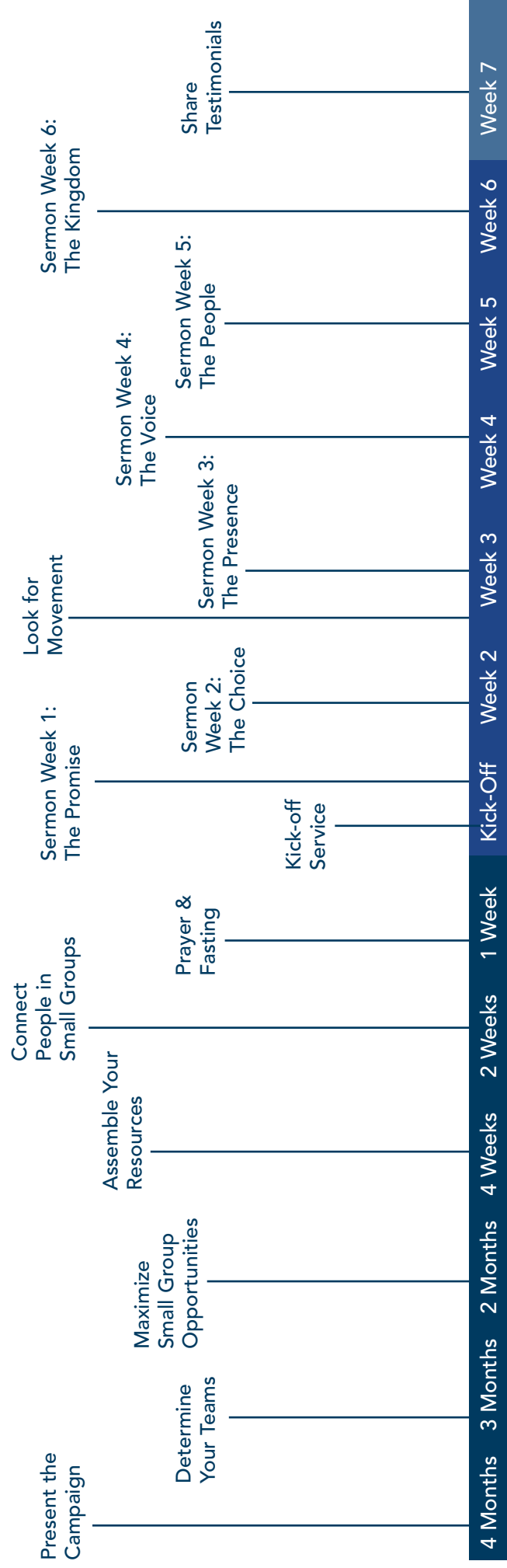


God Is Closer Than You Think

Campaign Overview



PREPARING YOUR CONGREGATION

OPENING THEIR EYES

SHARING THE VISION

God Is Closer Than You Think

How to Implement the “God Is Closer Than You Think” Campaign in Your Church

Is spiritual growth one of your congregation’s greatest needs?

According to a recent survey, many pastors who have led their churches through Rick Warren’s *40 Days of Purpose* campaign during the past two years have reported increased church attendance (by an average of 22 percent), small group participation (over 80 percent), and many decisions for Christ. But, apart from their current discipleship programs, they wonder what to do next to help their congregation continue to grow spiritually.

That’s where the *God Is Closer Than You Think* campaign can fill a need. Based on the latest book from pastor and bestselling author John Ortberg, it is designed, over a six-week period, to teach an entire congregation to see God more clearly and walk with him more closely than they ever have before. From weekly sermons to church wide small group tools to an individual reading resource, Zondervan has coordinated every component to ensure (from the human side of the equation) that your campaign is a success. Of course, you are free to adapt the materials for the specific needs and culture of your particular church community.

Let’s take a brief look at the various pieces found in the *God Is Closer Than You Think* kit, as well as a general timeline to guide you through the campaign—from the planning stages through the actual event.

God Is Closer Than You Think Campaign Components

God Is Closer Than You Think hardcover book

John Ortberg’s latest book is the basis of the *God Is Closer Than You Think* (GIC) campaign. Filled with solid Bible study, humor, and life application, the book is recommended (though not required) reading for everyone in the congregation. People who have read any of Ortberg’s previous books will know they’re in for a treat as well as spiritual substance; they are your best advertisers for those who haven’t read one of his books before.

God Is Closer Than You Think DVD and Leader’s Guide

The DVD features six teaching sessions with video introductions and wrap-ups by Ortberg, to be used for each of the campaign’s small group gatherings. The leader’s guide provides clear-cut instructions and tips to facilitate those meetings.

