



Bethany Forward

Ministry Leader Discussion Guide

Facing Reality. Reimagining Ministry. Renewing Leadership.

Reality → Renewal → Sustainability

Nehemiah 2:17–18

“You see...” → “Come...” → “Let us rebuild...”

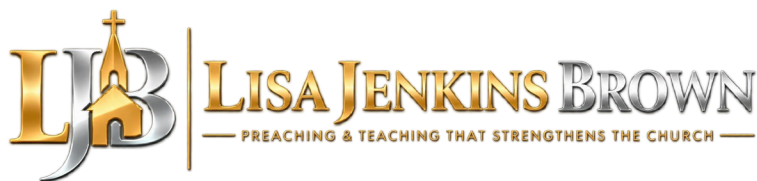
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HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

Four Meetings After the Summit

This resource builds on the Bethany Forward Leadership Summit and Participant Workbook. It does not introduce a new curriculum. It is designed to help participants reflect on, apply, and continue the work already begun.

Use it with ministry leaders, deacons, trustees, Christian Education leaders, committee chairs, or another group that can act together. Hold four 60-minute meetings over approximately four to eight weeks. Each meeting uses completed workbook work as a starting point and ends with one authorized decision or a clear recommendation to the person or body that can decide.

The rhythm

MEETING 1 / REALITY Verify one important observation or examine one practice.

MEETING 2 / ENGAGEMENT Remove one barrier to meaningful participation.

MEETING 3 / LEADERSHIP Share one responsibility with real support.

MEETING 4 / FOLLOW-THROUGH Connect the ministry's next action to Bethany's 12-month agenda.

Facilitation agreements

Speak from evidence and experience. Do not make one person or generation the problem. Invite voices affected by decisions, including those absent from the room. Record decisions in the ministry's normal minutes. This guide supports discernment; it does not replace Bethany's governance or approval process.

A workable role split

The convener keeps time and ensures every voice can enter. A recorder captures the decision, owner, date, and open questions. An owner follows through between meetings. These roles may rotate; someone should explicitly accept each one.

Bring the completed Participant Workbook to every meeting. The pages named in each preparation section are references, not assignments to repeat.

MEETING 1 / SEE CLEARLY

Facing Reality

PURPOSE Reach shared clarity about one reality affecting this ministry and authorize a focused next step to verify or address it.

Preparation

1. Review the Bethany Reality Check, Mission Tradition Method Habit, and What Must Never Change and What Can Change in the Participant Workbook (pages 7–11). Bring the responses already completed; do not fill out the tools again.
2. Bring one current ministry record or example that can be shared appropriately. Separate what it shows from what the team still assumes.
3. Invite a person who can speak from a different ministry experience. If someone affected is absent, plan how to hear them after the meeting.

Opening Scripture and Prayer

Read 1 Chronicles 12:32; Romans 12:2.

God of truth, give us the courage to see the ministry we have today. Quiet blame and defensiveness. Help us listen, discern, and honor the people entrusted to our care. Amen.

60-minute meeting flow

- 5 min • Scripture and opening prayer
- 10 min • What the summit surfaced for this ministry
- 25 min • Discuss evidence, practice, and missing perspectives
- 15 min • Decide one fact-finding or change-testing step
- 5 min • Confirm owner, date, and closing prayer

Facilitator cue

Keep the conversation on this ministry's present work. Ask "How do we know?" when a statement becomes a conclusion. Protect what is life giving while making room to examine a familiar practice.

MEETING 1 / CONVERSATION

Discuss What the Ministry Can Act On

Use the completed workbook pages and the experience in the room. These questions are prompts for discussion, not a second assessment. Choose the questions that help the group reach the meeting outcome.

1. What did we learn at the summit that applies directly to our ministry?

Name one observation from a completed workbook page and one example from current ministry life.

2. What reality have we been reluctant to name?

Describe its effect on people without assigning blame to a person or generation.

3. Where do our impressions and available evidence agree or diverge?

If evidence is thin, name what would help the team learn.

4. Which practice deserves a closer look, and what purpose does it serve?

Return to the classification already made in the workbook; discuss its impact rather than reclassifying the whole ministry.

5. What must remain faithful in this ministry, and what could change in form?

Distinguish a conviction worth protecting from a method that could be tested.

6. Whose experience would sharpen or challenge our current picture?

Choose a respectful way to listen before the next meeting.

Before deciding

Ask the recorder to distinguish what the group knows, what it believes but still needs to test, and who may be affected by the next step.

MEETING 1 / DECISION

Record One Outcome

Authorize one focused step to verify an important reality or test whether a current practice still serves its purpose.

Decision record

Working statement we are examining

Evidence or perspective still needed

Next step and who will lead it

Date to report back

If the group cannot yet decide

Record what must be learned or who must approve the step, assign someone to obtain it, and set a date to return. “We need more information” becomes useful only when someone owns the next step.

