	2	3	4	5
9	Our congregation is linked with global opportunities for serving	0	1	2	3	4	5
10	Our congregation serves each other with enthusiasm	0	1	2	3	4	5

Serving Total

Growth area 5: Sharing faith with non-believers and discipling believers.

1	Most people in our congregation look for opportunities to build genuine relationships with people who do not know God	0	1	2	3	4	5
2	People in our congregation are equipped to share their faith	0	1	2	3	4	5
3	We have a plan for how new people can be integrated into our congregation and continue to grow in faith	0	1	2	3	4	5
4	Most people in our congregation can explain how knowing God changes their life	0	1	2	3	4	5
5	New people very quickly 'belong' in our church family	0	1	2	3	4	5

6	Our church offers ministries that our seeker friends can be linked into	0	1	2	3	4	5
7	Most people in our congregation would have close relationships with people who are not part of our church	0	1	2	3	4	5
8	Most people in our congregation would see evangelism as a lifestyle more than it is a programme.	0	1	2	3	4	5
9	People in our congregation help others grow in their devotional life	0	1	2	3	4	5
10	People in our congregation often invite their friends to church events.	0	1	2	3	4	5

Sharing Total

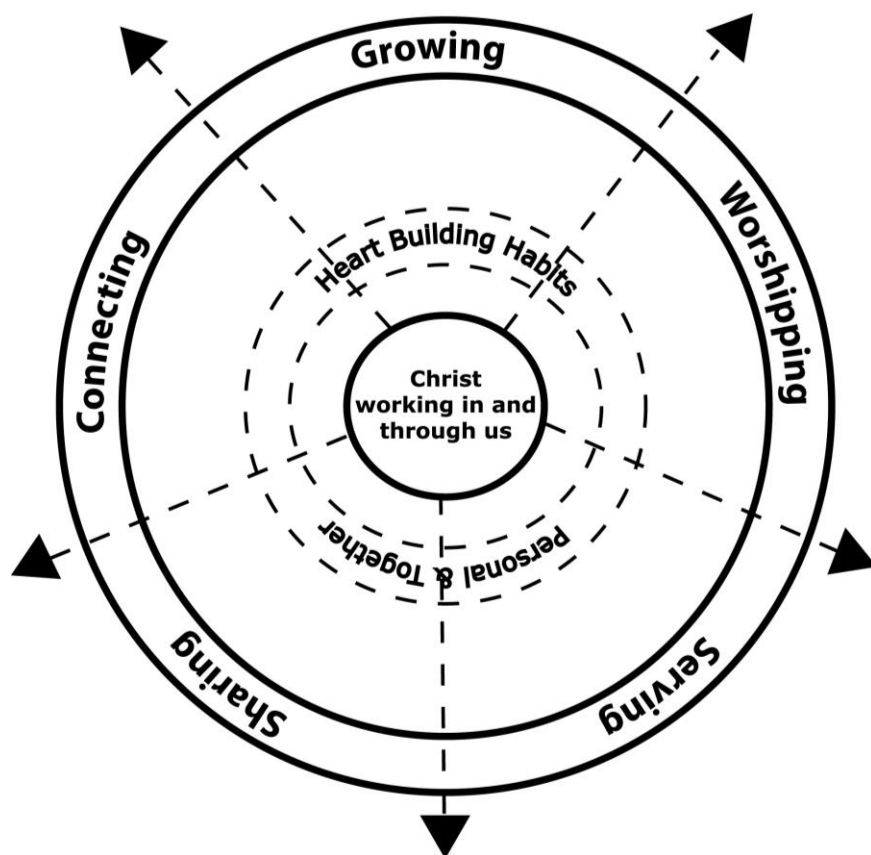
Enter your scores in the Table below for each of the five growth areas. Then average out the scores of your team.

Purpose	My Score	Team Average
Connecting		
Growing		
Worshipping		
Serving		
Sharing		

Then for **each area** use the following scale as a guide

Just Beginning 0-10	Needs more intentionality 11-20	On the way 21-30	Happening Well 31-40	Very Well Developed 41-50
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Colour your scores for each area onto the grid below. (Use the broken arrow lines as a guide in increments of ten). This gives you a picture of how balanced your congregation's discipleship growth currently is and will allow you to see what areas you might focus on to move toward an even circle.



