



Companion to *Strategically Small: Why a Bigger Church Was Never the Point* by Charlie Miller

Welcome, Pastor

This series is designed to run alongside the book *Strategically Small: Why a Bigger Church Was Never the Point* and the Small Group Discussion Guide found at the back of the book. Each week's sermon covers the same chapters your small groups will discuss that week, so the pulpit and the living room reinforce each other. That two-track approach is where the real transformation happens.

These are frameworks, not scripts. Every small church is different, and the best version of each sermon is the one that sounds like *you* and speaks to *your* people. Swap in your own stories. Adjust the emphasis based on where your congregation is. Linger where the Spirit leads.

The emotional arc of the series moves from *gratitude* (Weeks 1 and 2) to *clarity* (Weeks 3 and 4) to *conviction* (Weeks 5 and 6).

A note on Scripture: All quotations in this kit are from the English Standard Version (ESV) unless marked otherwise.

The Series at a Glance

- **Week 1: The Room That's Fuller Than It Looks** — Chapters 1–3
Session 1: What You Already Have — Key text: Matthew 18:20
- **Week 2: The Lie Nobody Told You Out Loud** — Chapters 4–6
Session 2: The Lie You've Been Told — Key text: 1 Samuel 16:7
- **Week 3: The Church That Fits in a Living Room** — Chapters 7–9
Session 3: What the Bible Actually Describes — Key text: Luke 12:32
- **Week 4: The Mess Is the Ministry** — Chapters 10–11
Session 4: The Mess and the Commitment — Key text: 2 Corinthians 4:7
- **Week 5: Known and Loved (Even When It's Uncomfortable)** — Chapters 12–13
Session 5: Being There and Being Known — Key text: Job 2:13
- **Week 6: Strategically Small on Purpose** — Chapters 14–17
Session 6: Strategically Small on Purpose — Key text: Zechariah 4:10



Before You Begin: A Simple Checklist

- Get books into hands. Distribute copies the week before the series begins if you can.
- Announce the two tracks. Sunday sermons plus midweek small groups working through the Discussion Guide.
- Recruit testimony voices. One church member per week, 2 to 3 minutes, matched to that week's theme.
- Talk with your worship team. Songs about community, faithfulness, being known, and God's presence in the ordinary.
- Load the graphics package. Series logo, background slides, countdown, and bumper video, plus the slide text provided for each week.

Week 1:

The Room That's Fuller Than It Looks



At A Glance

- **Covers:** Chapters 1–3
- **Pairs with:** Small Group Session 1: What You Already Have
- **Theme:** Seeing your church with fresh eyes
- **Big Idea:** What you have in this room is more than you think it is.
- **Key Text:** Matthew 18:20
- **Supporting Texts:** 1 Corinthians 12:26; Proverbs 17:17
- **Tone:** Warm, specific, grateful. This week is a cool drink of water, not a pep talk.

Key Scripture: *“For where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I among them.”*

— Matthew 18:20

Sermon Flow

1. Opening: Start with What They See

Open by describing your own church on a Sunday morning. Not the ideal version. The real one. The room as it actually looks when you stand up to preach. How many chairs. Who sits where. The sounds. The ordinary, unremarkable feel of it. Let people recognize themselves in the description.

Then pivot: what if the way we see this room is wrong? Not wrong because it's bad, but wrong because we've been measuring it by the wrong standard? What if the thing that makes a room feel full has nothing to do with how many chairs are occupied?

2. Teaching: Attendance vs. Presence

The difference between a room full of people and a room full of presence. You can pack a stadium with strangers. That's attendance. But when fifty people who know each other by name, by story, by struggle walk into the same room on Sunday morning, that room carries a weight that numbers can't explain.

Jesus didn't set a minimum threshold in Matthew 18:20. He described the nature of His presence. Where people gather in His name, He is there. Not “He will be there when enough of you show up.” He is there. Right now. At your current size.

The early church wasn't a megachurch in its infancy. It was a network of living rooms. And in those living rooms, people knew each other well enough that when one part suffered, every part suffered with it (1 Corinthians 12:26). That verse doesn't work in a crowd of strangers. It works in a family.

3. Illustration

[Your story goes here.] Tell a specific story from your own church where someone's absence was noticed and acted on. Not a program. Not a system. Just people who knew someone well enough to realize they weren't there and loved them enough to follow up.

