

Robert Schnase

Author of *Five Practices of Fruitful Congregations*

JUST *say* YES!

UNLEASHING PEOPLE
FOR MINISTRY



Participant Worksheets

with

—7-Session Devotion—



SESSION

1

Uncover
the Nos

"An unrelenting culture of No is a contradiction to our sacrament of baptism, stifling hope, new birth, and a sense of God's promise for the future" (x).

Welcome! What are some of the reasons you decided to say Yes to this training?

OPENING PRAYER

Faithful and Life-Giving God,
Please create in this room a sacred space filled with Your Holy Spirit.
We come here to learn more about You and Your call to lead in this church.
Open our hearts and minds to the work we must do to honor You.
Reveal to us the stifling impact Nos have on the gifts, talents, creativity and passion of Your people.
Help us feel Your grace in moments of conviction and then offer grace to each other through this work.
Give us courage to follow You from No to Yes.
By the end of our time together help us each to say boldly Yes Lord, Yes!
It is in the name of our Savior, Jesus Christ, we pray. Amen.

Video #1 Introduction from Bishop Robert Schnase

This video highlights why Bishop Schnase wrote this book and his hope for your interaction with the material.

STORIES OF NO

After hearing the stories, take a moment to imagine what these No scenarios do to the life of a congregation. What were some of the No stories from the book that spoke loudest to you?

CHECKLIST OF NOS

Take a few moments to check all the types of Nos you have received personally as well as all the types of Nos you have said yourself. If you want more details about the Nos listed, please feel free to reread the section in the book on pp. 3-8.

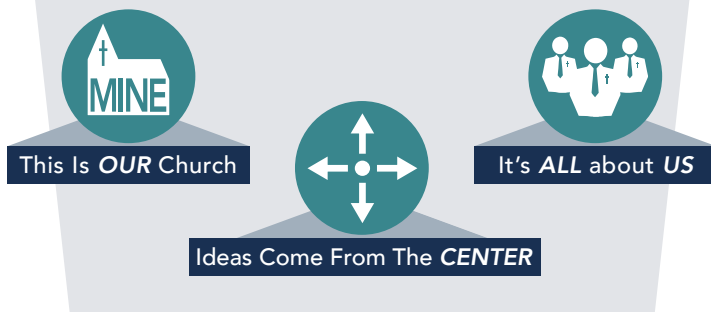
- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> You're Not The Pastor | <input type="checkbox"/> Analysis Paralysis |
| <input type="checkbox"/> I Don't Need That, So Why Should We Do It? | <input type="checkbox"/> You're Too Young, Too New, or Too Different |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Only Five People Signed Up | <input type="checkbox"/> You're Doing It All Wrong |
| <input type="checkbox"/> They're Not Our Members Anyway | <input type="checkbox"/> You Didn't Ask Me First |
| <input type="checkbox"/> That's Our Room | <input type="checkbox"/> Don't Rock the Boat |
| <input type="checkbox"/> They Can Just Join Us | <input type="checkbox"/> Things Won't Be the Same |
| <input type="checkbox"/> That Will Never Work Here
(and I'll See That It Doesn't) | <input type="checkbox"/> _____ |

GROUP SHARING

Describe one of the times you were on the receiving end of a No response. What happened to your ministry idea? Have you ever been the one saying No? What happened to that ministry idea?

FAULTY ASSUMPTIONS

Leading To No (pp. 8-11)



GROUP EXERCISE

How do these assumptions say No to the work of Jesus Christ?

What happens when we say “this is OUR church”?

What happens when we believe ideas only come from our core leadership team, “the center”?

What happens when we say “it’s all about me”?

UNCOVER

Before the break, write down one of the No scenarios you have experienced, either said or received. These scenarios will be used in the subsequent sessions, so this step is important!

☐

NOTES

[illegible]

SESSION

2

Unlock the
Power of Yes

"When I'm asked whether I think we should go forward with an idea, if I don't monitor myself to focus on the larger mission, my default response reflects my personal preference and my perception of the impact that the decision will have on me" (10).

Video #2 Sturgeon Ministerial Alliance

Group Sharing - Take a moment to share what struck you the most about the video.

INTENTIONAL LEADERSHIP REFLECTION

How can we discern if we are knowingly and unknowingly creating barriers to ministry? Ask yourself, "am I ever a stumbling block to others or the ministry of Jesus Christ in the world?"

