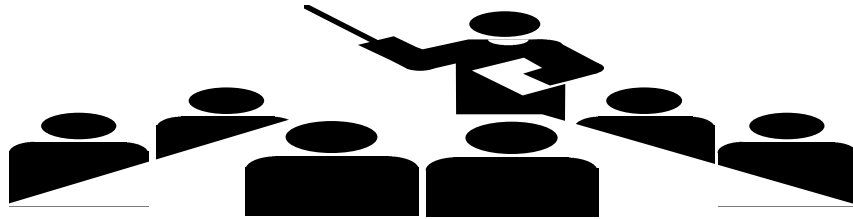


# CHURCH GROWTH SEMINAR



Facilitator  
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Charlotte, North Carolina



**Topic:**  
**Quality Characteristics of Healthy Congregations**

Teaching Outline

- I. The Introduction
- II. Eight Quality Characteristics
- III. The Minimum Factor
- IV. Six Biotic Principles
- V. A New Paradigm
- VI. Ten Action Steps

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## Topic: Quality Characteristics of Healthy Congregations

Resource: *Natural Church Development: A Guide to Eight Essential Qualities of Healthy Churches*  
By Christian A. Schwarz, Carol Stream, IL: ChurchSmart Resources, 1996

**Proposition: Healthy congregations have in place the eight essential qualities that release the growth automatism, by which God Himself grows His church.**

### I. INTRODUCTION

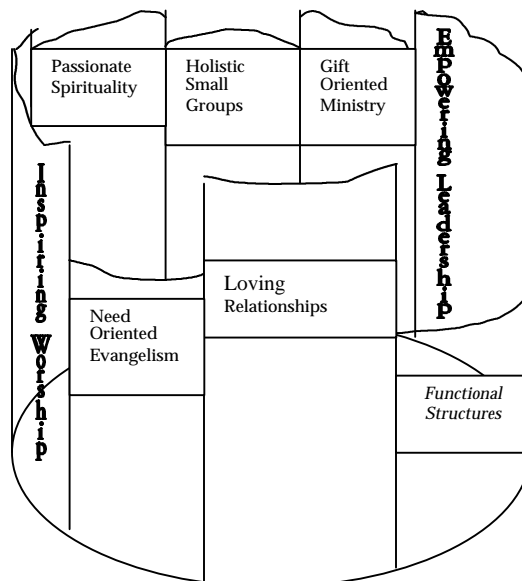
- A. Natural Church Development [learning church growth principles from nature] (Matt. 6:28)
- B. The “Biotic Potential” [the inherent capacity of an organism to reproduce and survive]
- C. The “All-By-Itself” Principle [the release of God’s growth automatism] (Mark 4:26-29)

### II. EIGHT ESSENTIAL QUALITIES OF HEALTHY CHURCHES

- A. Characteristic #1: **Empowering Leadership** [leaders that equip other to serve] (Eph. 4:12)
- B. Characteristic #2: **Gift-oriented Ministry** [tasks distributed according to spiritual gifts] (1 Pet. 4:10)
- C. Characteristic #3: **Passionate Spirituality** [spiritual lives typifying prayer, enthusiasm, boldness] (Rom. 12:11, 12)
- D. Characteristic #4: **Functional Structures** [structures useful for church growth here and now] (Mark 2:27)
- E. Characteristic #5: **Inspiring Worship** [worship is an inspiring experience for church members] (1 Thes. 5:16-19)
- F. Characteristic #6: **Holistic Small Groups** [small groups that meet the real needs of its members] (Acts 2:46-47)
- G. Characteristic #7: **Need-oriented Evangelism** [evangelism that is related to the needs of the lost] (1 Cor. 9:20-22)
- H. Characteristic #8: **Loving Relationships** [church relationships are characterized by love and affection. (Jn 13:34-35)]

### III. THE MINIMUM FACTOR [church growth is blocked by the quality characteristics that are least developed]

- A. No Quality Characteristic May Be Missing
- B. The “65 Hypothesis”
- C. Focusing Our Energies [focusing energy on these minimum factors can lead to further growth]
- D. The Minimum Barrel [the shortest stave determines the amount of water the barrel can hold] see drawing below
- E. Parallels from Agriculture [minerals necessary for growth of plants: nitrogen, lime, phosphoric acid, potash]



**IV. SIX BIOTIC PRINCIPLES** [Churches as living organisms need growth principles applicable for the living things]

- A. Interdependence [the way parts are integrated into a whole system is more important than the parts themselves] (1 Corinthians 12: 12-27)
- B. Multiplication [a tree does not keep getting bigger; it brings forth new trees, which in turn produce more trees] (John 12: 24)
- C. Energy Transformation [turning existing forces and energies in the desired direction through minute steering] (Romans 8:28)
- D. Multi-usage [energy, once invested, can be put to many uses to sustain the ongoing work] (Matthew 10:1-8)
- E. Symbiosis [the intimate living together of two dissimilar organisms in a mutually beneficial relationship] (Matthew 7:12; 1 Corinthians 10:24)
- F. Functionality [all living things in creation are characterized by the ability to bear fruit, preserving the species] (Matthew 7: 16-20; 1 Corinthians 10:23)

<b>Biotic Element</b> (Release of the “all by itself principle)	<b>Ministry Area</b>
<i>Empowering</i>	leadership
<i>Gift-oriented</i>	ministry
<i>Passionate</i>	spirituality
<i>Functional</i>	structures
<i>Inspiring</i>	worship
<i>Holistic</i>	small groups
<i>Need-oriented</i>	evangelism
<i>Loving</i>	relationships

**The secret of the eight quality characteristics lies not in the nouns, but in the adjectives.**

**V. A NEW PARADIGM**

- A. Bipolar Church Concept [creative relationship between dynamic & static poles is the key to self-organization] (1 Corinthians 3: 9)
- B. Technocratic Paradigm [assumes that attending to the static pole will yield the elements of the dynamic pole]
- C. Spiritualistic Paradigm [considers institutional elements (static pole) second-rate, or even downright evil]
- D. Theological Consequences [the effects of the three paradigms on various theological issues]
- E. The Bipolar Answer [recognizes the church as an organism (God’s work) and the organization (our work)] (1 Corinthians 3: 5-9)

**VI. TEN ACTION STEPS**

- A. Build Spiritual Momentum [build on the foundation of devotion to Jesus & His work] 1 Corinthians 3: 10-11)
- B. Determine Your Minimum Factors [obtain a church profile based on a scientifically sound analysis]
- C. Set Qualitative Goals [precise, time-bound, measurable goals relating to the increase of quality in a church]
- D. Identify Obstacles [Be sensitive to the reasons hidden behind the rational objections] (false paradigms)
- E. Apply Biotic Principles [use the biotic principles as a checklist for every decision or problem faced]
- F. Exercise Your Strengths [use your strengths to make progress in the area of your minimum factor]
- G. Utilize NCD Tools [integrate church members into the growth process by using NCD Discipleship Resources]
- H. Monitor Effectiveness [Do another church profile: comparing profiles, look for developments and trends]
- I. Address Your New Minimum Factors [foster more church growth by focusing on the new minimum factor]
- J. Multiply Your Church [Give birth to a new church which will eventually gives birth to another church]