

LIBERTY BAPTIST THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

HOW TO SUCCESSFULLY MATURE
A SMALL CHURCH

A Thesis Project Submitted to
Liberty Baptist Theological Seminary
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of

DOCTOR OF MINISTRY

By

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Lynchburg, Virginia

February 28, 2008

LIBERTY BAPTIST THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

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ABSTRACT

HOW TO SUCCESSFULLY MATURE A SMALL CHURCH

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Liberty Baptist Theological Seminary, 2007

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There is a tremendous amount of Christian writings that defines a successful pastor as one who has increased numerical growth each year. The purpose of this paper is to encourage the small church pastor that obedience to the Great Commission, which includes reaching, baptizing, and teaching, is God's measuring standard for success. The evidence of success will be discipleship-making according to the opportunities that God has given each pastor. It emphasizes that God equally provides all pastors the spiritual tools necessary to mature His church. A case study of Grace Church illustrates how it matured over the last forty-five years.

Abstract length: 103 words

CONTENTS

SIGNATURE PAGE	iii
----------------------	-----

ABSTRACT	iv
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CHAPTERS

1. INTRODUCTION	1
-----------------------	---

Statement of the Problem

Definition of Terms

Statement of Limitations

Statement of Methodology

PART I. BIBLICAL FOUNDATION

2. THE POWER OF GOD	11
---------------------------	----

3. THE POWER OF THE GREAT COMMISSION	20
--	----

4. THE POWER OF FAITHFULNESS	29
------------------------------------	----

Biblical foundation for Faithfulness

Faithfulness means to follow the example of Jesus

Faithfulness builds the Body of Christ

5. THE POWER OF COMMUNICATION	42
-------------------------------------	----

The Promise of the Holy Spirit's Communication

The Fulfillment of the Holy Spirit's Communication

Application to Pastors

6. THE POWER OF LEADERSHIP	51
----------------------------------	----

Understanding Biblical Leadership

The Call and Role of the Pastor

	The Call and Role of Disciples	
	The Characteristics of a Christian Leader	
	The Pastoral Function according to Church size	
7.	THE POWER OF BIBLICAL ORGANIZATION	63
	Organizational Principles found in Acts	
	Organizational Principles found in 1 Corinthians 12	
	Organizational Principles found in Ephesians 4:11-16	
8.	THE POWER OF TRANSFORMATION	72
	Transformation by Hearing and Studying God's Word	
	Transformation by Application of God's Word	
	PART II. PRACTICAL FOUNDATIONS FOR GROWTH	
9.	THE POWER OF PRAYER	78
	Biblical Insights to Prayer	
	Practical Insights to Prayer for the Pastor	
	Practical Insights to Prayer for the Church	
10.	THE POWER OF PLANNING	90
	Understanding Missions, Visions, and Planning	
	Walking through the Steps	
	A Strategic Plan for Growth	
	PART III. A CASE STUDY	
11.	A CASE STUDY OF GRACE CHURCH	99
	History from 1959 to 1994	
	History from 1994 to 2007	

Great Commission History

The Leadership History

Biblical Organization History

The History of Transformation

The History of Prayer

The Power of Communication

12. SUMMARY	118
BIBLIOGRAPHY	120
VITA	124

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Statement of the Problem

Is it possible to have a biblically correct church today without having thousands of members? Is it possible to be within God's will if you are pastoring a small church that does not multiply each year? Can a small church be a healthy biblical church if it does not have significant numerical growth each year? Can pastors of small churches have a sense of satisfaction and expect a "well done, good and faithful servant" commendation from God if their churches are not having significant numerical growth each year? It has been said that a healthy church is a living organism that will naturally grow. Is this a myth or actually Scripture? These are serious questions that touch a pastor's heart and need to be answered.