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Unlocking the Power of Yes through the Forgiving Grace of Jesus Christ

Video #3 Unleashing Yourself: Becoming More Permission-Giving

In each of us, there are obstacles preventing us from saying Yes to God. Rev. Jenn Weekes-Klein gives us suggestions on spiritual practices that can move us from No to Yes through Jesus Christ. We will focus on the transformative grace of God found in prayer and communion.

OPENNESS EXERCISE

On your blank piece of paper, take a few moments to write down the Nos you want God to transform into Yeses. Take the time you need to really communicate with God. This can be written in a prayer to God or as a list of all the ways you want God to help you lead with trust and hope. The "Checklist of Nos" from the Session 1 worksheet and the following list are here to help you get started.

- Fear - of the unknown or change
- Passive aggressive behavior - disparaging or snide remarks, sabotage others, etc.
- Negative attitude or thinking - church is too old, too small, too poor, too [fill in the blank]
- Unwillingness to help others - it will cost me too much, it is too hard, it is not my passion, or it is not for me
- Harsh correction of others - that is not how I think it should be done, that is not how "we" do it
- Body language - disapproving glances, shaking of the head, crossing of the arms

PRAYER & INSTRUCTIONS

Once you have written down your confession or plea for God's help, crumple it up and hold it tightly in your fist. Please join in this prayer of confession.

L: Lord, we confess our day-to-day failure to fully say Yes to You.

P: Lord, we confess to You.

L: Lord, we confess we often fail to love with all we have and are, often because we do not fully understand what loving means, often because we are afraid of risking ourselves.

P: Lord, we confess to You.

L: Lord, we confess we sometimes forget this church is Yours.

P: We sometimes center our ministry on personal preferences and desires.

L: Lord, we confess that by silence and ill-considered words,

P: we have built stumbling blocks to the creativity and passions of Your people.

L: Lord, we confess that by selfishness and lack of sympathy,

P: we have stifled generosity and missed opportunities to serve the least of these.

All: Holy Spirit, speak to us. Help us listen to Your word of forgiveness so we might lessen our tight-fisted hold on leadership. Right now, help us open our hands to receive Your grace. Allow us to become leaders of hope, innovation, and grace. Come, fill this moment and free us from sin. Amen.

(Adapted from #893 in The United Methodist Hymnal)



You are invited to leave your confessions at the table of the Lord. Please come with open hands and hearts to receive this awe inspiring gift of forgiveness and love. After you receive, please feel free to stay in prayer as long as you need.

Time of Reflection and Prayer

UNLOCK

Before the break, take a moment to fill in the answer to the intentional leadership reflection question above. Have you begun letting go of the hurts or guilt about the No scenario you wrote down at the bottom of the Session 1 worksheet? If not, keep the worksheet as a reminder to continue the process of letting go. The devotion guide we will introduce after the break will help in this journey.

Break [15 minutes]
[You are invited to take this break in silent reflection.]

SESSION

3

Unleash a
Culture of Yes

"A culture of Yes expects people to have ideas, gifts, and callings. It amplifies what works and encourages the passions and callings that already exist but what remain unseen or hidden from view." (95)

Video #4 Bridge Bread

In St. Louis, Missouri, Lafayette Park United Methodist Church is a powerful example of a permission giving culture. Check out this amazing social enterprise ministry for the homeless.

Group Sharing - Take a moment to share what struck you the most about the video.

PERMISSION-GIVING LEADER & PERSONAL DEVOTION INTRODUCTION

In light of the forgiveness, love, hope and grace that Holy Communion has unlocked in us, you can continue the journey toward becoming permission-giving leaders. Characteristics of a permission-giving leader can be found on pages 95-99 of *Just Say Yes!*. Becoming a permission-giving leader is not an instantaneous transition. For this reason, each of you have a 7-Session Devotion Guide at the back of your Participant Guide. Following this training, you are invited to invest more time to keep your life centered on Christ and listen for God's continued call on your life.

Core of the Book - According to Bishop Schnase, the core of this book is "vibrant, fruitful, growing congregations have been willing to say Yes to things that declining congregations have said No to."

Video #5 Unleashing Systems: Creating a Culture Shift

The difficult work is shifting from a No culture to an unleashed Yes culture. Over time, Rev. Jim Downing has been able to lay a foundation changing the default from No to Yes. He now serves a culture unleashing people for ministry. At its heart is reminding people they are partnering with God for the work of offering hope.