4. The Turn: The "Problem" That's Actually a Gift

Acknowledge the thing everyone is thinking: in a small church, everybody knows your business. You can't hide. Your bad days are visible. Your struggles are public. That feels uncomfortable.

Then reframe it: that's not a flaw. That's the feature. A church where you can hide is a church where you can be forgotten. A church where you're visible is a church where you're known. And being known, truly known, is the foundation everything else is built on.

Proverbs 17:17 says a friend loves at all times and a brother is born for adversity. The people in this room aren't just your church. They're your brothers and sisters. And the fact that they see you, that they know when something is wrong, that they won't let you disappear, that's not the downside of a small church. That's the whole point.

5. Landing

Don't close with a challenge yet. Close with gratitude. This first week is about seeing. Ask your church to look around the room this week and notice what's actually there. Not what's missing. What's there. The people. The stories. The weight of a room full of people who actually know each other.

This room is fuller than it looks.

Pastoral Notes

- This sermon sets the emotional tone for the series. Keep it warm and specific. Resist the urge to make arguments yet. Just help people see.
- If your church has been discouraged about size, this sermon should feel like a cool drink of water, not a pep talk. Don't hype. Just name what's true.
- Avoid any mention of big churches or comparison this week. That's next week's territory. This week is purely about gratitude for what's in the room.

Slide Text: Week 1

1. **Series Title** — **STRATEGICALLY SMALL** / Why a Bigger Church Was Never the Point
2. **Week Title** — Week 1: The Room That's Fuller Than It Looks
3. **Key Text** — “For where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I among them.” — Matthew 18:20
4. **Big Idea** — What you have in this room is more than you think it is.
5. **Point** — Attendance is not the same as presence.
6. **Scripture** — “If one member suffers, all suffer together; if one member is honored, all rejoice together.” — 1 Corinthians 12:26
7. **Point** — A church where you can hide is a church where you can be forgotten.
8. **Scripture** — “A friend loves at all times, and a brother is born for adversity.” — Proverbs 17:17
9. **Point** — Being known is not the downside of a small church. It's the whole point.
10. **Closing** — This room is fuller than it looks.

Week 2:

The Lie Nobody Told You Out Loud



At A Glance

- **Covers:** Chapters 4–6
- **Pairs with:** Small Group Session 2: The Lie You've Been Told
- **Theme:** Where the pressure comes from
- **Big Idea:** The insecurity you feel about your church didn't come from God. It came from a gospel that was never actually in the Bible.
- **Key Text:** 1 Samuel 16:7
- **Supporting Texts:** John 6:66–68; 1 Thessalonians 2:7–8
- **Tone:** Honest and clear-eyed, not angry. The sharpest sermon in the series.

Key Scripture: “For the LORD sees not as man sees: man looks on the outward appearance, but the LORD looks on the heart.” — 1 Samuel 16:7

Sermon Flow

1. Opening: Name the Feeling

Start by naming the thing no one talks about. The low-grade spiritual insecurity that most small church members carry. The quiet ache after scrolling past another church's highlight reel. The feeling at the conference when every success story involves a church ten times your size. The well-meaning friend who says, “You should visit our church sometime. We just moved into our new building.”

Nobody ever sat you down and said, “Your church is failing.” But the message is everywhere. And you absorbed it the way you absorb humidity. You didn't choose it. You just walked outside and it stuck to you.

2. Teaching: Where the Bigger-Is-Better Gospel Comes From

This isn't an attack on big churches. Big churches can be faithful, healthy, wonderful places. This is about an assumption that has seeped into Christian culture so deeply that most of us have never questioned it: the assumption that growth equals health, that size equals blessing, and that a church that isn't getting bigger is a church that's doing something wrong.

That assumption didn't come from the Bible. It came from a consumer culture that measures everything by scale. And when the church adopted the language and metrics of the marketplace, small churches became the equivalent of struggling businesses instead of what they actually are: faithful families.

God told Samuel in 1 Samuel 16:7 that He doesn't see the way man sees. Man looks on the outward appearance, but the LORD looks on the heart. We usually apply that to individuals. What happens when you apply it to a church? If God looked at your church's heart rather than its attendance, what would He see?

3. The Turn: Jesus Watched His Church Shrink

Tell the story from John 6. Jesus gives the hard teaching. The crowd thins. Disciples walk away. His attendance numbers drop dramatically in a single afternoon. And He doesn't chase them. He doesn't rebrand. He doesn't commission a felt-needs survey to figure out what went wrong.