There are many modern-day methods for measuring a healthy church, and one current measurement states that healthy churches are growing churches. The current growth indicator today is numerical growth.¹ This author would agree that such an

¹ Stephen A. Macchia, who wrote *Becoming a Healthy Church*, disagrees that numerical growth is the best indicator of a healthy church. He wrote that the biblical maturity of the church's membership is a more valid measurement of a healthy church.

indicator has its significance and would not disagree unless it overshadows the purpose for numerical growth.²

The purpose of this paper is to stress a biblical growth measurement that is beyond numerical increases. This paper is written for the pastor of a small, landlocked church who desires to fulfill The Great Commission (Matthew 28:18-20)³, but has limited outreach possibilities or church facilities. It is written to the small church pastor as an encouragement that being small is not an indication of failure; for success must be measured in discipleship-making.

From 1978 to 2006, the author has been the pastor or associate pastor in three churches. Each church had similar characteristics, such as five or fewer acres of land, a sanctuary capacity under three hundred people, a limited budget, and plenty of Christian workers. Every church was reaching people for Christ and producing disciples for His ministry.

All three churches had children's ministries, youth ministries, choirs, nursery, Sunday school, junior church, outreach ministries and active church boards. All three were ministering according to The Great Commission, but each was often internally viewed as missing the growth factor to be considered a great church. Numerical growth was the established measurement for a successful church. If you did not have a larger church than you did last year, you had failed an accepted spiritual indicator.

Was numerical growth a valid assessment of success? Was increased attendance the number one biblical indicator that any church was following God's growth plan? Is it

² This author read Mark Dever's book, *Nine Marks of a Healthy Church*. In appendix two, Dever summarizes thirty-nine healthy church books. None of these books list numerical growth as the first indicator of a healthy church.

³ Matthew 20:18-20 will be used as The Great Commission verses in this paper.

realistic to assume that all churches will reach 1,000 or 2,000 members if they just try a little harder? Are there natural limitations to growth that are acceptable?

Questions concerning the seeker-sensitive model as the best church growth plan began to emerge in the author's mind. The author began to reevaluate his first church⁴. It had the largest attendance in the town. It had the only Christian school in the town. It had the only youth pastor on staff in the town. It had students going to Christian colleges. With all that it had, the average attendance was still only 125⁵ individuals. The next largest church was only averaging about 80.

The author's second church⁶ was about twice the size as the first. It had a Christian school, children's programs, youth programs, men's and women's programs, outreach ministries, Sunday school programs and three services a week. It had several young men called into the ministry. It was reaching the neighborhood with the full gospel, but the church never averaged over 270⁷ members. In the back of the author's mind was the thought that possibly the church was never going to be a mega church. Was this acceptable to God?

At his third church, Grace Church in Smithtown, New York, he became the associate pastor. In this position, he had the opportunity to understand what it meant to be a successful New Testament church. This church was the smallest of the three numerically and both the Pastor and the author had similar church backgrounds. They

⁴ First Christian Church of Holtsville, Holtsville, California. When the author was called to this church, he was assured that it was an independent Baptist Church. The name was changed to Cornerstone Community Church.

⁵ The author kept the attendance records. In a small town, attendance rarely changed from week to week.

⁶ Heritage Baptist Church, Bay Shore, New York. This was an independent Baptist Church.

⁷ The author kept the attendance records.

had both gone to the same seminary, and both had previously ministered at churches that forced them to rethink their ministerial directions for themselves and the church they served. They both wanted a dynamic church that could make a change in their community. How would this be accomplished?

What was different about Grace Church? In 1994, it was averaging about sixty people in its one worship service. This was a drop of fifty people from 1990. What caused the huge drop? The pastor from 1985 to 1994 was very aggressive with his desire to increase the membership. He had many innovative ideas which were years ahead of his congregation. With each innovation, he lost more and more people. His ideas were good, but his timing and methods were not in agreement with his congregation.