What Does it All Mean

- If you scored high on the Growing in God's word factor then you have already made very significant progress. In this case you would be best served by working on the factor your church scored lowest in. If serving was one of the lower factors then perhaps this would be a great starting point as it can effectively engender relationships and an outward focus in terms of faith sharing.
- If Growing in God's word was amongst your lower scores then this would be the place to particularly focus energy as this factor is the most likely to engender a heart that responds in worship, serving, sharing and connecting in authentic relationships.
- If your church scored high on relationships but low on serving and sharing then put the emphasis on growing in God's word and serving.
- In reality you will need to work to some extent in all five areas at the same time however this assessment gives you a guide for where to put your initial energy.

Designing a plan for your church

Maturity matrix

What does your school currently do that promotes the five discipleship purposes?

(Aspect of church life)	Worshipping	Serving	Growing	Connecting	Sharing

Remember that the answer is not found in more programmes. More church activities can actually negate spiritual growth. We need to pray and think through what we already do and refocus what we have with discipleship in mind. In some cases we might need to add a programme however for the most part it's about putting in place ideas that encourage people in their connection with God.

Exercise:

On a large white board draw a stick man on the far left side. Then draw five lines going across the board labelled with the five growth areas.



Imagine this man become connected to your congregation for a year. What opportunities would he have to grow in the five areas and how would he link into them?

From the above exercise, where are the gaps?

Take a look at what you currently do as a church family. How can the time and energy you already spend be redirected into the growth area/s that you are particularly focusing on?

Ideas:

How can you go about having the leaders of your ministries work together in focusing on the growth areas? What opportunities for symbiosis exist between ministry areas?

For example your youth might serve the children in a way that enhances their connectedness with God, sense of community and opportunity to invite seeking friends. Your Pathfinder club might develop serving opportunities that whole church can help with along with providing another opportunity to get seeker friends involved. The opportunities are endless when you get ministries to talk through how they can help each other in the five areas.

Ideas:

What can your church family do to encourage heart building habits?

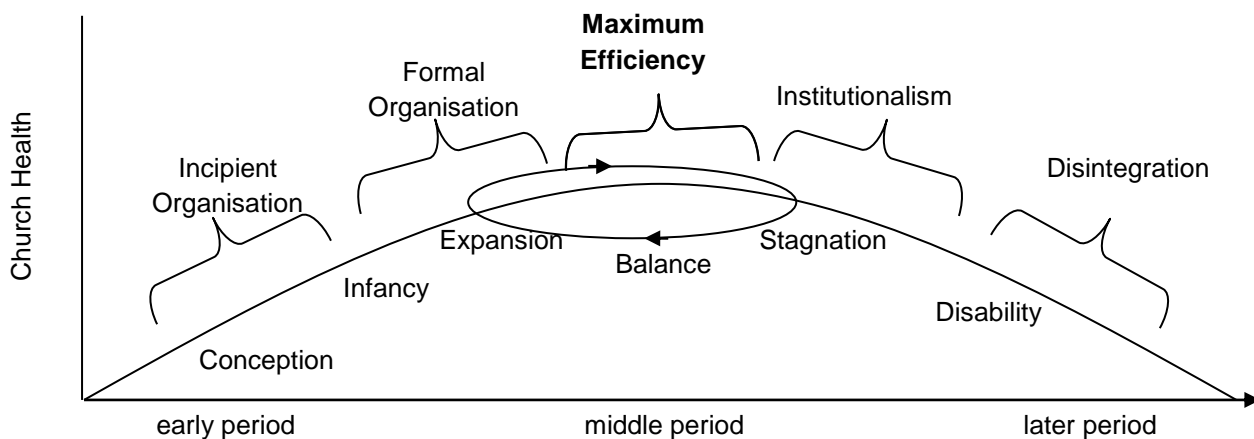
Maybe it will include:

- A sermon series on heart building habits
- Using a tool that encourages heart building habits in small groups/Sabbath school groups. Tools might include *An Ordinary Day With Jesus, Christian Life Profile* or the *monvee* resource.
- Putting in place a spiritual accountability system (see example)
- Resourcing and promoting a spiritual disciplines section of your church library

Dream – Explore – Discover what God wants to do in and through the congregation you serve.