He turns to the twelve and asks: "Do you want to go away as well?"

Peter's answer is everything: "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life."

That's not a consumer answer. That's a family answer. Peter wasn't there because the experience was meeting his needs. He was there because he belonged to Jesus. And the church Jesus built from those twelve people, the ones who stayed, changed the world.

4. Illustration

[Your story goes here.] Share honestly about a time you felt the comparison pressure yourself. A conference. A podcast. A moment when you looked at your church and felt the ache. Be vulnerable here. Your congregation needs to know their pastor has felt this too.

5. Teaching: What We Lost When Church Became a Brand

When church becomes a product, members become consumers. And consumers evaluate. They compare. They shop. They ask whether this church "meets my needs" the way they'd ask whether a restaurant meets their dietary requirements.

But Paul didn't describe his church in consumer terms. He described it in family terms: "like a nursing mother taking care of her own children" (1 Thessalonians 2:7). He said he shared not just the gospel but his very self. You can share the gospel from a stage. You can only share your self in a family. And the difference between a church that attracts people and a church that binds people together is the difference between a brand and a family.

Your church was never meant to compete. It was meant to love.

6. Landing

The lie says your church isn't enough. The lie says you should be bigger, louder, more polished, more impressive. But the lie didn't come from God.

God looks at your heart. And what He sees in this room, the love, the faithfulness, the staying, is exactly what He's looking for.

This week, your assignment is simple. Notice where the lie lives in your head. Notice the sentence that plays when you feel insecure about your church. And then ask yourself: where did that come from? Because it didn't come from the Bible. And it didn't come from God.

Pastoral Notes

- This is the sharpest sermon in the series. The tone should be honest and clear-eyed, not angry. You're naming something your people have felt but never had words for. That naming alone is healing.
- Be careful not to bash big churches from the pulpit. The book is for small churches, not against big ones. Keep the target on the assumption, not on any specific church or leader.
- Some people in the room will feel emotional during this sermon because you're validating something they've carried silently. Make space for that.

Slide Text: Week 2

1. **Week Title** — Week 2: The Lie Nobody Told You Out Loud
2. **Key Text** — “For the LORD sees not as man sees: man looks on the outward appearance, but the LORD looks on the heart.” — 1 Samuel 16:7
3. **Big Idea** — The insecurity you feel about your church didn't come from God.
4. **Point** — Nobody said it out loud. But the message is everywhere.
5. **Point** — The assumption: growth equals health. Size equals blessing.
6. **Point** — That assumption didn't come from the Bible.
7. **Scripture** — “Do you want to go away as well?” “Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life.” — John 6:67–68
8. **Point** — That's not a consumer answer. That's a family answer.
9. **Point** — You can share the gospel from a stage. You can only share your self in a family.
10. **Point** — Your church was never meant to compete. It was meant to love.
11. **Closing** — The lie didn't come from God.

Week 3:

The Church That Fits In A Living Room



At A Glance

- **Covers:** Chapters 7–9
- **Pairs with:** Small Group Session 3: What the Bible Actually Describes
- **Theme:** The biblical case for small
- **Big Idea:** The church of the New Testament was a small church. And it changed the world.
- **Key Text:** Luke 12:32
- **Supporting Texts:** Romans 16:3–5; 1 Corinthians 14:26; Matthew 25:21
- **Tone:** Discovery, not argument. This week should feel like relief. Like exhaling. Like good news.

Key Scripture: “Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom.” — Luke 12:32

Sermon Flow

1. Opening: Picture the First Church

Ask your church to close their eyes. Describe a house church. Not a cleaned-up, idealized version. The real thing. Twenty to thirty people in someone’s living room. A meal on the table. Someone singing. Someone reading a letter from Paul that just arrived. A new believer asking a question. An older believer answering it. Someone confessing a struggle. Someone praying over them.

No stage. No sound system. No parking lot. Just a room full of people who know each other by name. That’s the church Paul wrote to. That’s the church that turned the Roman Empire upside down. And it looked a lot more like your church than like anything you’d see on a livestream.

2. Teaching: What the New Testament Actually Describes

Walk through the house church evidence. Priscilla and Aquila’s home (Romans 16:3–5). Nympha’s house (Colossians 4:15). Philemon’s house (Philemon 1:2). Mary’s house where the church gathered to pray for Peter’s release (Acts 12:12).