God Is Closer Than You Think Participant’s Guide

A “must” for everyone, this small group guide will give each individual in the congregation an opportunity to interact meaningfully with Ortberg’s six-week DVD curriculum, participate fully in the discussion that follows, and grow spiritually between sessions. Until December 31, 2005, you can download the Guide at no cost, store it on your computer or a CD-ROM, and print

copies whenever you need them. Or, take the downloaded file to your local Kinko's or Sir Speedy where they can print bound copies for your congregation.

God Is Closer Than You Think Campaign CD-ROM

Here's where you'll find six full-length sample sermons and campaign PowerPoints co-written by John Ortberg and Brad Mitchell, pastor of Trinity Church in East Lansing, Michigan. Also here are promotional tools (for example: bulletin inserts, posters, announcements, etc.), sermon tools, and a video message from John Ortberg—all to build awareness and enthusiasm for the GIC campaign not only in your church community but in the community at-large.

God Is Closer Than You Think Campaign Phases

Present the Campaign — Four Months Prior to Campaign Launch

Step 1:

Schedule a kickoff meeting to present the GIC campaign to your church leadership (board, elders, committees, etc.). This will be your opportunity to share with them the campaign's objective and to remind them of the synergy that's created when, for a specified period of time, everyone studies and discusses the same themes and materials. If your church has never done a campaign of this type before, you may want to invite a pastor friend who *has* done one to come and share its benefits with your group.

Step 2:

At the presentation, preview the themes for the six weeks on the CD-ROM or on the website at www.GodsCloserThanYouThink.com. In addition, show the DVD video segment of John Ortberg's first small group session and let them see the participant's guide for groups and/or Sunday school classes. The more information they have up-front, the greater their excitement about what God could do through the congregation—and in their own lives!

Be sure that you have support of the vast majority—especially those individuals who carry the greatest influence in the church. Their ownership is important. But remember, your personal passion for the GIC campaign likely will influence your church's leadership the most. Once you have leadership's buy-in, it's time to start the subsequent phases of preparation.

Determine Your Teams — Three Months Prior to Campaign Launch

If you have done a previous church-wide campaign, you realize the significant commitment of staff and volunteer resources necessary for effective implementation. That's why it is vital to create leadership teams to spearhead the GIC campaign's various aspects.

Step 1:

Select a *prayer team* coordinator, someone with a gift of leadership and a heart for prayer. Remember: this isn't just a program but a spiritual endeavor in which God can grow his people. As such, it needs to be preceded by and covered in prayer.

Together with your prayer team coordinator, pray about and make a list of individuals to contact to be on the prayer team. Ask the team to be committed to meet weekly beginning immediately and continuing through the GIC campaign, perhaps even before/after morning services if that works best.

Step 2:

Select a *communications team* coordinator, if possible someone with administrative and marketing background. With the coordinator, choose two to three others to work on this team. Keeping this team smaller will expedite the decisions that need to be made.

You want to be certain that your congregation knows what is coming and thus build excitement and anticipation around the GIC campaign. It may be helpful to conduct gatherings similar to the one you had earlier with your key leaders to broaden ownership and support. You may choose to have bulletin inserts, banners, weekly announcements, and the like for three to four weeks prior to the launch date.

You may also choose to develop a plan for letting people in your community know about the campaign and inviting them to participate. Your team may consider radio, TV, and newspaper advertising; flyers; or special invitations that the congregation can hand out to their acquaintances, etc. (See the GIC CD-ROM or the previously noted website for all of these materials.)

Step 3:

Begin enlisting *small group facilitators*, starting with people already holding leadership roles in the congregation (current small group leaders included) but by no means stopping there. This can be an excellent opportunity to challenge people you see as potential leaders to step up and try leading a group for six weeks. All they have to do is provide a warm environment for ten to twelve people, show the video, guide the discussion, and close with prayer requests and prayer.

Step 4:

If your church is large and/or you personally are unable to manage every aspect of the GIC campaign, you may want to consider enlisting a cross-functional leader to integrate the efforts of all the teams.

Maximize Small Group Opportunities — Two Months Prior to Campaign Launch

Step 1:

Determine the opportunities you'll provide for people to gather in smaller settings for discussion—whether on Sunday morning, at a midweek gathering at church, or in home groups.

Step 2:

Promote the GIC campaign to existing small groups, showing the small group leaders the materials that you recommend they use during the church-wide event. Of course, this also is an ideal time to encourage people who have never been a part of a small group to try one on a six-week trial basis, or—if your church doesn't have a small group ministry—a perfect opportunity to start one.