Thinking About Church Life Cycles

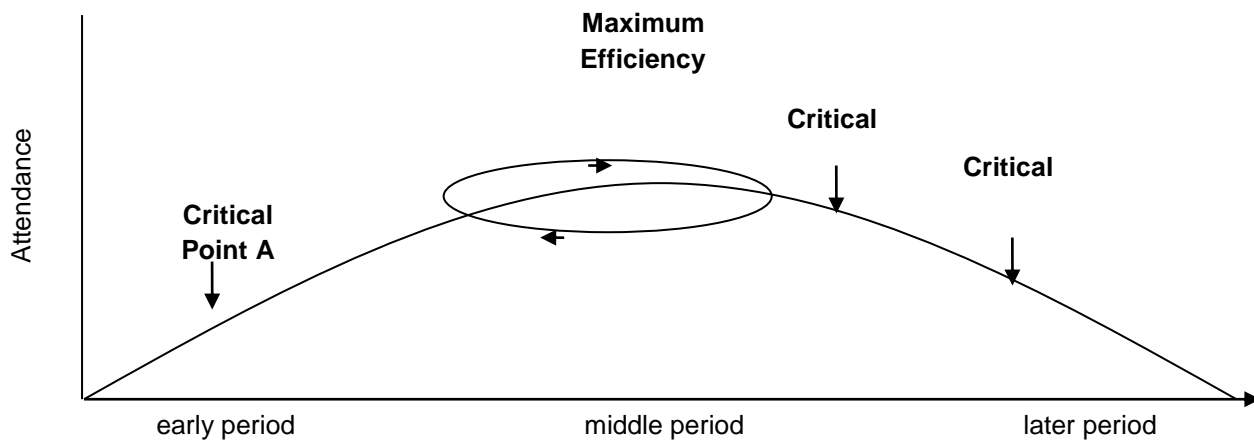
- All living organisms have a Life Cycle
- Church is a living organism - not merely an Institution
- Unlike the human body church life cycles can be renewed.
- The further down the right hand side a church moves the harder it is to renew.
- Churches can live at the maximum efficiency point
- Left to their own drift, churches move through the life cycle in remarkably predictable ways.



Organizational life stages:

- 1- Conception
- 2- Infancy
- 3- Expansion
- 4- Balance
- 5- Stagnation
- 6- Disability

Critical Points

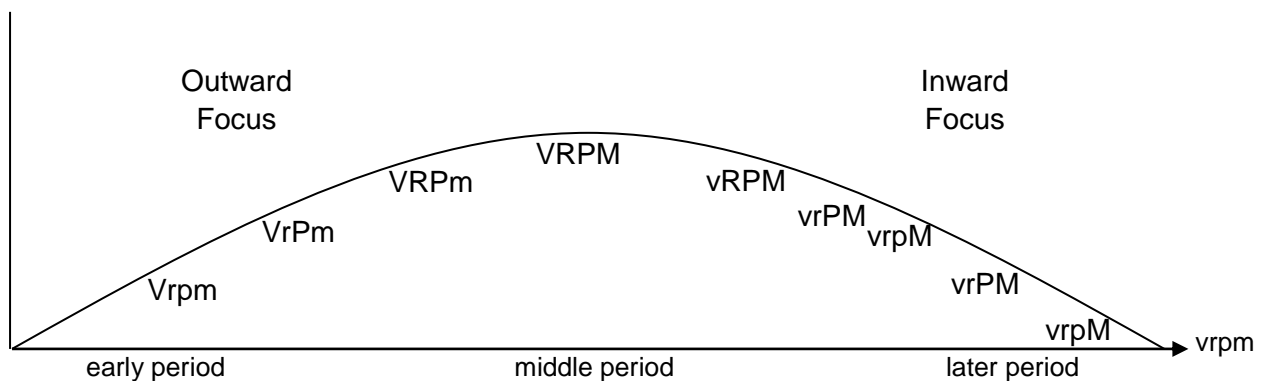


Point A – many churches never develop the programme/systems that achieve the vision of the church.

Point B – most churches do not have systems in place that help them identify when they have started moving down the right hand side.

Point C – The church realises that it is in decline however take the wrong action to address what it happening.

Vision, Relationships, Programmes, Management



V = Vision
R = Relationships
P = Programmes
M = Management

Vrpm

A healthy church plant starts with a high level of vision. There are not a lot of relationships as the church has not impacted many people at this point. There are not many programmes and management is very fluid.

VrPm

Programmes are shaped to achieve the vision.

VRPm

If the Programmes work and achieve the vision people join the groups and relationships increase.

VRPM

Systems (management) are put in place to make sure everything works well, is supported and that resources are being stewarded well.

vrPM

Vision is swapped by church life. People think programmes are the vision. New people joining do see the programmes but do not have an opportunity to hear the vision. A new generation grows up without the vision being explained to them.

vrPM

The programme is now more important than people. At this point attendance starts to decline as relationships (especially with new people) become less significant.

vrpM

People no longer want to serve in the programmes and consequently ministries are disbanded.

vrPM

The congregation meets to 'revive' the church. Instead of vision they choose to do the programmes they used to. People rally around to 'save the church'.

vrpM

The programmes die and the church keeps managing in decline until even management dies.

vrpm

The 'church; (in name only as it is not achieving the biblical purposes of the church) keeps going with just enough income to get by until often the congregation literally die.

