



# revitalization

FOR SMALL CHURCHES



## SERMON SERIES: THRIVE LISTENING QUESTION

### Introduction and Background

This set of sermon series is one possible way to preach through the Listening Questions in the Thrive Binder. While some congregations may find it effective to go through the Listening Questions over a short period of time, others will benefit from processing the material over several months.

Each set of three sermons focuses on a different Listening Question.

### In this Series:

1. God's Call to All People is DISCIPLESHIP
2. God's Call to the Church is LOVE
3. God Calls Me to Live for HIM
4. Serve and Bless
5. God's Call for Our Congregation

# Thrive Listening Question 1:

## God's Call to All People is DISCIPLESHIP

**Question:** What is God's Invitation and Challenge for All People?

**Answer:** God invites and challenges all people to Become Disciples, to Be Disciples, and to Make Disciples.

### Question 1, Week 1: Becoming Disciples

- **Sermon Title:** Becoming Disciples: Believe and Follow
- **Big Idea:** All human beings are invited and challenged to become disciples - to believe and follow Jesus.
- **Scripture:** Romans 3:19-26
- **Theme:** We are created to love God. Our sin separates us from God, but Jesus' death saves us and reconciles us to God so we can believe in Him and follow Him.

### Question 1, Week 2: Being Disciples

- **Sermon Title:** Being Disciples: Living in Love
- **Big Idea:** All human beings are invited and challenged to be disciples - to Love God and Love Others
- **Scripture:** Mark 12:28-31 (The Greatest Commandments)
- **Theme:** Throughout the Bible, we read that the Christian life can be summed up in two parts: Loving God and Loving Others. We love because God first loved us and we love with the help of the Spirit within us.

### Question 1, Week 3: Making Disciples

- **Sermon Title:** Making Disciples: Sharing God's Love
- **Big Idea:** All human beings are invited and challenged to make disciples – to help other people become disciples and be disciples.
- **Scripture:** Matthew 9:35-38, Matthew 28:16-20 (The Great Commission)
- **Theme:** Jesus saw people and had compassion on lost people and invited his disciples to join him in caring for them; later, he sent us all out to make disciples by helping people become disciples and live as disciples.

### Looking Beyond Sunday Mornings

- Consider leading Bible Studies or Discussion groups using Page 22 from the Thrive Binder

# Thrive Listening Question 2:

## God's Call to the Church is LOVE

**Question:** What is God's Call to the Church? (the "big C", universal church rather than our congregation specifically)

**Answer:** The Church is Called to Love God, Love One Another, and Love Our Neighbours.

### Question 2, Week 1: Loving God

- **Sermon Title:** Loving God: Everyday Worship
- **Big Idea:** The Church is Called to Love God.
- **Scripture:** Luke 7:36-50
- **Theme:** We love God because he first loved us... he has forgiven us and made us his own. And our love for him overflows into worship... all the ways that we give God glory - through words, actions, prayer, music, reading scripture, trusting God.

### Question 2, Week 2: Loving One Another

- **Sermon Title:** Loving One Another: Being Part of the Family
- **Big Idea:** The Church Is Called to Love One Another (especially other Christians)
- **Scripture:** I John 4:7-5:12
- **Theme:** We love others because God loved us first. That includes serving one another, helping each other grow in our faith, and enjoying one another's company - basically, being a family. Jesus said that others would know we are His disciples because of how we love one another.

### Question 2, Week 3: Loving Our Neighbours

- **Sermon Title:** Loving our Neighbours: Reaching Out
- **Big Idea:** The Church is Called to love Our Neighbours (especially those outside the church community)
- **Scripture:** 2 Corinthians 5:11-21
- **Theme:** God loves us, and so we love God in return, and that overflows into love for God's people... but it doesn't stop there. We are also called to love neighbours and strangers... people outside our church community, both nearby and far away. There are many things we can do to love our neighbours practically and tangibly. But one significant way we show that love is by sharing the good news about Jesus, through our words and our actions.

### Looking Beyond Sunday Mornings

- Consider leading Bible Studies or Discussion groups using Page 23 from the Thrive Binder

# Thrive Listening Question 3:

## God's Call to Live for HIM

**Question:** Who is God Calling Me to Be and What Am I Called to Do?

**Answer:** God has saved me, gifted me, and calls me to live for Him. Our congregation has received every gift we need to be who God has called us to be and to do what God is calling us to do in this place, at this time, with these people.

### Question 3, Week 1: God Saved Me (Responding to God's Salvation)

- **Sermon Title:** Living for Jesus: Responding to God's Salvation
- **Big Idea:** God has saved us and calls us to live for Him. We respond to God's Salvation by believing, trusting and following Him.
- **Scripture:** Colossians 2:6-19 or Ephesians 1:3-23
- **Theme:** Jesus loves you enough to die for you... and Jesus is calling you to believe in Him, trust Him, and follow Him. The Colossians 2 passage lends itself well to a focus on responding through baptism. The Ephesians passage leads to a response of thanksgiving and praise.

### Question 3, Week 2: Responding to God's Gifts

- **Sermon Title:** Living for Jesus: Responding to God's Gifts
- **Big Idea:** God has given us His Holy Spirit and calls us to live for Him. We respond to the Holy Spirit by discovering and welcoming the gifts He has given us.
- **Scripture:** 1 Corinthians 1:4-9, 1 Corinthians 12:1-11
- **Theme:** The Gospel has both an individual and communal component to it. We are saved as individuals and into a community of faith. A congregation is made up of people with specific spiritual gifts, talents, and passions. Paul told the Corinthians that they (as a congregation) did not lack in any spiritual gift... it's a good reminder that God has given us every spiritual gift that we need at this time. But that raises the question... what gifts has God given each of us?