These weren’t temporary arrangements. These weren’t churches waiting to get a building. This was how the church worked. Small gatherings, intimate communities, people who shared meals and stories and struggles in close quarters.

And Paul's instructions to these churches make more sense when you picture the room. When he writes "each one has a hymn, a lesson, a revelation" (1 Corinthians 14:26), he's describing a gathering small enough for everyone to participate. That verse doesn't work in a room of five hundred. It works in a room of fifty.

3. The Turn: "Little Flock" Is a Term of Endearment

Jesus called His followers "little flock" in Luke 12:32. Not "growing flock." Not "future megaflock." Little flock. And then He said something astonishing: it is the Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom.

The kingdom isn't promised to the little flock when they get bigger. It's given to them while they're still little. Jesus didn't say "you'll inherit the kingdom once your attendance numbers improve." He said it is the Father's good pleasure. Right now. At this size. With these people.

Connect this to the parable of the talents in Matthew 25:21. The master doesn't praise the servants for managing a lot. He praises them for being faithful with what they had. "Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful over a little; I will set you over much." What would it look like for your church to hear those words based on what you've done with what you have, rather than what you haven't done with what you don't have?

4. Illustration

[Scripture reading moment.] If you can, read a short passage from one of Paul's letters and ask your church to hear it the way it was first heard: read aloud in a living room full of people who knew each other. Philippians 1:3–8 works beautifully for this. Paul's affection for the Philippians sounds different when you picture thirty people in a room rather than a crowd in a cathedral.

5. Teaching: God Counts Differently

The biblical pattern is consistent. God chooses the small. The overlooked. The insignificant. Gideon's army was too large, so God made it smaller. David was the runt of Jesse's sons. Jesus chose twelve, not twelve hundred. The mustard seed is the smallest of all seeds, and it becomes a shelter for birds.

God's math has never worked the way the world's math works. The world counts heads. God counts faithfulness. The world measures success by scale. God measures it by depth. And the repeated testimony of Scripture is that God has always done His most transformative work through the small and the faithful, not through the big and the impressive.

Your church is not behind. Your church is in a biblical tradition that stretches back to the first living room where believers broke bread together.

6. Landing

The tone of this week should be discovery, not argument. You're not defending your church. You're helping your people discover that the Bible has been describing their church all along. They just never noticed because no one told them to look.

Close with Luke 12:32 one more time. Slowly. Let the words sit. "Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom." He's not waiting for you to get bigger. He's pleased with you now.

Pastoral Notes

- This is the sermon where the theological foundation gets laid. But keep it pastoral, not academic. You're a pastor opening the Bible with your people, not a professor delivering a lecture.
- The shift in tone from Week 2 to Week 3 is important. Week 2 was sharper. This week should feel like relief. Like exhaling. Like good news.
- Resist stacking too many proof texts. One or two strong passages that land deeply are better than a dozen that skim the surface.

Slide Text: Week 3

1. **Week Title** — Week 3: The Church That Fits in a Living Room
2. **Key Text** — “Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom.” — Luke 12:32
3. **Big Idea** — The church of the New Testament was a small church. And it changed the world.
4. **Scripture** — “Greet also the church in their house.” — Romans 16:5
5. **Point** — This wasn't a church waiting for a building. This was how the church worked.
6. **Scripture** — “When you come together, each one has a hymn, a lesson, a revelation...” — 1 Corinthians 14:26
7. **Point** — “Little flock” is a term of endearment.
8. **Point** — The kingdom is given to the little flock while they're still little.
9. **Scripture** — “Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful over a little; I will set you over much.” — Matthew 25:21
10. **Point** — The world counts heads. God counts faithfulness.
11. **Closing** — He's not waiting for you to get bigger. He's pleased with you now.

Week 4:

The Mess Is The Ministry



At A Glance

- **Covers:** Chapters 10–11
- **Pairs with:** Small Group Session 4: The Mess and the Commitment
- **Theme:** The friction and the faithfulness
- **Big Idea:** Spiritual growth doesn't happen in spite of the mess. It happens because of it. And the decision to stay is one of the most spiritually powerful choices you'll ever make.
- **Key Text:** 2 Corinthians 4:7
- **Supporting Texts:** Hebrews 10:24–25; Proverbs 27:17; Psalm 1:3
- **Tone:** Humor up front, tenderness at the close.