Vision is the key to church revitalization.

Not just any vision but God's vision of what He wants the church to 'be' and 'do'.

The vision will focus on:

- **Growing in relationship with God**
- **Connecting with one another**
- **Serving in the church and community**
- **Worshipping**
- **Sharing faith.**

How each church goes about implementing the vision in terms of these five purposes will be different for every congregation. Shaping this plan takes lots of prayer, diligence and exploring together.

Avoiding Stagnation and Disability

1. Make sure a discipleship process is in place that grows people in personal spiritual disciplines.
2. Actively cast an outward focused vision.
3. Increase the pace of leadership development while in stage 3.
4. Ensure that leaders have access to ample and reliable information about the state of the ministry.
5. Leaders must help the ministry refocus and renew before hitting stagnation.

Revitalizing On The Down Side

1. **Prayer** is the most important factor in tuning churches around. Create an environment of prayer seeking **God's leading** for the mission of the church and for one another.

2. Focus on what the church is to **Be** and **Do** with a compelling **Outward Vision**

2. Focus on **Steps** over Programmes

3. Develop A Culture of **Evaluation**

4. **Communicate** Often

God Honouring, Outward Focused Vision is crucial in turning churches around and starting a new life-cycle.

Life-Cycle Assessment Tool

Step 1

Take a moment to answer the 25 questions below which will give you an idea of where your church is at on the life-cycle. Answer with the impression that first comes to mind regarding the description of your congregation.

5=This is exactly us

4=Very much describes us

3=Often

2=To some extent

1=Hardly

0=Not at all

When your leadership team have each added their totals average them to determine a score for that area of the life cycle.

1	There is a strong sense of Purpose at our church, we are very clear on where we are going.	0	1	2	3	4	5
2	The programmes our church runs change lives	0	1	2	3	4	5
3	People are generally enthusiastic about being involved in the life of our church	0	1	2	3	4	5
4	Our church is innovative and we see new ministries and programmes often	0	1	2	3	4	5
5	I know this church is being used to reach lost people	0	1	2	3	4	5
6	I can see that we have programmes to help people grow spiritually in our church	0	1	2	3	4	5
7	Our church is a lot more than a Sabbath morning worship service	0	1	2	3	4	5
8	Our church has a good system for keeping everything running well	0	1	2	3	4	5
9	Our church leaders are visionary	0	1	2	3	4	5
10	Our church has some excellent outreach ministries	0	1	2	3	4	5
11	Most of our members are in attendance every Sabbath	0	1	2	3	4	5

12	Our church board/leadership team makes significant decisions about the future plans of our church	0	1	2	3	4	5
13	We make sure we have ways new members can understand the mission of our church.	0	1	2	3	4	5
14	Our church has a variety of programmes to reach people	0	1	2	3	4	5
15	New people quickly make friends in our church family	0	1	2	3	4	5
16	Our board does a good job keeping everything sorted in our church	0	1	2	3	4	5
17	I am excited about the future plans of our church	0	1	2	3	4	5
18	Our church has a very full bulletin, there is a lot going on	0	1	2	3	4	5
19	New people are regularly becoming part of our church family	0	1	2	3	4	5
20	Our church is well managed financially	0	1	2	3	4	5
21	A lot has changed in our church over the last ten years	0	1	2	3	4	5
22	Our church is not content to be 'just the faithful little remnant'	0	1	2	3	4	5
23	People are eager to serve in our church making it easy to staff the ministries of our church	0	1	2	3	4	5
24	Our church is very well organised.	0	1	2	3	4	5

25 The Big Question:

Where would you rate your church as far as being Inward v's Outward focused?

Inward Focus

1

2

3

Outward Focus

4

5

Step 2

Copy your scores for each question into the corresponding box below and then add the lines going across and write your answer in the Totals box.

Total

Vision	1	5	9	13	17	21	
Programmes	2	6	10	14	18	22	
Relationships	3	7	11	15	19	23	
Management	4	8	12	16	20	24	

Step 3

Now average the totals of your team for each area

	My Total	Team Total
Vision		
Programmes		
Relationships		
Management		

Step 4

Now shape your VRPM profile

Over 15 = a capital letter for that factor

Less than 15 = a small letter for that factor

Step 5

Now match your profile to the life cycle chart. You may not fit a profile exactly however you will have a reasonable idea. Keep in mind there are two points on the cycle that have vrPM. One after the church has decided to turn things around and one before that decision.