

A close-up, profile view of a man with short brown hair and a beard, looking down at an open book. He is wearing a blue and red plaid shirt. The background is blurred, showing other people in a dimly lit setting. The overall tone is contemplative and focused.

GOSPEL SATURATION:

An Envisioning Toolkit For Your City

FOR PASTORS

CHRIST TOGETHER 

At Christ Together we know it can be challenging to step into leadership in a geography, to envision pastors, your staff and your church.

Our goal is to provide you with resources and share what has worked for others in cities across the nation.

Our resources are designed to initiate conversations and create environments for kingdom leaders to pray, learn, strategize and act in concert with God's mission in their community, town, city or region. Casting vision, and creating momentum will take time. In this tool kit you will find envisioning outlines, slides, tips, video's and an FAQ section.

Remember, all of the CT resources should be customized to your context. This is not a one-size fits all approach, and we believe that any prescribed strategy will vary depending on context and on the leading of the Spirit of God to specific leaders striving to faithfully carry out His purpose for the church.

Envisioning Points & Resources



DECLINE IN CHRISTIANITY

Audience: Pastor or group of Pastors

We often begin with this question: “*Could you be considered a “successful pastor” and stand before Jesus having lived in the largest Christian nation, having presided over the largest decline in Christianity?*” “*Are you prepared to give an account for what happens on your watch?*” One day we, as pastors, will have to answer this question.

The statistics are staggering:

- Between 2007 and 2014 the Christian share of the population fell from 78.4% to 70.6%.
- The share of religiously unaffiliated experienced the most growth from 16.1% to 22.8%. (America’s Changing Religious Landscape.)
- In 2026, less than 15 years from now, the total population of the United States will exceed 360 million people – the vast majority of whom will likely not be reconciled to God through Jesus Christ.
- The growth of the general population continues to accelerate at a faster rate than that of the Church. Christianity in the United States is in danger of losing ground quickly – and with that, a generation of souls.
- Likely there are more than 30 million Americans, or about 10% of the population, who are in a genuine relationship with Jesus Christ and who, in varying degrees, are attempting to orient their lives around a biblical worldview
- The U.S. is currently home to somewhere between 200,000 and 300,000 protestant church fellowships. This reveals a large, though somewhat dormant, Christian infrastructure.

NOTE: *It helps to have some statistics on your area or geography. How many churches are there? What’s the religious landscape like, etc... What is the total population of your city? How many lost people live there?*

We have great churches, with great Pastors, but we are losing ground at the same rate as Europe during the post-World War II era. If The Church in America continues doing the same thing that we are today – do you think we could actually turn the tide on Christianity in the United States? Something will have to change.

Discussion: Based on current success of the church you are pastoring, if you keep doing what you’re are doing, do we believe that we can actually turn the tide on Christianity in the United States?

What questions might we ask that would confront the scorecard: What does God want for my city? What would it look like if he did that? What will it take for us to get there? How are we measuring success in our church? Has lostness increased or decreased in your city because of the way The Church has been unified? Do you have a vision for your church, or a vision for your city?

GOSPEL SATURATION

To give every man, woman, and child repeated opportunities to see, hear, and respond to the Good News.

- Acts 1:8 – Commissioned and empowered to reach certain geographies
- Matthew 28:18-20 – The Great Commission
- 2 Peter 3:9 – Every man, woman, and child
- Romans 15:18-21 – a picture of gospel saturation in a region
- 2 Corinthians 5:17-21 – Ambassadors of reconciliation

What is your personal story for every man, woman, and child?

Is your desire to see the *whole church* bring the *whole gospel* to the *whole city*?

Resource: CT Vision Video, “How Many Churches in Your City?” video, christtogether.org/resources/videos

Discussion: In our city, what would it have to look like if God did what He wanted to do? How would The Church in our city have to change? How does the American Church typically define success? How did we arrive at *this* conclusion? How does God define a successful church?

JOHN 17

Driven by the principles found in John 17 we raise the question: “How do non-churched, non-Christians in your city know Jesus is divine by the way Christians, led by pastors, collaborate around the Gospel of Jesus Christ?” In all of our cities we have great churches with great pastors doing great things with a great heart – but we are losing ground at the same rate Europe did post World War II. As pastors we will all stand before Jesus and give an account.

In John 17 Jesus gives His disciples a vision of the future, so he prays for them. John 17: 20-23. He is praying that we would have the same unity or oneness that He has with the Father. Jesus is actually calling for Trinitarian unity here. But not just unity for unity sake, unity with a purpose. His purpose is to unify His people around the mission of gospel saturation. If the gospel can unite men/women, white/black, young/old, Arminians/Calvinists, and is from every tribe, tongue and nation people would see an incarnation of the Trinitarian God on the same mission.

Could this be the missing apologetic in our nation? We aren’t unified around the gospel. If we were, would that change the way the non-churched, non-Christians in your community see The Church of Jesus Christ? Would this give them an opportunity to see, hear and respond to the gospel?

Resource: Explore God Video, COA Video

Discussion: As a pastor do I believe this is a vision to which it is worth tithing my time? Would it impact the lostness in our geography? Do I view myself as The Pastor of A Church in my city, or A Pastor of The Church in my city? Am I willing to take personal responsibility for the lost people in my city?