Key Scripture: “But we have this treasure in jars of clay, to show that the surpassing power belongs to God and not to us.” — 2 Corinthians 4:7

Sermon Flow

1. Opening: The Person Who Drives You Crazy

Start with honesty and humor. Everybody in a small church has somebody. The person who talks too much. The person who brings the same terrible dish to every potluck. The person who always has an opinion about the thermostat. The person whose personality just rubs you the wrong way.

In a big church, you can avoid that person. You can slip in and out without ever crossing their path. In a small church, they're sitting three seats away from you every single Sunday.

Acknowledge it. Let your people laugh about it. And then reframe it.

2. Teaching: Treasure in Cracked Containers

Paul says in 2 Corinthians 4:7 that we carry treasure in jars of clay. Cracked, ordinary, fragile vessels. That's the church. That's every church. But it's especially visible in a small church, where you can't hide behind production quality or anonymity. In a small church, the cracks are showing. Yours and everyone else's.

And Paul says that's the point. The treasure is in clay jars so that the surpassing power belongs to God and not to us. God didn't put His gospel in polished, impressive containers. He put it in cracked people who irritate each other, who disagree about the budget, who sometimes have to apologize in the parking lot after a business meeting. Because when transformation happens in that environment, nobody gets to take credit except God.

Proverbs 27:17 says iron sharpens iron. Sharpening involves friction. Heat. Contact. You can't be sharpened from a distance. And the person at church who irritates you most might be doing more for your sanctification than your favorite Bible study.

3. The Turn: A Theology of Staying

Transition from the mess to the staying. Hebrews 10:24–25 says to consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together. The word “stir” is not gentle. It implies provocation. The community of faith is not a place of pure comfort. It's a place where you're stirred, challenged, sharpened, even agitated, toward becoming more like Christ. And that only works if you stay long enough for the stirring to do its work.

Psalms 1:3 describes a person planted by streams of water, yielding fruit in season. The image is rootedness. A tree that gets transplanted every time the soil gets uncomfortable never bears fruit. It takes roots to produce fruit. And roots take time.

There's a difference between being planted and being stuck. Being stuck is staying out of fear or inertia. Being planted is staying out of conviction, because you believe God put you here and the roots you're growing will eventually bear fruit, even if you can't see it yet.

4. Illustration

[Your story goes here.] Share a story from your own experience about staying through difficulty. A season when leaving would have been easier. What happened because you stayed? What grew in the soil of that difficult season? Be honest about the cost, not just the payoff.

5. Teaching: The Consumer Question vs. the Family Question

A consumer asks: “Is this church meeting my needs?” A family member asks: “Am I the person God is calling me to be in this family?”

The consumer question will eventually lead you out the door, because no church meets every need perfectly. The family question keeps you rooted, because families don't work that way. You don't leave your family because dinner was disappointing last Thursday. You stay and you work and you grow and you love, even when it's hard. Especially when it's hard.

6. Landing

Close by speaking directly to anyone who has been thinking about leaving. Not with guilt. With honesty. Acknowledge that sometimes leaving is the right thing. There are legitimate reasons. But there are also consumer reasons. And the difference matters.

If you're staying, know this: the mess you're sitting in is the raw material God uses. The friction is the sharpening. The person who annoys you is part of your sanctification. And the decision to stay, to put down roots, to be planted, is one of the most spiritually courageous things you can do.

Pastoral Notes

- This sermon needs humor up front and tenderness at the close. The opening should feel light and honest. The landing should feel weighty.
- Be careful with the “person who irritates you” framing. It should be universal and self-deprecating, not targeted. Make sure you include yourself in the category of people who are sometimes difficult.
- If your church has recently experienced people leaving, tread carefully. Don’t weaponize this sermon against anyone who left. Speak to the people who stayed, and honor their staying.

Slide Text: Week 4

1. **Week Title** — Week 4: The Mess Is the Ministry
2. **Key Text** — “But we have this treasure in jars of clay, to show that the surpassing power belongs to God and not to us.” — 2 Corinthians 4:7
3. **Big Idea** — Spiritual growth doesn’t happen in spite of the mess. It happens because of it.
4. **Point** — In a small church, the cracks are showing. That’s the point.
5. **Scripture** — “Iron sharpens iron, and one man sharpens another.” — Proverbs 27:17
6. **Point** — You can’t be sharpened from a distance.
7. **Scripture** — “And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together...” — Hebrews 10:24–25
8. **Scripture** — “He is like a tree planted by streams of water that yields its fruit in its season.” — Psalm 1:3
9. **Point** — It takes roots to produce fruit. And roots take time.
10. **Point** — The consumer question: “Is this church meeting my needs?”
11. **Point** — The family question: “Am I the person God is calling me to be in this family?”
12. **Closing** — Planted, not stuck.