In 1994, a new pastor came to Grace Church when it had only a handful of members and so little money in the bank that he had to remodel the old church parsonage for his own housing. By 1998, he had seen the church attendance increase to about 110 people on Sunday morning. It had almost doubled in size! Would this be considered a successful church according to God's standards or man's? Would it still be considered successful if it remained at 110 people for the next ten years, or must Grace Church continue to multiply each year to achieve clerical approval?

Grace Church is a small church living by The Great Commission and seeking to reach as many individuals as possible. Grace Church needs to understand that Matthew 28:18-20 is the measuring block for obedience to God. The church needs to understand that Ephesians 4:11-16 is the measuring block of obedience for organizational structure. It needs to understand the model for individual disciples is Jesus Christ, and I Timothy

4:11-16 is the lifestyle for His followers. When these scriptures permeate the church's philosophy then God will provide His spiritual blessing regardless of the church size.

This paper is written to provide biblical support for the small church pastors, and practical application that any pastor, but especially the small church pastor, can use in his church. These biblical supports and practical applications will help the small church pastor appreciate that God has given him the same tools that the large church has to accomplish The Great Commission.

This paper will biblically show the small church pastor that the Holy Spirit power that large churches use to build their church is the same power available to him. Secondly, it will provide the small church pastor with guidelines to organizing his church for numerical and spiritual growth with a greater emphasis on making disciples for Christ. Grace Church will be the model for both types of growth.

The small church pastor must understand and believe that the same spiritual power that is used for the larger church growth is also available for the smaller church. This understanding will give assurance that God measures all churches by how they have handled The Great Commission, reached people for Christ, and produce disciples for the next generation.

Definition of Terms

There are several terms which will be used and need explanation. When the term "small church" is used, it will refer to a church with an active attendance of 100 to three hundred individuals. This will include all adults and children on Sunday morning.

Geographically, the small church would be either landlocked or community locked. Landlocked refers to the small church that has fewer than five acres of land or less than a full city block (150 by 250 feet). Community locked refers to the church located in a town with a population less than 4,000 individuals.

The biblical growth pattern is a reference to Ephesians 4:11-16 which starts with pastoral leadership and trains church members for the work of the ministry. This is a continual process which produces the image of Christ in the believer and unity in the body.

The Holy Spirit power is that power that Jesus said would be available to all believers. It is a power given at salvation and is manifested in service to accomplish God's work in the believers' life and the church body. Holy Spirit gifts are given to individual members for the body. The fruit of the Holy Spirit provides character capabilities to all.

Statement of Limitations

Although this paper addresses organization and administrative concepts for the small church, it is not designed as a help for the church planter. The church planter will discover this information helpful to administrate his church but not in establishing it. It will not discuss state and local requirements for incorporation or building permit requirements. It is written for the pastor in an existing small church facility.

This paper primarily addresses administrative and organizational issues with heavy biblical and practical input. It is not a Sunday school handbook, youth group

handbook, or an office procedural manual. It will cover the biblical foundation for each ministry and how each ministry helps the local small church.

This paper does acknowledge that healthy churches often will grow, but it does not believe that numerical growth alone is the best indicator of a successful church. It does acknowledge that many large churches are very successful in reaching and discipling thousands and does not take away from their methodology. It only seeks to focus numerical and spiritual growth at a small church level. In summary, it concludes that the small church, when following the same principles, will be equally successful.

In addition, this paper is not written as a rebuttal for the current large church strategy for numerical growth. It is written as a tool for the small church pastor to have assurance that any church that fulfills The Great Commission is doing God's will regardless of its size.

This paper will not debate whether there is more potential for doing greater things with more members than with less nor will the paper tackle the problems that hinder church growth.

Statement of Methodology

The major emphasis of this paper will acknowledge the availability of the spiritual power that God gives all churches regardless of size. The major goal is to help the small church pastor to measure his church according to The Great Commission rather than by comparing membership numbers between churches.