Closing prayer

God, keep us honest and hopeful. Bless the people who will help us learn what we do not yet know. Give us wisdom to act on truth with love. Amen.

Follow-up responsibility

The named owner gathers the agreed evidence or conversations and reports back at Meeting 2. The chair records the decision in the ministry’s usual minutes.

MEETING 2 / MAKE ROOM

Reimagining Engagement

PURPOSE Choose one barrier this ministry can remove so that people can belong, contribute, and grow more readily.

Preparation

1. Review the Bethany Engagement Journey Map, Engagement Barrier Audit, The Empty Chair, and Intergenerational Ministry Assessment (pages 13, 18–20). Use the CONNECT → BELONG → DISCOVER → SERVE → DEVELOP → LEAD pathway already mapped; bring the work completed.
2. Ask one person who recently encountered this ministry about their experience, if they are willing. Bring their words with permission and without making them speak for a whole group.
3. Bring the report from Meeting 1. Note what it changes about the team’s understanding of participation.

Opening Scripture and Prayer

Read 1 Corinthians 12:12–27; Ephesians 4:15–16.

Christ, you make us one body with many members. Open our hearts to people whose gifts and stories we have not fully received. Lead us toward a welcome that becomes belonging. Amen.

60-minute meeting flow

- 5 min • Scripture and opening prayer
- 10 min • Report from Meeting 1
- 25 min • Discuss the point of friction and missing voices
- 15 min • Choose one barrier-removal test
- 5 min • Confirm owner, date, and closing prayer

Facilitator cue

Avoid treating “people are not involved” as a complete diagnosis. Ask what a person actually encounters. A single story is evidence of one experience; do not turn it into a claim about everyone.

MEETING 2 / CONVERSATION

Discuss What the Ministry Can Act On

Use the completed workbook pages and the experience in the room. These questions are prompts for discussion, not a second assessment. Choose the questions that help the group reach the meeting outcome.

1. Where are people getting stuck in this ministry's current pathway?

Identify a specific handoff, invitation, role description, or relationship point.

2. Which barrier from the completed audit most affects this ministry?

What have people affected said, and what are we still assuming?

3. Who is missing from our relationships or decision spaces?

Ask whether people have voice, visibility, value, responsibility, and relationship here.

4. What would meaningful participation look like for someone new?

Consider a real contribution with support, not simply attendance or a vacant slot.

5. What is one barrier we can remove in the next month?

Choose a small change within the ministry's authority, such as clarifying an invitation or improving a handoff.

6. How will we know whether the change helped?

Decide whose experience to ask about after the test.

Before deciding

Ask the recorder to distinguish what the group knows, what it believes but still needs to test, and who may be affected by the next step.

MEETING 2 / DECISION

Record One Outcome

Approve one modest barrier-removal test and decide whose experience will be heard after it.

Decision record

Barrier and person or group affected

Change to test and permission needed

Owner and support person

Date and person to ask about the experience

If the group cannot yet decide

Record what must be learned or who must approve the step, assign someone to obtain it, and set a date to return. “We need more information” becomes useful only when someone owns the next step.

Closing prayer

God of welcome, turn our good intentions into clear, caring action. Help us listen to those who enter, those who stay, and those who have found no easy place. Amen.

Follow-up responsibility

The owner tests the agreed change, asks the person or group identified about its effect, and reports what happened at Meeting 3.

MEETING 3 / SHARE THE WORK

Renewing Leadership

PURPOSE Choose one responsibility to share through a supported development step that respects the capacity of the people already serving.

Preparation

1. Review the Ministry Dependency Map, Leadership Capacity Map, and Leadership Development Planner (pages 25–28). Use the entries already made and the IDENTIFY → INVITE → EQUIP → EMPOWER → SUPPORT → RELEASE sequence; do not repeat the map.
2. Ask the person now carrying the relevant responsibility what support or relief would help. Do not propose transferring their work without involving them.
3. Bring the report from Meeting 2. Note any gifts or leadership potential that emerged through better participation.

Opening Scripture and Prayer

Read Ephesians 4:11–12; Exodus 18:17–23; Mark 6:31.

Lord, you call the whole body to ministry and invite weary people to rest. Give us humility to share responsibility, patience to equip one another, and care for those who have carried much. Amen.

60-minute meeting flow

- 5 min • Scripture and opening prayer
- 10 min • Report from Meeting 2
- 25 min • Discuss concentration, capacity, and support
- 15 min • Approve one supported sharing or development step
- 5 min • Confirm owner, date, and closing prayer

Facilitator cue

Describe a concentrated task as a design issue, not a personal failure. A handoff needs consent, clarity, authority, training, and a person to call when problems arise. Rest is part of sustainability, including pastoral renewal.