NOTE: *CT has a collection of videos online that may help you with envisioning language. To see how our Directional Team would cast vision for a specific topic – watch the videos on our website from the Christ Together Gathering.*

Frequently Asked Questions on City Envisioning

CHALLENGE: INTERNAL CHALLENGE OF LEADERSHIP

As you begin to engage with Christ Together and take ownership and leadership for your geography, it is natural to ask yourself a few questions:

- Who am I to lead?
- Will people actually follow?
- Will this come across as *my* plan?

Many leaders in our network have asked themselves these same questions, and even pushed off initiating with other churches because of these doubts. So what moved them forward? The overwhelming conviction of the mission and the reality that if no one else is stepping forward to lead – who will? If not now, then when? Embrace the reality that God may be wanting to use your leadership to reach Every Man, Woman and Child in your city. This is a vision that rises up out of scripture and we cannot simply opt out.

Another question to ask as you are beginning leadership is, “Who else can I bring along with me?” Are there any spiritual leaders in your city who might have paved a way for activity to take place, or are there other Pastors who have a strategic mindset you could begin a dialogue with? Including key individuals in the conversation on the front end may help you overcome some of these perceived leadership obstacles. What churches and pastors in your city would resonate with this vision?



CHALLENGE: COMPETING GROUPS IN A CITY

As a leader, how do I engage with the para-church, existing church partnerships, social justice organizations or denominations with their own strategies and plans that exist in my city?

- Describe the “why” of keeping Gospel Saturation at the center
- Why do we focus on pastors? the largest number of believers are tethered to a pastor of a church. This enables equipping and mobilization.
- John 17 discussion explained – missing apologetic in the city.
- What is at the center of your vision? (Not prayer, not unity, not events, not social justice, not even church planting, but rather gospel saturation).
- What would it look like for The Church of your city to lead the way for God’s mission?

If a group is currently meeting in your city and they don’t have a gospel saturation focus, begin to engage their leadership in a discussion on saturation. Christ Together would love to help you with an envisioning to a group who desires to see a gospel saturation outcome, but lacks strategy to get there. Just let us know and we would be glad to get one of our Regional Directors connected to you.

CHALLENGE: HOW DO WE GET THE BIG CHURCHES INVOLVED & CREATE A SPACE FOR EVERYONE TO PARTICIPATE?

Getting activity started in a city can be challenging. It requires prayer and relationship. Across the board activity and engagement may vary. It takes time for churches to catch and own the vision and mission. Don’t get discouraged if you can’t get “that big church down the road” to participate. Here are a few recommendations based on what we’ve seen work:

- Don’t underestimate the power of praying for the churches and pastors in your geography.
- Invest your time in reaching out. Try to get 30 minutes on the calendar of a large church pastor. Thank them for their leadership and spend a few minutes just praying for them without asking for anything.
- Go ahead and start. If churches decline to participate upfront, don’t rule out their eventual participation.
- Every church participating matters if we are talking about every man, woman, and child. Let them know that they are needed.

CHALLENGE: HOW DO WE DEVELOP TRUST?

The key to any relationship is trust. The relationships between pastors and leaders in a city is no different. It takes time and effort. We've seen pastors gather people around the mission, but without the relational equity and trust, there is little to no action. So where do you start? Below are a few examples from around the nation that we've seen work.

- Pray for other churches in your city from the pulpit.
- Be relationally intentional. Ask for time on a pastor's calendar to come by and pray with them and affirm them. Or take them to lunch. One pastor in Chicago did this with a number of pastors in his city and was amazed at the overwhelming response he received.
- Cast a vision for saturation – unifying around the gospel, rather than everyone trying to become one.
- Host a prayer gathering. Invite pastors and leaders to join you for a time of prayer for your city or geography.

CHALLENGE: MOVING THE GROUP AND VISION FORWARD

Once you've got a group meeting there are challenges to keeping the vision moving forward. Agendas, calendars and budgets will all get in the way at some point. Successfully moving a group requires development and cultivation. It requires consistent leadership, patience and communication. The group must feel as if forward progress is being made. Below are a few tips we've seen leaders use to move groups of Pastors forward:

- Because agendas, calendars and budgets drive our world, challenge the group to think about what the Holy Spirit is saying to the city.
- Get people in groups to dream and pray. Involve them in a bigger conversation to help them see the need for flexibility in plans and give them space to work through what that might look like in their individual church.
- Consider doing a 24-hour retreat with a group of pastors and leaders in your city to discern what God wants for your city.
- Use the Christ Together Field Guide to begin to deepen relationships, build trust, create a common language and scorecard around a shared outcome, and set a culture and strategy for gospel saturation.

CHALLENGE: ARE THERE EXISTING GROUPS IN PLACE THAT WE COULD VISIT OR LEARN FROM?

Yes, this is the benefit of a network like Christ Together. We are here to resource and equip pastors and leaders in cities across the nation. Our goal is to provide you with resources, tools and real life experiences that can be modified to fit your context. From church planting to discipleship models and citywide activity, we have groups that would be happy to meet with you as you strategize for your geography.

Remember, Christ Together is a network of networks, denominations, and churches. Often times, there can already be great strategies in place around the four strategies of mobilization, transformation, collaboration, and multiplication. However, the activity might not be directed toward the outcome of gospel saturation.

Contact us to determine the best Christ Together partner city to gain insight from, and we will be happy to make a connection to leadership.

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