Assemble Your Resources — One Month Prior to Campaign Launch

Step 1:

Download needed small group materials from Zondervan at www.GodsCloserThanYouThink.com and get bids from two to three local printers to determine cost per copy. Then, decide if you want to have the participant's guides printed locally, or to purchase them from your local bookstore or from Zondervan ChurchSource (1-800-727-3480; www.ZondervanChurchSource.com). Place the order to ensure having the product on time for your launch date.

Step 2:

Announce to the congregation that anyone not yet in a small group but willing to try one for six weeks will have that opportunity on Sunday morning two weeks from now. You might want to call it "Connection Sunday."

Connect People in Small Groups — Two Weeks Prior to Campaign Launch ("Connection Sunday")

Step 1:

If possible, preach a message on the value of community and small groups (perhaps using Jesus and the disciples as an example). Successful connections usually require three components: a vision cast on the importance of small groups; modeling by current leadership of being in a group; and easy connection to either a new group or an existing group.

Step 2:

Have a "connection event" after the service to get people into small groups for the GIC campaign. Here are a couple of options:

1. Have a modified Sunday service that concludes approximately fifteen minutes early. At the end of the service identify all of your group leaders by having them come to the front of the church. Then invite those willing to be connected in a group for six weeks, but who are not already in one, to follow you and the leaders out of the sanctuary/auditorium to one of two rooms. Those interested in a small group in someone's home should go to one of the rooms; those who would prefer a midweek or Sunday group at church should go to the other.

In the home-group room, have tables set up with red, blue, or white tablecloths. Instruct people to go to the red table(s) if they want a women's group, blue for men's, and white for couples and singles. Or perhaps you'll want to organize the home groups geographically. Have leaders available at each table to welcome those who sit at their table.

Once all are seated, instruct everyone to introduce themselves and determine the best time and place for them to meet as a group over the six-week GIC campaign.

In the church-group room, have a red table set up for those who prefer a Sunday group and a blue table for those who prefer a midweek group, and have people sign up accordingly.

In both rooms, remember to proceed quickly because people will need to leave for other obligations (picking up children from child care, etc.).

2. Have a "Connection Card" in each bulletin. On the card is space for people's pertinent information (name, address, phone, email, etc.). Provide options for them to check off the kind of group they may be interested in and the best times for them to meet (have them rank in order the top three days and times).

Instruct people during the service to fill out the card and put it either in the offering plate or in a basket by the door as they exit. Have teams ready to work after the service and that afternoon sorting the cards and beginning to contact people to connect them to groups.

Prayer & Fasting — One Week Prior to Campaign Launch

Step 1:

Call the congregation to a day of prayer and fasting about the upcoming GIC campaign. Give them the flexibility to choose for themselves which day would be best to fast. Provide some instruction on what fasting is and why it is important.

Step 2:

Ask the prayer team to consider an all-night prayer and fast at church the night before the launch—praying over each pew or seat, praying through the church and for the congregation.

Kick-off Service — "Launch Sunday!"

Step 1:

Preach the first sermon in the GIC campaign series.

Step 2:

Begin the small group curriculum program today (and proceed throughout the week at church and homes).

Step 3:

Remind people to begin reading Ortberg's book on their own if they haven't already.

Look for Movement — Weeks 2–6 of Campaign

Step 1:

As your sermon series and the small groups continue, listen for and track names/stories of how God is moving in people's lives during this time. (Make sure all small group leaders are listening for stories to pass on to you as well.) You may want to incorporate some of these stories into one of your messages (with permission) or ask individuals to tell the story themselves (much more powerful!), providing a guideline of how much time they have. By the way, it's fine if they would feel more comfortable writing out their story ahead of time—you can

approve it or help them refine it—and simply reading it Sunday morning. It won't lose its power if it is read. When individuals are done sharing, pray for them.

Step 2:

You may choose to approach some of those who don't tell their story during weeks 2–6 and ask if they could be among the first to stand up and tell their story on week 7.

Step 3:

On week 6 you will want to let people know about the next week's opportunity to take sixty seconds and talk about how they have experienced God's closeness during this spiritual adventure.

Share Testimonials — Week 7 ("Celebration Sunday")

Provide time in the service for an open mic forum, giving people no more than sixty seconds each to tell what God has done in their life as a result of the GIC campaign. Arrange at least a week beforehand for two or three people (per service) to tell their experiences first, as a way of "breaking the ice." Some churches will allow ten to fifteen minutes for the open mic, though by week 7 you may choose to forgo the message and simply designate the entire time for sharing.