GROUP ACTIVITY

Rev. Downing talks about three types of people: complainers, critics, and champions. Name some champions you have met in your life. What about them unleashes others? What would shutting down the complaints department mean in our church and how could we make that happen?

Permission-Giving Culture Development

In churches creatively saying Yes, like Rev. Downing's church, their systems encourage dreaming. How do we make this happen here?

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ROLE PLAYING EXERCISE

Scenario 1

Narrator: A passionate young woman goes to the finance committee with an idea. This scene takes place seated at a table during a meeting.

Young Woman: Recently, I saw a news report about Mexican people in poverty. No matter what I am doing, the faces of the people there just haunt me. It seems like God is calling me to lead a trip there to help, but since I have never done anything like this before I am coming to you for guidance.

Team Member: (puts on a sour face and abruptly shoves a piece of paper across the table to her) Well, here is the church budget; if you can find money in there you can do it!

Narrator: This woman's spirit was crushed and she stepped away from church for several years.

Scenario 2

Young Woman: Recently, I saw a news report about Mexican people in poverty. No matter what I am doing, the faces of the people there just haunt me. It seems like God is calling me to lead a trip there to help, but since I have never done anything like this before I am coming to you for guidance.

Team Member: (with a smile) Wow, thank you so much for sharing your passion! Can you tell me a little bit more about why you feel God is asking you to do this now?

Young Woman: Well, awhile ago Pastor preached about how God gives us each gifts and talents to use to help others. Pastor also said sometimes we see a need in the world and then our gifts and talents will line up with that need. I am organized and have done international travel a lot with my job. My heart is breaking for these people and I think we can offer hope.

Team Member: I am sure Pastor will be thrilled you listened to the sermon (smile). It also sounds like you are listening to God and willing to be the champion for this ministry.

Young Woman: Absolutely!

Team Member: Well, here are some things we can do to start. Why don't you line up some friends to pray about this mission. Also, I believe the Office of Mission, Service and Justice at the Missouri Annual Conference has led some trips to Mexico. Let's find their number and get you in contact with them. After you get more information, how about we reserve a room after church and invite people to hear about your passion. The church budget is tight, but with some creative fundraising nothing is impossible with God.

Young Woman: Oh thank you, I just needed a place to start and to hear from someone else it is okay to think God really is talking to me.

Narrator: This time the young woman left excited. She was asked important questions to help her process. She was challenged to be the champion for this effort and to share it with others. She was encouraged to pray and to not expect all the money to come from the church budget. She was also affirmed in her call from God.

TEAM MISSIONAL QUESTION DEVELOPMENT

To develop our framework for decision making, Bishop Schnase gives some launching points (see table below). Please remember, this is not a time for brainstorming ministry ideas. This is the time to set a framework for encouraging the people in our midst to share their ideas, and dreams about using the gifts and talents God has given them.

Just Say Yes! Missional Assumptions pp. 55-62:

1. Everyone has gifts for ministry
2. God calls everyone to service and ministry
3. The ministry of the Church should foster spiritual growth and discipleship
4. The Church's mission is outward focused
5. The work of the Church is to encourage people in their callings

Woods Chapel UMC's Three Questions pp. 75-78:

1. Does it align with the mission?
2. Who will do it?
3. How will it be funded?

Must be grounded in prayer, discernment and calling.



First UMC Sedalia's Three Questions pp. 80:

1. Have you prayed about it?
2. Do you believe it is God's will for us at this time? (Timing is important: do we have the right resources for sustainability, the right alignment with the priorities of the church for this ministry at this time?)
3. Will it bring glory to Jesus Christ?

NOTES

USING THE QUESTIONS

Turn back to the No example you wrote down at the end of Session 1. Revisit one or two of the No scenarios and replay it with our new mission questions.

Closing and Anointing

As we close this training our work is not done but we can be confident of the One we follow into the world. Remember Jesus said, "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled, and do not let them be afraid." (John 14:27)

Go into the world with peace and confidence saying, "Yes, Lord, Yes!"



7-Session Devotion

Unlock the Yes Within You!

During the Uncover, Unlock, Unleash leader training, we scratched the surface of what it means to create a culture of Yes. This devotional guide is a tool to deepen your relationship with the One who first gave you the ability to truly say Yes. Through the power of our Creator God, our Savior Jesus Christ, and our Advocate the Holy Spirit, you can continue growing as a permission-giving leader. A leader who is full of trust and hope. A leader who answers the call to love your neighbors and to go make disciples of Jesus Christ. A leader who encourages others to use their gifts and talents for the glory of God.

