

INTRODUCTION

Welcome.

Our hope for this tool is to help your church function in a manner that the gospel of Jesus Christ is evident and proclaimed in all that you do, from how people are greeted, the music that's played, the sermon, how your staff relates to one another, how your members serve their neighbors, how deep and authentic community plays out, to the lasting impressions that people walk away with from your gatherings. We pray that all we do, as the Church, would be bathed in the gospel.

This assessment is broken into 12 parts, each part distributed monthly and corresponding to a chapter in the book, *Creature of the Word*. We will update the Creature of the Word website regularly with new content and the upcoming month's assessment. It's designed to help you audit yourself and your church, and that's not always easy because we all have blind spots. We also have sacred cows – areas of our personal lives and churches that we don't want to touch. We urge you to open up your life and your church's ministry for examination during this process. If we are honest, every church has significant areas that need to be further aligned to the person and work of Jesus Christ.

Our advice to you and your team (yes, it's best to work through the assessment each month as a team in community) is the following:

- Start with a blank sheet of paper. Hold each area of your life and each area of your church up to the lens of the gospel. Evaluate everything through the gospel. That's what each month's assessment is designed to help you do.
- Each month you'll find the corresponding chapter's assessment, and in it, you'll see a list of questions. You don't have to answer all of them. If only one or two questions cause you and your team to dig deeper into evaluation and discussion, then only wrestle through those questions.
- The questions listed in the assessment are simply guides. As you and your team read each chapter, there may arise questions specific to you and your church. If so, discuss those instead.
- Don't leave it at mere discussion. Make sure that you develop a plan as a result of the discussion. What are your next steps? What's your deadline? Who's responsible for what? Create tangible, concrete plans; otherwise, things won't get done. Maybe there will only be one thing to get done each month; maybe there will be 12. Whatever it is, get after it.
- In church life, the months come quickly, so don't be overwhelmed by the assessments. If you need two months to work through the first month's assessment, take that time, but don't dawdle.

- Set a time for you and the team to regularly discuss the assessment each month. It might be a standing meeting that's already scheduled, or you might need a separate meeting dedicated to this topic.
- If the Holy Spirit stops you in one particular assessment, maybe that's the area that needs your focus. Maybe that's the only area you need to change in 2013. Work and pray until you have that area complete.
- To make some changes, you will need courage. Devote yourselves to prayer before making these changes. Pray for courage and His divine guidance.

Let us know about your highs and your lows, and we'll share those with you as well throughout the year. The majority of this discussion will take place on the Creature of the Word Facebook page. Our prayers are with you as you travel this journey alongside us.

Now, let's dig in.