MEETING 3 / CONVERSATION

Discuss What the Ministry Can Act On

Use the completed workbook pages and the experience in the room. These questions are prompts for discussion, not a second assessment. Choose the questions that help the group reach the meeting outcome.

1. Where is responsibility unnecessarily concentrated?

Name one bounded task or decision, not a person as the problem.

2. Who might be ready to learn or share part of this work?

What evidence of interest or gifts do we have, and have we asked the person?

3. What support would make an invitation responsible?

Clarify role, time, training, mentor, feedback, and decision boundaries.

4. What must the current leader be able to release?

Ask how the team can avoid handing over a task while retaining every decision.

5. What burden should not be shifted onto another already stretched person?

Name the pastor, staff, volunteers, and emerging leaders whose capacity needs protection.

6. What one development step can begin before the next meeting?

A conversation, observation opportunity, or supervised task may be enough.

Before deciding

Ask the recorder to distinguish what the group knows, what it believes but still needs to test, and who may be affected by the next step.

MEETING 3 / DECISION

Record One Outcome

Approve one supported development or responsibility-sharing step with the consent of those directly involved.

Decision record

Bounded responsibility to share or teach

Person to invite and who will ask

Support, authority, and boundaries

Check-in date and capacity safeguard

If the group cannot yet decide

Record what must be learned or who must approve the step, assign someone to obtain it, and set a date to return. “We need more information” becomes useful only when someone owns the next step.

Closing prayer

Jesus, you invited your disciples to rest. Renew those who lead and those who serve quietly. Help us equip without using people up, and trust the gifts you have placed among us. Amen.

Follow-up responsibility

The ministry owner speaks with the current and prospective leaders, confirms consent and support, and brings an update to Meeting 4. The chair routes any required approvals.

MEETING 4 / LET US REBUILD

Moving Forward

PURPOSE Confirm the ministry's contribution to Bethany's 12-month priorities and approve the next concrete action, owner, and review date.

Preparation

1. Review the Bethany 12 Month Renewal Agenda and My Bethany Forward Commitment (pages 33–34). Bring the current agenda if leadership has revised or approved it since the summit.
2. Bring the outcomes and open questions from Meetings 1–3. Ask each owner for a concise update before the meeting.
3. Identify which decisions this group can make and which require a pastor, board, deacon, trustee, or congregational process under Bethany's practice.

Opening Scripture and Prayer

Read Nehemiah 2:17–18; Isaiah 43:19.

God who calls us to see, come, and rebuild, gather our learning into faithful action. Keep our plans within our capacity and our decisions accountable to the people they affect. Amen.

60-minute meeting flow

- 5 min • Scripture and opening prayer
- 10 min • Reports from prior meetings
- 25 min • Align with up to three churchwide priorities
- 15 min • Approve the next action and review process
- 5 min • Confirm communication and closing prayer

Facilitator cue

The summit recommended no more than three strategic priorities for the church. This ministry may contribute to those priorities rather than add three more. Keep the approved workbook agenda as the primary record; use this page to capture what today's meeting decided.

MEETING 4 / CONVERSATION

Discuss What the Ministry Can Act On

Use the completed workbook pages and the experience in the room. These questions are prompts for discussion, not a second assessment. Choose the questions that help the group reach the meeting outcome.

1. What have Meetings 1-3 changed in our understanding?

Name evidence, a person heard, a barrier tested, and a responsibility better shared.

2. Which one to three existing Bethany priorities should this ministry support?

If the churchwide agenda is not yet approved, frame these as recommendations.

3. What is the first concrete action within our authority?

Make the action small enough to begin, with a willing owner and needed support.

4. What should we stop, defer, or simplify to make room?

Do not quietly add work to the pastor or the same small circle.

5. What evidence will tell us whether the action helped?

Choose a signal that can be observed or gathered respectfully.

6. When and where will the decision be reviewed?

Set a date and identify who will report to the appropriate leadership body.

Before deciding

Ask the recorder to distinguish what the group knows, what it believes but still needs to test, and who may be affected by the next step.

MEETING 4 / DECISION

Record One Outcome

Confirm the ministry’s contribution to the churchwide agenda and authorize its first action, or forward a precise recommendation to the body with authority.

Decision record

Decision or recommendation made today

First action, owner, and support

Approval or communication route

Review date and evidence to bring

If the group cannot yet decide

Record what must be learned or who must approve the step, assign someone to obtain it, and set a date to return. “We need more information” becomes useful only when someone owns the next step.

Closing prayer

Lord, we thank you for what we have seen and for the people who have helped us see it. Make Bethany faithful in its next step. Teach us to rebuild together, to welcome new life, and to sustain one another. Amen.

Follow-up responsibility

The chair enters the outcome in the ministry’s approved records and updates the Bethany 12 Month Renewal Agenda where authorized. The named owner reports at the scheduled review, not only at a future summit.