This devotion will help unlock obstacles holding you back from being an unleashed leader. Thankfully, God offers you multiple means of grace to unleash you for ministry. Each session starts by naming a Lock that may also be holding you back from the fullness of leadership in Jesus Christ. Then, you are offered an Invitation to Unlock through scripture and insights found in Bishop Robert Schnase's book, *Just Say Yes!: Unleashing People for Ministry*. Finally, you are given Keys to Unlock including prayer, fasting, holy conferencing and ideas for serving others. These keys are grace-filled opportunities to increasingly open up as a permission-giving leader. You can use this devotion for seven weeks, focusing on one session per week, or for an intense period of seven days. By the end of this devotion, may you feel closer to God and understand more about yourself as a permission-giving leader.

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() indicate the page number reference for *Just Say Yes!: Unleashing People for Ministry* by Bishop Robert Schnase.

Additional Keys to Unlock: The Living Prayer Center, a ministry of The Upper Room, may be helpful (www.prayer-center.upperroom.org/resources/quiz). They list prayer methods, offer articles on prayer and help to discern your spiritual type.

Lock #1: Distraction

INVITATION TO UNLOCK

"God's Son, Jesus Christ, is the one who was preached among you by us — through me, Silvanus, and Timothy — he wasn't yes and no. In him it is always yes. All of God's promises have their yes in him. That is why we say Amen through him to the glory of God. God is the one who establishes us with you in Christ and who anointed us. God also sealed us and gave the Spirit as a down payment in our hearts." (2 Cor. 1:19-22)

The Apostle Paul has a clarity of purpose and mission. He said Yes to Jesus and knows through Jesus all God's promises are Yes. This informs every decision he makes and gives him focus.

A constant challenge for leaders is keeping everything in our lives focused on the mission and ministry of Jesus Christ. The world is moving so quickly and so many things compete for our attention. In this scripture, the Apostle Paul could easily be distracted from his purposes by the demands of life. He is forced to change his travel plans and people begin to doubt him. They question if his words and actions line up with his mission. He overcomes this questioning by reminding the people of Corinth that God's promises remain constant. The love and grace he continually offers the people comes from the One who is always faithful. As a leader, Paul faces everything with a clear memory of God's promises and focuses on his call to share the good news of Jesus Christ with others. His focus gives him clarity of purpose and helps him lead faithfully. No matter what the obstacle he continually says Yes to Jesus!

How are you keeping your focus on the purposes of Jesus Christ?

Keys to Unlock

- Write down all the ways Jesus has said Yes in your life. Make this list into a prayer of thanksgiving and end it with "through Jesus we give you all the glory God. Amen."
- At the end of the Uncover, Unlock, Unleash leader training, you were anointed with oil. Reread the scripture above. Do you have the same sense Paul has of being anointed and commissioned for a special mission? What is your unique mission from God?
- If you enjoy drawing, draw a heart and write down what you think God has placed on your heart as "a down payment" (2 Cor. 1:22).



Lock #2: Apathy

INVITATION TO UNLOCK

"You know I held back nothing that would be helpful so that I could proclaim to you and teach you both publicly and privately in your homes. You know I have testified to both Jews and Greeks that they must change their hearts and lives as they turn to God and have faith in our Lord Jesus. Now, compelled by the Spirit, I'm going to Jerusalem. I don't know what will happen to me there. What I do know is that the Holy Spirit testifies to me from city to city that prisons and troubles await me. But nothing, not even my life, is more important than my completing my mission. This is nothing other than the ministry I received from the Lord Jesus: to testify about the good news of God's grace." (1 Cor. 20-24)

Everything about the Apostle Paul's life changes once he meets and commits to following Jesus Christ. His language exudes a passion and devotion to God. He even considers his life nothing but a tool for offering the grace of God to others. Paul says no matter what obstacles he faces, he is willing to do it for the cause of Jesus Christ. The message is worthy of any sacrifice. This is what Bishop Schnase refers to as imperative. "Imperative refers to drive, passion, momentum, excitement, and desire that motivates ministry" (46). He goes on to share how " ... [leaders and] congregations with a sense of imperative believe that the work of Christ is absolutely necessary, vital to life and rebirth, and that inviting people into the spiritual life is something that must be done. They operate under the mandates of Christ, the imperatives that lace the teachings of Jesus: 'Go...Teach...Heal...Welcome...Give...Serve... Pray...Do...Love...Follow'" (47).