Week 5:

Known And Loved (Even When It's Uncomfortable)



At A Glance

- **Covers:** Chapters 12–13
- **Pairs with:** Small Group Session 5: Being There and Being Known
- **Theme:** Showing up and being seen
- **Big Idea:** The most powerful thing your church offers isn't a program. It's the experience of being truly known and loved anyway.
- **Key Text:** Job 2:13
- **Supporting Texts:** 1 John 4:18; James 5:16; Galatians 6:2
- **Tone:** The emotional heart of the series. Take your time. Let the silences do their work.

Key Scripture: “And they sat with him on the ground seven days and seven nights, and no one spoke a word to him, for they saw that his suffering was very great.” — Job 2:13

Sermon Flow

1. Opening: The Ministry of Showing Up

Start with a story about crisis response. Not a big, organized, institutional response. The small church response. The one where there's no staff member assigned to it, no budget line for it, no program to activate. Just people who love each other showing up because that's what families do.

The casserole on the doorstep. The text at 11 p.m. that says “I'm coming over.” The person who sits with you in the hospital waiting room and doesn't say anything because there's nothing to say. The church that takes up an offering on the spot, no committee meeting required, because someone in the family needs help right now.

That's what it looks like when there's no program for it. It's slower and messier and also more human. And it's what your small church does, often without even realizing it's doing anything remarkable.

2. Teaching: The Ministry of Presence

Job's friends get a bad reputation, mostly because of what they said later. But their first response was extraordinary. They sat on the ground with him for seven days and seven nights. Nobody spoke. Nobody advised. Nobody tried to fix anything. They just stayed.

That's the ministry of presence. And it's the thing a small church does better than almost anything else on earth. Not because you have a training program for it. Because you know each other well enough to know when someone is hurting, and you love each other enough to show up without being asked.

Galatians 6:2 says to bear one another's burdens. But you can't carry a burden you don't know about. That verse assumes a community intimate enough for real honesty, where people's struggles are visible and where someone is close enough to help bear the weight. That kind of community doesn't happen by accident. It happens because you're small enough to see each other.

3. The Turn: The Gift and the Risk of Being Known

Transition from crisis care to the deeper, more everyday reality of being known. Not just in crisis, but all the time. Year after year. The people in your church see you on your best Sundays and your worst ones. They know when your marriage is strained. They notice when you've been quiet. They remember what you said three years ago, and they're still here.

Being known is a gift. It's also terrifying. Because being known means being seen without your mask. And most of us have spent our lives perfecting the mask.

1 John 4:18 says perfect love casts out fear. The fear of being known, really known, is one of the deepest fears most people carry. What if they see the real me and walk away? What if they find out what I'm actually struggling with? What if they judge me?

The answer the small church offers is costly and extraordinary: they see the real you and they love you anyway. Not because you're perfect. Because you're family. And that's what family does.

4. Illustration

[Your story goes here.] Tell a story about someone in your church being known over time. Not a dramatic crisis moment, but the slow, accumulating knowing that happens over years. The kind of knowing where someone remembers what you said in passing two years ago. Where people know your kids' names and your parents' health problems and the thing you're quietly worried about. That kind of depth.

5. Teaching: Confession and Safety

James 5:16 says to confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed. That verse assumes a community safe enough for real confession. Not public spectacle. Genuine, trusting honesty between people who have earned each other's trust.

A small church has the potential to be that community. Not automatically. Safety is built, not guaranteed. But the raw materials are there: people who know each other, who have history together, who have already seen each other's worst moments and chosen to stay.

The world offers the comfort of anonymity. Nobody sees your mess. Nobody asks hard questions. But anonymity comes at a cost: nobody carries your burden either. Your small church offers something more costly and more valuable: being known and loved anyway.

6. Landing

Close with a commissioning. This week, let yourself be known. Not dramatically. Not with a public confession. Just in a small, real way. Share something honest with someone at church that you'd normally keep to yourself. Let someone in. Because the healing James 5:16 describes doesn't happen in isolation. It happens in community. In a family that sees you and stays.