How will this author demonstrate to the small church pastor that God has blessed them with the same spiritual growth tools that He has given the large church? The author

will establish this truth in the introduction. After the introduction, the paper will have three major sections. Section one contains the biblical foundations, and section two presents the practical application. Section three will be a case study of Grace Church from 1994 to 2006, which shows the implementation of the biblical foundation and the practical applications.

Part I will establish a biblical foundation for why churches grow. Chapter two is the power chapter. It will explain the power of the Holy Spirit, and its purpose as revealed in several New Testament books. It will explain why the individual gifts given by the Holy Spirit must be recognized in the church. It will explain how the fruit of the Spirit builds character in individuals and in the body.

Chapter three presents the power of the Great Commission. It will establish the biblical reasons for having a church. In this chapter, the author will explain why the Great Commission must be the permanent mission statement for all New Testament churches. It will demonstrate scripturally from the Books of Acts how The Great Commission was fulfilled in the first century

Chapter four shows the biblical importance of faithfulness. It will give the foundation for faithfulness. It will show the example of the faithfulness of Jesus. Lastly, it will show how faithfulness builds the body of Christ.

Chapter five will stress the importance of communication with God for a pastor and his leadership teams. It will draw from Jesus' promise of the Holy Spirit power from the Book of John, and it will follow the Holy Spirit's interaction in the Book of Acts.

Chapter six, The Power of Leadership, has three purposes. The first purpose is to understand the call to be a pastor and the role of the pastor. The second purpose is to

show the calling of the early disciples. This chapter shows how Jesus called His disciples (Matthew 4:18-25), their initial training by example (Matthew 5-9), their first application instructions (Matthew 10), and their final commission (Matthew 28:18-20). The chapter will show that God has given each man a particular calling in a particular place and relate those scriptures to the modern day pastor. The third purpose is to understand the calling of a leadership team to the church. It will discuss the biblical characteristics needed for good leaders and how to use them.

Chapter seven lays the foundation for church organization. God has an established organizational structure that every church needs to follow. This section will use Ephesians 4, I Corinthians 12 and 13 to establish an organization and servanthood philosophy for ministry.

Chapter eight is a transition chapter discussing how disciples must be made and will be used as a purposeful explanation for establishing church ministries. Ministries need to be established in order to reach people for Christ and to disciple people for ministry. When the pastor understands his overall objectives, it aids him in establishing new ministries and ending old ministries.

Part II will establish a practical foundation for growth today. Chapter nine presents the power of prayer and discusses the importance of prayer. It will cover individual prayer, staff prayer, congregational prayer, and ministry prayer on Sunday morning.

Chapter ten develops the practical steps for building a ministry team which reaches the lost and builds up the saved. It will suggest the skeletal team needed in all churches and how to build more teams from them. This section will provide a ministry

structure for churches of 100, 150, 250, 300 and 350 active members. It will show in chart forms how ministries jointly fitted together will grow as one unit proportionally.

Part III is a case study of Grace Church. It will present the actual applications presented in this paper. Chapter eleven is a case study which brings the biblical mandates and practical applications together. This is a case study of Grace Church from 1961 to 2006. The majority of the study will be concentrated on the period from 1994 to 2006. It will show how the small church can structure itself for steady numerical growth and consistent spiritual maturity. Chapter twelve is a summary with a conclusion for the small church pastor.

Bible references are from the New King James unless otherwise stated.

PART I. BIBLICAL FOUNDATION

CHAPTER TWO

THE POWER OF GOD

And it happened, while Apollos was at Corinth, that Paul, having passed through the upper regions, came to Ephesus. And finding some disciples he said to them, "Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?" So they said to him, "We have not so much as heard whether there is a Holy Spirit" (Acts 19:1-2).

How many times have you forgotten that God promised the gift of the Holy Spirit to those who believe in Jesus Christ? How many times have you forgotten that it is the Holy Spirit who is the power behind all that every pastor does for God? When God gave Zerubbabel the vision of the lampstand with the two olive trees on each side, the angel of the Lord asked him if he knew what he was seeing. Zerubbabel said, "No." The angel of the Lord said, "Not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit" (Zechariah 4:6).