Do you have imperative drive for the mission and purposes of Christ?

Keys to Unlock

- Take a few minutes to reread pages 45-49 in *Just Say Yes!* under the heading, Imperative Drive. Thinking about the asthma example in this section, imagine the feeling - "You can breathe again, all fear is gone, and there's new energy and vitality." With this sense, practice the following breath prayer in a place of quiet and comfort. First, take a deep breath in and then hold it. Pay attention to your body and hold it until you are desperate for breath. Then repeatedly, passionately breathe in the name of God, then breathe out your plea for help. Here are phrases to help you begin:

Creator God, breathe life in me.

Lord Jesus, save me.

Holy Spirit, make me yours.

- Write down your passions. How are you using them for the mission and purposes of Jesus Christ?
- Remember a story of how Jesus grabbed hold of your life and find a way to share it with someone this week.

Lock #3: Fear

INVITATION TO UNLOCK

"I am the Lord your God, who grasps your strong hand, who says to you, Don't fear; I will help you." (Isaiah 41:13)

"You didn't receive a spirit of slavery to lead you back again into fear, but you received a Spirit that shows you are adopted as his children. With this Spirit, we cry, 'Abba, Father.'" (Romans 8:15)

"God didn't give us a spirit that is timid but one that is powerful, loving, and self-controlled." (2 Timothy 1:7)

Throughout scripture, in both Old and New Testaments, God calls us from fear toward trust. Permission-giving leaders are grounded in trust and hope. This allows them to be creative and encouraging to others. With innovation and dreaming, things change. Change is often very hard. Bishop Schnase's book asks an important question about why we struggle with change. "Why do people resist change and reject new ideas even when they know that the old habits, attitudes and systems are holding them back from doing greater good? Leadership author, Ronald Heifetz says that people do not fear change; they fear loss. People fear the grief that comes with losing what has been familiar, reliable, and known; habits, values, and attitudes - even those that have been barriers to progress and unhelpful for the mission - are part of one's identity, and changing them challenges how we define ourselves" (7-8).

How do you overcome fear of change and loss?

Keys to Unlock

- Pick one of the scripture passages from above to use in a Lectio Divina ("sacred reading") prayer exercise. You will read the text three times. During the first reading, pay attention to what word or phrase takes your focus. Write down this word or phrase. During the second reading, focus on what images and thoughts this word or phrase brings to mind. Take some time to draw an image from your thoughts, journal or go for a walk praying for God to speak to you. During the third reading, read it out loud and hear any challenge God may be giving you through the text. What do you need to do or say to faithfully live into this message from God's word? Leave this time of prayer with comfort and confidence in your connection with the Living God.
- Think of a time when you were afraid. How did God help you overcome the fear? When change has happened in church, what losses were the hardest for you to accept?
- Take a few moments to rest in the constancy of God's love and grace for you. Fear can be overcome with the assurance of God's forever faithfulness. Listen to or play a song that helps you feel the faithfulness of God. If you have access to the Internet, possible songs are "One Thing Remains" by Bethel Music, performed by Jesus Culture, 'Tis So Sweet to Trust in Jesus #462 United Methodist Hymnal, or Precious Lord, Take My Hand #471 African American Heritage Hymnal.

Lock #4: Negativity

INVITATION TO UNLOCK

"Don't let any foul words come out of your mouth. Only say what is helpful when it is needed for building up the community so that it benefits those who hear what you say." (Ephesians 4:29)

These words are crucial to hear and repeat today. Words hold great power to tear down or to inspire. When we speak negative words, we may be discouraging or stopping the passions and gifts of others in our midst. "The No person looks for problems, and then focuses exclusively on how to fix them ... 'I serve a dysfunctional church,' a pastor says. 'I could never get my people to do that.' 'That would never work here,' a layperson laments, 'Our church doesn't have enough people or money.' The repetition and reinforcement of these negative perceptions create a self-fulfilling prophecy" (95).

Bishop Schnase challenges us to ask...