### Question 3, Week 3: Responding to God's Call

- **Sermon Title:** Living for Jesus: Loving and Serving
- **Big Idea:** God has placed me in his family/body and calls me to live for him. We give God Glory when we use our gifts to love and serve others.
- **Scripture:** Romans 12:1-13, (1 Peter 4:10-11)
- **Theme:** What is God Calling Me to Do? (How Can I Serve God?) Loving God and loving others... worship and service, spiritual gifts and the body of Christ... it all comes together here in Romans 12. We can live for God because of what God has done for us in Christ and through the power of the Holy Spirit... and it ends up looking pretty practical.

### Looking Beyond Sunday Mornings

- Consider leading Bible Studies or Discussion groups using Page 24 from the Thrive Binder

# Thrive Listening Question 4:

## Serve and Bless

**Question:** Who is God Calling my Church to Serve and to Bless?

**Answer:** God is calling us to serve and to bless our neighbours (in our homes, our communities, and our world)

### Question 4, Week 1: The Good Samaritan - Who is My Neighbour?

- **Sermon Title:** Who is My Neighbour?
- **Big Idea:** God calls us to serve and bless (to love!) our neighbours... the people we see who need our help.
- **Scripture:** Luke 10:25-37
- **Theme:** The Samaritan had a different ethnicity, a different religion, probably a different hometown, different friends, different family... but he became a neighbour to the injured man when he saw his need and had mercy on him. Our neighbours include the community around our building, our immediate and extended families, the people who live close to us, the people we work with, the people we see in the community, etc. Includes but is not limited to the people who live next door or the people who are “like us”.

### Question 4, Week 2: How do we Love our Neighbours?

- **Sermon Title:** What Does love look Like?
- **Big Idea:** We love our neighbours (even the ones we don't like!) by doing good to them.
- **Scripture:** Romans 12:9-21, Romans 13:7-10, Luke 6:27-36
- **Theme:** What does it look like to serve and bless and love our neighbours? First of all, it means not just loving the neighbours that we like or the ones that like us. It looks like paying our bills and our debts, lending without expecting anything back, helping people who need help, and doing to others what you would want them to do to you. It looks like showing respect and honour to our elders, first responders, government officials, and others. It might look like sharing a meal with someone you have known for a while, or striking up a conversation with someone you have just met.

### Question 4, Week 3: How do we Love Strangers... The Neighbours We Have Never Met?

- **Sermon Title:** The Neighbour I Have Never Met
- **Big Idea:** We are called to serve and to bless strangers... the neighbours we have never met.
- **Scripture:** 2 Corinthians 8:1-15, 9:5-15
- **Theme:** Can you love someone you have never met? Can you “love your neighbours as yourself” if they live on the other side of the world? Paul certainly thought so. In his day, the Christians in Jerusalem were facing a severe famine. Paul was convinced that all believers (both Jewish and Gentile) are one family in Christ. So he challenged and encouraged believers in Philippi and in Corinth and other places... and they gave generously and collected an offering that Paul and others were able to take and give to the poor believers in Jerusalem. Our neighbours those who need God's love and mercy. We can love them by doing good to them... by treating them the way we would want to be treated. We can welcome people into our lives and give our time and our finances... we can pray, and pray, and pray.

### Looking Beyond Sunday Mornings

- Consider leading Bible Studies or Discussion groups using Page 25 from the Thrive Binder

# Thrive Listening Question 5:

## God's Call for Our Congregation

**Question:** Why do We Exist? What Is God's Call for our Congregation?

*\*\*The answer to this question will be different for each congregation and answering it is the purpose of the Thrive resources and a significant part of the Revitalization process. (See pages 26-27 of the Thrive Binder)*

The example series that follows uses the following answer:

**Answer:** God is calling us to be a worshipping community that helps people to experience God's salvation and be formed in Christ-likeness.

This series is organized using the rubric of Belonging (community), Believing (salvation), and Becoming (formation/discipleship). It could easily have included a fourth sermon focused on the aspect of worshipping.

### Question 5, Week 1: Belonging - A Worshipping Community

- **Sermon Title:** Belonging: Called to be a Worshipping Community
- **Big Idea:** We have been called into one nation/household/dwelling/family. And when we live as God's family, we point to God's love.
- **Scripture:** Ephesians 2:11-22, Ephesians 4:1-6
- **Theme:** God has called us to be a worshipping community... we belong and we help others to belong to a welcoming, caring, adoptive, inter-generational family. When we live as God's family, we point to God's love.

### Question 5, Week 2: Believing - Experiencing God's Salvation

- **Sermon Title:** Believing: Called to Experience God's Salvation
- **Big Idea:** We have peace with God and hope for today and tomorrow because Christ died for us.
- **Scripture:** Romans 5:1-21
- **Theme:** God is calling us to experience and help others experience salvation through Jesus Christ. It looks like helping each other trust Jesus and experiencing the hope and peace that come with God's gracious gift of salvation

### Question 5, Week 3: Becoming - Being Formed in Christ-likeness

- **Sermon Title:** Becoming - Being Formed in Christ-likeness
- **Big Idea:** We are called to help each other grow in faith and be formed in Christ-likeness.
- **Scripture:** Ephesians 4:11-24
- **Theme:** God is calling us to help each other grow in faith and be formed in Christ-likeness. It looks like learning, growing, serving, and being transformed by God's Holy Spirit.

### Looking Beyond Sunday Mornings

- Consider leading Bible Studies or Discussion groups using Page 26-27 from the Thrive Binder