Pastoral Notes

- This sermon is the emotional heart of the series. Take your time with it. Let the stories breathe. Let the silences do their work.
- Be sensitive to people in the room who have been hurt by being “known” in a church context, whether through gossip, betrayal of confidence, or judgment. Acknowledge that being known carries real risk. The gift is real. So is the potential for harm. A healthy church guards what’s shared.
- Keep the framing on scale and proximity, not “programs are bad.” Celebrate what closeness makes possible without disparaging churches that organize care differently.
- The Job 2:13 passage is powerful. Consider reading it slowly, pausing, and letting it sit before you say anything about it.

Slide Text: Week 5

1. **Week Title** — Week 5: Known and Loved (Even When It’s Uncomfortable)
2. **Key Text** — “And they sat with him on the ground seven days and seven nights, and no one spoke a word to him, for they saw that his suffering was very great.” — Job 2:13
3. **Big Idea** — The most powerful thing your church offers isn’t a program. It’s being truly known and loved anyway.
4. **Point** — The ministry of presence: nobody spoke, nobody fixed, they just stayed.
5. **Scripture** — “Bear one another’s burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.” — Galatians 6:2
6. **Point** — You can’t carry a burden you don’t know about.
7. **Scripture** — “There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear.” — 1 John 4:18
8. **Point** — They see the real you. And they love you anyway.
9. **Scripture** — “Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed.” — James 5:16
10. **Point** — Anonymity means nobody sees your mess. It also means nobody carries your burden.
11. **Closing** — This week, let yourself be known.

Week 6:

Strategically Small On Purpose



At A Glance

- **Covers:** Chapters 14–17 (including the closing chapter, “Sunday Morning”)
- **Pairs with:** Small Group Session 6: Strategically Small on Purpose
- **Theme:** Embracing the vision and opening the door
- **Big Idea:** Your church is not stuck. It’s planted. And the most faithful thing you can do is stop apologizing for your size and start living into your calling.
- **Key Text:** Zechariah 4:10 (NIV)
- **Supporting Texts:** John 13:35; Matthew 5:14–16; Acts 13:2–3; Mark 4:30–32
- **Tone:** A commissioning, not a conclusion.

Key Scripture: “Who dares despise the day of small things?” — Zechariah 4:10 (NIV)

Sermon Flow

1. Opening: The Assumption That Had to Die

Start with vulnerability. Share about the assumption that bigger is always better. Where it came from. How it shaped the way you thought about ministry, about your church, about your own calling. Be honest about the journey from insecurity to conviction.

Then name the reframe: small is not a stage on the way to something bigger. For your church, small might be the strategy. The most intentional, most faithful, most biblical posture you could take.

2. Teaching: Strategic Smallness

Unpack what “strategically small” actually means. It doesn’t mean settling. It doesn’t mean giving up on growth. It means redefining what growth looks like.

Strategic smallness says: we will be the most faithful, most loving, most Christ-shaped community we can be at the size we are. We will not waste our energy longing for a version of church God hasn’t called us to. We will go deep instead of wide. We will know each other instead of just attending alongside each other. We will be a family, not an audience.

And when God grows us beyond what this room can hold, the next step isn’t a bigger building. It’s sending people out to start something new.

3. Teaching: Growing by Sending

This is where the vision gets exciting. Connect to Acts 13:2–3. The church at Antioch sent away Barnabas and Saul, their best leaders, because the Holy Spirit said to. They didn't send their surplus. They sent their best. In worship. In prayer. In trust.

The New Testament model of growth was never accumulation. It was multiplication. The early church didn't build one massive congregation. It planted living room after living room after living room. And those living rooms changed the world.

Your church can do the same thing. Not by getting bigger. By going deeper. By growing people so faithfully that those people are equipped and compelled to carry the gospel somewhere new. The greatest legacy a small church can leave is not a building. It's a constellation of churches, each one small, each one faithful, each one a family.

The growth question isn't "why aren't we getting bigger?" It's "who are we sending next?"

4. The Turn: The Church the World Needs Now

Pivot to the mission field. People are lonely. The Surgeon General has called it an epidemic. People have more ways to communicate than ever and fewer people to call when something goes wrong.

And the thing they're starving for, to be known by name, to belong to something real, to walk into a room and be recognized, is exactly what your church already offers. You've had it all along. The world just doesn't know it yet.

Matthew 5:14–16: "You are the light of the world." Not "you could be." Not "you will be when you're bigger." You are. Right now. A small light in a dark room. And the people stumbling around in the dark don't need a floodlight. They need a lamp. Something warm. Something close. Something they can find their way to.