"What if we believed that we have exactly enough people and resources to fulfill the ministry God is calling us to today?" (95)

Keys to Unlock

- If you have access to the Internet watch again the video, *Unleashing Systems: Creating a Cultural Shift* at www.JustSayYesToMinistry.org. In this video, Rev. Jim Downing says there are two common "rails" churches operate on: "we've always done it this way" (stuck in the past) and "we've never done it that way before" (fear of failure). In his ministry context, they created a mission jar and anytime anyone started to say anything negative, like these two phrases, they paid \$1 for missions. Create a jar for yourself and place \$1 in for missions any time negative words come from your mouth. Positivity and hope will become a habit.
- What negativity do you carry in your heart about the ministries or people in your congregation? It is nearly impossible to stay negative when you come face to face with the light of Christ. Get a white candle and find a quiet and preferably dark space to light the candle. Before you turn out the room light, light the candle and read Matthew 5:14-16. "And you, beloved, are the light of the world. A city built on a hilltop cannot be hidden. Similarly it would be silly to light a lamp and then hide it under a bowl. When someone lights a lamp, she puts it on a table or a desk or a chair, and the light illumines the entire house. You are like that illuminating light. Let your light shine everywhere you go, that you may illumine creation, so men and women everywhere may see your good actions, may see creation at its fullest, may see your devotion to Me, and may turn and praise your Father in heaven because of it." Believe deep in your heart this is the light of Christ burning away any negativity you carry. Christ's light is the hope, joy and love you will carry into the world with you. Stay in an attitude of devotion as long as you feel connected to the light of Christ.
- Take a few moments to read the "Instead of" questions on pages 65-66 of *Just Say Yes!*. Which strike you as the most challenging and the most empowering?

Lock #5: Selfishness

INVITATION TO UNLOCK

"Therefore, if there is any encouragement in Christ, any comfort in love, any sharing in the Spirit, any sympathy, complete my joy by thinking the same way, having the same love, being united, and agreeing with each other. Don't do anything for selfish purposes, but with humility think of others as better than yourselves. Instead of each person watching out for their own good, watch out for what is better for others." (Philippians 2:1-4)

When we make ourselves the focus of our decision-making, we push Christ from the center of our lives. Bishop Schnase writes, "We align the ministries with our preferences rather than discerning what aligns with Christ's work. We become protective, defensive, controlling and territorial. We say No. When we make it all about us, we ask "'What's in it for me?' ... 'How does this affect me? Will I benefit from it?' And most importantly, 'What will I have to do? What will it cost me?'" (9-10) When we ask questions like these, how is the love of God evident in our lives and leadership?

How are you sharing of your time, resources, gifts and passions to show your love of God and neighbor?

Keys to Unlock

- Serving others is the best way to counter selfishness. Create a graph matrix like the one described in Just Say Yes! (57-59). Make the left side of the graph with needs you see in the world. Along the bottom write your personal interests, gifts, passions and talents. Find the intersection. Are there others doing this type of ministry you can join or should you start a prayer of discernment around using your gifts? If you are uncertain about the gifts God has given you, please take some time to do a spiritual gifts inventory. Try this one: www.umc.org/what-we-believe/spiritual-gifts-online-assessment.
- This week, find a way to intentionally show the love of Jesus Christ to others through service. This is not about us, this is about giving thanks for what God has done for us. By serving others, we will be living the pattern of gracious love we read above in Philippians 2.
- **Humility Prayer** - If you typically pray sitting up, consider praying on your knees. If you normally pray on your knees consider praying prostrate (lay with your face down). Increase your physical expression of humility and offer a prayer such as the Wesley Covenant prayer (contemporary version) or one of your own.

Wesley Covenant Prayer

*I am no longer my own, but yours.
Put me to what you will, place me with whom you will.
Put me to doing, put me to suffering.
Let me be put to work for you or set aside for you,
Praised for you or criticized for you.
Let me be full, let me be empty.
Let me have all things, let me have nothing.
I freely and fully surrender all things to your glory and service.
And now, O wonderful and holy God,
Creator, Redeemer, and Sustainer,
you are mine, and I am yours.
So be it.
And the covenant which I have made on earth,
Let it also be made in heaven. Amen.*

Lock #6: Control

INVITATION TO UNLOCK

"As Jesus walked alongside the Galilee Sea, he saw two brothers, Simon, who is called Peter, and Andrew, throwing fishing nets into the sea, because they were fishermen. Come, follow me,' he said, 'and I'll show you how to fish for people.' Right away, they left their nets and followed him." (Matthew 4:18-20)

When we follow Jesus, we do not know where this may lead us. This takes control out of our hands. Following Jesus means first remembering you are a follower and then a leader. This takes faith in the One you follow. "The essence of faith is captured in the words that describe Abraham's obedience to God's call, 'He went out without knowing where he was going.'" (Heb 11:8) When the disciples dropped their nets they put their trust in Jesus.