In the same manner, Paul wrote there are some spiritual truths in life that many good people will never understand. He said that there are things that your eyes have not seen, nor have your ears heard, nor have they entered into your heart. These are the things that God has prepared for His children. How are they revealed? "God has revealed them to us through His Spirit. For the Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God" (1 Corinthians 2:10). Without the Holy Spirit operating in the pastor and

the congregation, there will not be a spiritually healthy church. Jesus promised the Holy Spirit to His children.

When Jesus told His disciples that He must go away, He also said that the Helper could not come until He left. Jesus said, “But if I depart, I will send Him to You” (John 16:7). Jesus told His apostles that they would be His witnesses, and that He would send the promise of the Father. In Luke 24:49b He said, “But tarry in the city of Jerusalem until you are endued with the power from on high.”

In Acts 2:1-13, the initial outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the one hundred and twenty disciples in the Upper Room was recorded. The Holy Spirit came down like a mighty rushing wind with fire and filled each of them. They all began to speak as the Holy Spirit directed. This initial filling attracted the attention of the crowds. There was no denial that something had happened, but what had actually happened needed to be explained.

Even today, the power of the Holy Spirit still needs to be explained in the pastor’s life. The pastor needs to bear in mind that it is God’s power within that changes the congregation which God has entrusted to him. The Holy Spirit power is given equally to all who have been saved and called to minister The Great Commission.

William W. Steven, in *Doctrine of the Christian Religion* writes, “In the New Testament the work of the Spirit is more personal and intimate”¹ as compared to the Old Testament. Jesus said you would know that the Holy Spirit was abiding in you (John 14:17), and Paul said that it was the Holy Spirit who dwells in you and should be the power of your strength (Eph 3:16, I Cor.3:16). God has given His Holy Spirit equally to

¹ William Wilson Stevens, *Doctrine of Christian Religion* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1967), 99

the pastors ministering in the large and the small congregation to be their strength in service. What will the Holy Spirit equally do?

According to Charles Stanley, the Holy Spirit will convict, illuminate, teach, guide, assure, intercede and warn.² In this capacity, the Holy Spirit's ultimate goal is to make us more like Christ in our thinking and our actions. Also, it is the Holy Spirit who will build the church.

It is encouraging to understand that building a church is God's desire, and God has provided His power to accomplish the task. If the power to build were innate to just a few pastors, then what hope would there be to the generations that followed? If the power were only in them, it would vanish at their death. God chose to allow His power to work in the life of every pastor to reach and to build his congregation.

In John 16:8, Jesus says when the Holy Spirit comes, He will convict the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment. It is a tremendous encouragement for all pastors to know that convicting power comes from God. As we share the message, it is the Holy Spirit who convicts.

It is the Spirit who brings the sinner to salvation. Jesus said in John 3:5, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, except one be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." Paul reemphasized the same truth in Titus 3:5, "according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit." God has given all pastors the Scriptures and the power to share the Gospel with the lost world, but pastors need to praise God that He brings conviction, which leads to

² Charles Stanley, *The Wonderful Spirit filled Life* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1992), 15

salvation. It is His power which allows us to minister. It is the same power which gives assurance to the saved.

Jesus said that we are children of God, joint heirs with Him (Romans 8:17), and should have complete assurance that we are His children redeemed for everlasting life with Him (John 3:16). It is the Spirit of God who bears witness with our spirit that we are the children of God. All believers are sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise until the day of redemption (Ephesians 1:13-14). It is this relationship, which God has given us in the Holy Spirit, which builds up the believer in Christ and in fellowship with other believers.

Every pastor can faithfully tell his congregation that they can have an abundant life by living in the Spirit. The abundant life has nothing to do with the size of your church, your financial statement, your baptism records, or your membership enrollment. The abundant life comes about when your obedience to the Holy Spirit allows His fruit to be manifested in your life.