That's your church.

5. Teaching: The Mustard Seed

Close the teaching with the mustard seed parable from Mark 4:30–32. The mustard seed doesn't become a different kind of plant. It becomes the fullest version of what it already is. It grows as itself. It doesn't try to become an oak tree. It becomes a shelter, a place where birds can perch, where life can flourish.

That's what God is asking your church to do. Not to become something you're not. To become the fullest, most faithful, most life-giving version of what you already are.

6. Landing: Open the Door Wider

Close the series with a commissioning. You've spent six weeks seeing your church with fresh eyes. You've named the lies. You've found your church in the pages of Scripture. You've sat with the mess and the beauty and the gift of being known.

Now open the door.

Not with a marketing campaign. Not with a rebrand. Open the door the way a family opens the door. Invite the neighbor. Welcome the stranger. Set an extra place at the table. The best evangelism a small church can do is not a program. It's a posture. It's the posture of a family that has room at the table and isn't afraid to say so.

John 13:35: "By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another." The world will know you by your love. Not your building. Not your budget. Not your attendance. Your love. And that love is most visible, most tangible, most believable in a community small enough for it to be personal.

Close with Zechariah 4:10 one more time: "Who dares despise the day of small things?"

Not you. Not anymore. Not ever again.

You are not behind. You are not failing. You are the church. Go be the church.

Pastoral Notes

- This is the capstone. It should feel like a commissioning, not a conclusion. You're sending your people out with a vision, not wrapping up a lecture series.
- If your church has been on this journey together for six weeks, the emotional groundwork is laid. Trust it. Don't over-explain. Let the conviction land.
- Consider ending the service differently this week. A prayer of dedication. A moment of silence. A time where people can share what they've seen in their church over these six weeks.
- If you've been doing the small group discussion guide in parallel, this final week is a natural point to celebrate what's happened in those groups.

Slide Text: Week 6

1. **Week Title** — Week 6: Strategically Small on Purpose
2. **Key Text** — "Who dares despise the day of small things?" — Zechariah 4:10 (NIV)
3. **Big Idea** — Your church is not stuck. It's planted.
4. **Point** — Small is not a stage. It might be the strategy.
5. **Point** — Deep instead of wide. A family, not an audience.
6. **Point** — Antioch didn't send their surplus. They sent their best. (Acts 13:2–3)
7. **Point** — The growth question isn't "why aren't we getting bigger?" It's "who are we sending next?"
8. **Scripture** — "You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden." — Matthew 5:14
9. **Point** — The world doesn't need a floodlight. It needs a lamp.
10. **Point** — The mustard seed becomes the fullest version of what it already is. (Mark 4:30–32)
11. **Scripture** — "By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another." — John 13:35
12. **Closing** — You are not behind. You are not failing. You are the church. Go be the church.

Series Planning Notes



Recommended Parallel Track: Small groups work through the Strategically Small Discussion Guide (found at the back of the book) during the same six weeks, reading the assigned chapters and meeting midweek. The sermon reinforces the reading, and the small group deepens the sermon. This two-track approach is where the real transformation happens.

Book Distribution: Consider purchasing copies for your congregation and distributing them the week before the series begins. A small church can often do this affordably, and it removes the barrier of people needing to buy the book themselves. This is an investment in your church's identity.

Worship Integration: Talk with your worship team about song selections that reinforce each week's theme. Songs about community, faithfulness, being known, God's presence in the ordinary. Avoid the temptation to pick "small church anthems." Pick songs that point to God's character and let the themes do their own work.

Testimony Moments: Consider inviting a different church member each week to share a 2 to 3 minute testimony related to the theme. Someone who has experienced being known. Someone who stayed through difficulty. Someone who was carried. These short, honest moments from real people in the room will preach louder than anything you say from the front.

Using the Slide Text: Each week's slide text is written to drop directly onto the series background graphics. A few suggestions: keep one verse per slide, let scripture slides stay on screen while you read the passage aloud, and resist adding more text than what's provided. The slides are cues, not notes. Scripture slides are ESV except where marked NIV.

After the Series: Don't let the momentum die. The book's appendix includes a note to pastors and a preview of the companion series. Consider what your church's next step is. A continued small group study? A conversation about multiplication? An intentional effort to invite neighbors and open the door wider? Let the series end with a clear "what now" for your community.