It is common for leaders to feel a need to hold tight reins. Leaders who try to control, instead of following Jesus, believe they need to know everything and want to constantly be the final say in decisions. They say No often. Permission-giving leaders know relinquishing control can be messy, but also realize saying Yes to Jesus is worth it. "Unleashing people for ministry sets a church on an unpredictable path. It multiplies ministry. It interrupts the business as usual. Yes unleashes the wild, raw nature of God" (90).

What will your leadership legacy be? Will you be the one who "killed ideas, closed down initiatives, curtailed the ministries of energetic and passionate people." Or, will you "be the person God works through rather than the person God has to work around"? (13)

Keys to Unlock

- Consider trying a Wesley Fast. "The Wesley Fast, traditionally observed, begins with dinner on Thursday evening and continues until tea time (4 p.m.) on Friday. Time and energy that would have been consumed in eating is offered for deeper prayer, meditation and works of charity and compassion. When, for health reasons such a fast is not advisable, persons are encouraged to adjust the fast to their personal needs. Please remember to drink plenty of juice and water." (www.umc.org/who-we-are/call-to-prayer-and-fasting) The time you spend fasting can be used to focus on faith and your dependence on God. It can help reorient your leadership from control to following and believing God is gifting others with ideas for ministries. If a medical reason makes a food fast unsafe, please consider refraining from other activities such as social media, talking, etc.
- Find a person in the congregation you trust to talk with about your leadership style. Have them help you discern times when they have witnessed you try to hold onto control. Pray with them and ask them to hold you accountable for leading with obedience to Christ's mandates and not your own.
- In addition to meeting with others to talk about leadership, you can form a covenant or accountability group. Each meeting you could share joys and concerns, where you have seen God moving in your life and your current struggles related to faithfulness.

Lock #7: Discouragement

INVITATION TO UNLOCK

"Let's hold on to the confession of our hope without wavering, because the one who made the promises is reliable. And let us consider each other carefully for the purpose of sparking love and good deeds. Don't stop meeting together with other believers, which some people have gotten into the habit of doing. Instead, encourage each other, especially as you see the day drawing near." (Hebrews 10:23-25)

A discouraged congregation will hear more Nos than Yeses. The people will be less likely to dream and more likely to focus on themselves. They will show less love, do less service and be more afraid of change. Yet, this kind of culture can change with hope. Permission-giving leaders have hope and they encourage others! "Encouragement literally means 'to fill with courage and strength of purpose, to hearten, to give heart.' Encouragement refers to the action of giving someone support, confidence, and hope ... to inspire and motivate ... emboldens rather than restrains, empowers rather than limits, stimulates people to move forward rather than to retreat ... Real encouragement means helping people say Yes to God" (112-13).

Encouragement not only lifts up the individual, but it builds up the entire community of faith. How do we stop discouraging and become encouragers?

Keys to Unlock

- Spend some focused time in prayer for others in your congregation. Think of specific people in the congregation you want to lift to God. Who needs encouragement for tough life situations, needs encouragement to answer a call to ministry, and longs for connection and purpose?

Encouraging and Empowering God, your word tells us we are part of the body of your Son. Help us remember, "The whole body grows from him, joined and held together by all the supporting ligaments. The body makes itself grow in that it builds itself up with love as each one does its part." (Ephesians 4:16) We need your help to grow. We need your help to properly use the gifts you have given each of us. We need your help to encourage each other in love. Please hear this urgent plea to encourage _____, who is in desperate need of hope. Please hear my hopeful plea for You to help _____, to answer their call to ministry. Please hear my grateful plea to empower _____, who needs a place to connect, a purpose and longs to serve. I praise you God for this opportunity to lift my brothers and sisters to You with confidence my prayers will be heard. May your will be done in this place. Amen.

- Permission-giving leaders spend time with others. They help people at all stages of faith to listen to God. Who is the first person that comes to mind when you think of someone at church who needs encouragement to follow their God-given dreams? Consider inviting them to coffee or writing them a note of encouragement.