



revitalization

FOR SMALL CHURCHES



SERMON SERIES: THRIVE DISCERNING PHASE

Introduction and Background

This set of sermon series is one possible way to preach through the first four of the “Eight Signs of a Thriving Church” from the Thrive Binder. While some congregations may find it effective to go through these signs over a short period of time, others will benefit from processing the material over a few months.

Each set of three sermons focuses on a sign of a thriving church.

Discerning the Sign of Community

Question: How is God calling us to live as a Community?

Answer: We are called to live as God’s family and to point to God’s love

What it Looks Like: We live as a community when we live, eat, and play together, when we rejoice, grieve and forgive together, and when we talk, listen and pray together.

Reflection: To what extent are we living as the community and family that God has created and called us to be? Is God calling us to anything new or different? What should we keep doing? Stop doing? Start doing?

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

Thrive Discerning Phase 1:

Discerning the Sign of COMMUNITY

Question: How is God calling us to live as a Community?

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Sign 1, Week 1: Family Life: Being Together

- **Question:** How is God calling us to live as a Community?
- **Answer:** We are called to live as God's family and to point to God's love.
- **What it looks like:** Thriving communities live, eat, share and play together.
- **Scripture:** Acts 2:42-47
- **Reflection:** How are we sharing our lives and how may God be calling us to grow in this area?
- *Additional Scripture: Ephesians 4:32; 1 Corinthians 12:26-27*

Sign 1, Week 2: Family Life: In Good Times and Bad

- **Question:** How is God calling us to live as a Community?
- **Answer:** We are called to live as God's family and to point to God's love.
- **What it looks like:** Thriving communities celebrate the good, grieve with those who grieve, and forgive each other when relationships get messy.
- **Scripture:** Romans 12:9-21; Colossians 3:12-15
- **Reflection:** How are we caring for one another and how may God be calling us to grow in this area?

Sign 1, Week 3: Family Life: Conversation

- **Question:** How is God calling us to live as a Community?
- **Answer:** We are called to live as God's family and to point to God's love.
- **What it looks like:** Thriving communities talk, listen, and pray together.
- **Scripture:** Philippians 1:27-2:18
- **Reflection:** How are our conversations and how may God be calling us to grow in this area?

Looking Beyond Sunday Mornings

- Consider leading Bible Studies or Discussion groups using Pages 28 and 31-33 from the Thrive Binder (pages from 2019 printing) To what extent is your church living as the community and family that God has created and called you to be?

Thrive Discerning Phase 2:

Discerning the Sign of WORSHIP

Question: How is God calling us to respond to Him in Worship?

Answer: We are called to worship and celebrate God and His work in our world and in our lives - to give back to God as we proclaim God's goodness.

What it Looks Like: We worship through praying and praising, giving and celebrating God's gifts, and hearing and telling God's story.

Reflection: To what extent are we worshiping as God has created and called us to worship? Is God calling us to anything new or different? What should we keep doing? Stop doing? Start doing?

Sign 2, Week 1: Worship: Praying and Praising

- **Question:** How is God calling us to respond to Him in Worship?
- **Answer:** We are called to worship and celebrate God and His work in our world and in our lives - to give back to God as we proclaim God's goodness.
- **What it looks like:** We worship when we praise God, when we pray to Him, and when we thank Him for answered prayer.
- **Scripture:** Philippians 4:4-9; Colossians 3:15-17
- **Reflection:** How is our praying and praising and how may God be calling us to grow in this area?
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Sign 2, Week 2: Worship: Giving and Celebrating God's Gifts

- **Question:** How is God calling us to respond to Him in Worship?
- **Answer:** We are called to worship and celebrate God and His work in our world and in our lives - to give back to God as we proclaim God's goodness.
- **What it looks like:** We worship when we praise God, when we pcelebrate God and His gifts and we give back to Him in response.
- **Scripture:** Mark 12:41-44; John 12:1-8
- **Reflection:** How is our giving and thanksgiving and how may God be calling us to grow in this area?

Sign 2, Week 3: Worship: Hearing and Telling God's Story

- **Question:** How is God calling us to respond to Him in Worship?
- **Answer:** We are called to worship and celebrate God and His work in our world and in our lives - to give back to God as we proclaim God's goodness.
- **What it looks like:** We worship when we praise read, preach, hear, and tell God's Word.
- **Scripture:** Nehemiah 8:1-12
- **Reflection:** How are we doing at hearing and telling God's story and how may God be calling us to grow in this area?

Looking Beyond Sunday Mornings

- Consider leading Bible Studies or Discussion groups using Pages 31-33 from the Thrive Binder To what extent is your church worshiping God has created and called you to worship?
- Consider beginning a conversation about your church's mission, vision and values based on Pages 38-42 from the Thrive Binder. In what ways do Community and Worship shape your values? What else shapes your values?

Thrive Discerning Phase 3:

Discerning the Sign of FORMATION

Question: How is God calling us to respond to Him in Worship?

Answer: We are called to worship and celebrate God and His work in our world and in our lives - to give back to God as we proclaim God's goodness.

What it Looks Like: We worship through praying and praising, giving and celebrating God's gifts, and hearing and telling God's story.