*But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law. Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires. Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit (Galatians 5:22-25)*³.

It is not the pastor who produces change in a person's life. It is the power of the Holy Spirit working in their life. Most honest people want peace, joy, patience and especially self-control to be in their life. They will spend a fortune seeking these attributes without understanding that God also wants them in their life, and He will provide them to all his children. All pastors, regardless of the size of their church, can

³ New International Bible: *The Knowing Jesus Study Bible*. Ed. Edward Hindson and Edward Dobson. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1999), 1582.

assure their congregation of the fruit of the Spirit when they are living by the Spirit.

Also, God has told us that if we “live by the Spirit,, we will not fulfill the lust of the flesh” (Galatians 5:16). This promise has nothing to do with your church size.

It is the Holy Spirit who imparts spiritual gifts to the believers. The operation of the spiritual gifts unifies the body and matures the saints. God has made it clear that no one individual has all the gifts, and every individual has one or more gifts. These gifts are given by the Holy Spirit, and He gives them according to His will.

Not only does the Holy Spirit give gifts to be used in the church, but also it is recorded that it is possible for each church to use them in the different manners, yet they come from Him. Paul wrote in I Corinthians 12:4, “There are diversity of gifts but the same spirit. There are differences of ministries but the same Lord. There are diversities of activities, but the same God who works all in all. The source of the gift is God; the sphere for administering the gift is from God and the energy to use the gift is from God.”⁴

Some of the most encouraging verses for all pastors are found in I Corinthians 2:10-12;

*. . . the Spirit searches all things, even the deep things of God. 11 For who among men knows the thoughts of a man except the man's spirit within him? In the same way no one knows the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God. 12 We have not received the spirit of the world but the Spirit who is from God, that we may understand what God has freely given us.*⁵

Charles Stanley wrote that the Holy Spirit is a person, not an “it,” who knows the thoughts of God and imparts knowledge to believers. It is the Holy Spirit, as a personal

⁴Warren W. Wiersbe, *The Bible Exposition Commentary* (Wheaton, Ill. : Victor Books, 1996).

⁵ (New International Bible 1999, 1540).

force, “that has knowledge and the power to impart knowledge”⁶ to the believers. It is the freely given gifts of the Holy Spirit that molds the man of God into His humble servant. What are the free gifts that should be brought to remembrance?

God instructed His followers not to get drunk with wine but be filled with the Spirit (Ephesians 5:18). J. Oswald Sanders explained that the person who is filled with the Spirit, “will be dominated and controlled by the Spirit even as the drunkards are dominated and controlled by his intoxicating wine.”⁷ As a pastor surrenders himself to God, he allows the fruit of the Spirit to build spiritual character in his life.

The fruit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. The pastor who walks in the Spirit will see the biblical traits become more and more evident in his life. There are no traits stronger than these to aid the pastor in his personal life and the life of those to whom he ministers weekly. These traits are matured by experience in all who have surrendered their lives in order to make themselves like Christ. These spiritual gifts are given regardless of church size, location, culture, or denomination. They are given to those who have been crucified with Christ and are now living by faith in Him.

The Holy Spirit gives each pastor gifted individuals for his church. These individuals are to teach, to evangelize, and to disciple the body of Christ. Pastors must remember that the Holy Spirit will equip their church with what it needs just as God has equipped the human body. I Corinthians 12:12 says that the body (Church) is a unit, though it is made up of many parts, and though all its parts are many, and they form one

⁶ Charles Stanley, *The Wonderful Spirit Filled Life* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1992), 18.

⁷ J. Oswald Sanders, *The Holy Spirit and His Gifts* (Grand Rapids: Michigan: Zondervan, 1940), 138.

body. So it is with Christ. Pastors need to remember that God never designed His church to function without many individuals working together with their unique and diversified gifts fully functioning.