Reflection: To what extent are we worshipping as God has created and called us to worship? Is God calling us to anything new or different? What should we keep doing? Stop doing? Start doing?

Sign 3, Week 1: Formed in Christ-Likeness: Becoming Like Jesus

- **Question:** How is God calling us to respond to Him in Discipleship?
- **Answer:** We are called to help each other grow in faith and be formed in Christ-likeness.
- **What it looks like:** We become more like Jesus when we believe and respond to God.
- **Scripture:** Romans 8:1-17, 26-30
- **Reflection:** How are we responding to God and how may God be calling us to grow in this area?
- *Additional Scripture: 2 Corinthians 3:17-18; Colossians 3:10; Luke 6:40; 1 John 4:13-17*

Sign 3, Week 2: Formed in Christ-Likeness: Transformed by God's Word

- **Question:** How is God calling us to respond to Him in Discipleship?
- **Answer:** We are called to help each other grow in faith and be formed in Christ-likeness.
- **What it looks like:** We become more like Jesus when we are changed by God's Word.
- **Scripture:** 2 Timothy 3:14-4:5
- **Reflection:** How are we being changed by God's Word and how may God be calling us to grow in this area?
- *Additional Scripture: Hebrews 4:12*

Sign 3, Week 3: Formed in Christ-Likeness: Leading by Example

- **Question:** How is God calling us to respond to Him in Discipleship?
- **Answer:** We are called to help each other grow in faith and be formed in Christ-likeness.
- **What it looks like:** We become more like Jesus when we learn from the example of others and lead others by example.
- **Scripture:** 1 Thessalonians 1:1-8, 2:7-12
- **Reflection:** How are we learning and leading by example and how may God be calling us to grow in this area?
- *Additional Scripture: 1 Corinthians 11:1-2; Philippians 3:17; Hebrews 13:7-8; 1 Timothy 4:12*

Looking Beyond Sunday Mornings

- Consider leading Bible Studies or Discussion groups using Pages 31-33 from the Thrive Binder To what extent is your church discipling people and helping one another become more like Jesus?
- Consider beginning a conversation based on pages 29-30 and 34-36 from the Thrive Binder. What kind of Discipleship Culture does your congregation have? In what ways are you equipping people to use their spiritual gifts, talents and passions?

Thrive Discerning Phase 3:

Discerning the Sign of MISSION

Question: How is God calling us to take part in His Mission?

Answer: We are called to bear witness to the love of Jesus and the reign of God both locally and globally. We are called to experience and help others experience hope and salvation through Jesus Christ.

What it Looks Like: We take part in God's mission as we love our neighbours, serve our neighbours, and share God's hope with our neighbours...both locally and globally.

Reflection: To what extent are we taking part in God's mission and helping others experience hope and salvation through Jesus Christ? How are we bearing witness to the love of Jesus and the reign of God? Is God calling us to anything new or different? What should we keep doing? Stop doing? Start doing?

Sign 4, Week 1: Taking Part in God's Mission: Loving our Neighbours

- **Question:** How is God calling us to take part in his Mission?
- **Answer:** We are called to bear witness to the love of Jesus and the reign of God both locally and globally. We are called to help people experience hope and salvation through Jesus Christ.
- **What it looks like:** We take part in God's mission as we love our neighbours. If we truly want to love our neighbours we need to spend time building trusting relationships with them.
- **Scripture:** Isaiah 43:10-13; Luke 19:10; Mark 2: 13-17
- **Reflection:** How are we sharing Jesus' love and how may God be calling us to grow in this area?

Sign 4, Week 2: Taking Part in God's Mission: Serving our Neighbours

- **Question:** How is God calling us to take part in his Mission?
- **Answer:** We are called to bear witness to the love of Jesus and the reign of God both locally and globally. We are called to help people experience hope and salvation through Jesus Christ.
- **What it looks like:** We take part in God's mission as we serve our neighbours, both locally and globally. We serve our neighbours out of love for them and for Christ, not for our own benefit.
- **Scripture:** Isaiah 43:10-13; Luke 19:10; Mark 10:45; Matthew 25:31-46
- **Reflection:** How are we serving our neighbours and how may God be calling us to grow in this area?

Sign 4, Week 3: Taking Part in God's Mission: Sharing Hope with our Neighbours

- **Question:** How is God calling us to take part in his Mission?
- **Answer:** We are called to bear witness to the love of Jesus and the reign of God both locally and globally. We are called to help people experience hope and salvation through Jesus Christ.
- **What it looks like:** We take part in God's mission as we share God's hope with our neighbours. We testify to the grace we have experienced and the reason for the hope that we have.
- **Scripture:** Isaiah 43:10-13; Luke 19:10; Romans 10:5-15; 1 Peter 3:15-18
- **Reflection:** How are we sharing God's hope and how may God be calling us to grow in this area?

Looking Beyond Sunday Mornings

- Consider leading Bible Studies or Discussion groups using pages 31-33 and 37 from the Thrive Binder To what extent is your church taking part in God's mission and bearing witness to the love of Christ?
- Consider continuing the conversation about your church's mission, vision and values based on Pages 38-42 from the Thrive Binder. How could you describe who God is calling you to be and what God is calling you to do?
- Consider leading a prayerful discernment exercise like the one on pages 43-45 of the Thrive Binder.