Charles Stanley wrote, “When things happen that have no human explanation,”⁸, this is the supernatural outpouring of the Holy Spirit. This is the body of Christ functioning as it should without external catalyst, and every pastor should praise God for this manifestation of the Holy Spirit in his church. Ray Stedman states that ministry should be carried out “not by the so-called clergy but by ordinary members of the body, because every member of the body of Christ was gifted by the Holy Spirit.”⁹

In the pastor’s relationship with the Holy Spirit, there is a commandment to be filled with the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 5:18). According to Lewis Sperry Chafer, the literal translation means to be continually filled with the Spirit.¹⁰ Millard J. Erickson said that being filled with the Holy Spirit is “not so much a matter of our getting more of the Spirit as it is a matter of his possessing more of our life.”¹¹ Paul Enns makes a clear distinction between the baptism, which occurs at salvation, and the filling of the Holy Spirit for power. He said, “the filling of the Spirit is experiential and also repeated.”¹² Billy Graham agrees and said there is only one baptism at salvation but many fillings. He

⁸ Charles Stanley, 121.

⁹ Mark S. Mitchell, *Portrait of Integrity: The Life of Ray C. Stedman*, (Grand Rapids: Discovery House Publishers, 2004), 71.

¹⁰ Lewis Sperry Chafer, *Major Bible Themes: 52 Vital Doctrines of the Scriptures Simplified and Explained* ed. John F. Walvoord. (Grand Rapids: Academic Books Zondervan Publishing House, 1974), 117.

¹¹ Millard J Erickson, *Introduction to Christian Doctrine*. Ed. L. Arnold Hustad (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 1992), 285.

¹² Paul Enns, *The Moody Handbook of Theology*. (Chicago: Moody Press. 1989), 279.

said that the many fillings are possible because as “we grow in the grace and knowledge of Christ, our spiritual capacity enlarges.”¹³ Charles Stanley says the word filled “carries the idea of being filled to the point of saturation, a fullness that leaves nothing to be desired.”¹⁴

Every pastor is commanded to be continually filled with the Holy Spirit power. This constant filling is available by walking in the Spirit, which keeps you free for the service of God. There are no geographical requirements, no population requirements, no educational requirements, no financial requirements, no marketing strategies, no targeting requirements, and no denominational requirements for the filling. It is God who gives His power which builds the kingdom of God. The apostle Paul expressed the Holy Spirit power to build the kingdom of God with these words in 1 Corinthians 3:6-7, “I planted the seed, Apollos watered it, but God made it grow. So neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything, but only God, who makes this grow.”

Every pastor who yields his life to the power of the Holy Spirit will have the wisdom of God to minister to his congregation. Romans 12:2 and I Timothy 3:15 promise a life of knowing what God wants for His servants. This knowledge will help pastors build the church of God. It is not by the will of man that God’s church is built but by the power of God. Gary L. McIntosh wrote, “Churches that follow biblical church growth principles know that God’s sovereignty grows His church and such growth comes through the life-giving work of the Holy Spirit.”¹⁵

¹³ Billy Graham, *The Holy Spirit: Activating God’s Power in Your Life* (Waco: Word Book Publishers, 1978), 101.

¹⁴ Charles Stanley, 121.

¹⁵ Gary L. McIntosh, *Biblical Church Growth: How You Can Work with God to Build a Faithful Church* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House Company, 2003), 83.

Jesus spoke these words to His disciples concerning the Holy Spirit: “You shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you and you shall be witnesses to me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria and unto the end of the earth” (Acts 1:8). These words were spoken to assure His disciples that they would have sufficient power to accomplish the will of God. God’s will for His disciples was to reach the world in the power of the Holy Spirit to fulfill the Great Commission. Pastors who yield their lives to God and seek to fulfill God’s Great Commission will hear God say, “Well done, good and faithful servant” (Matthew 25:21).

CHAPTER THREE

THE POWER OF THE GREAT COMMISSION

18 And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. 19 Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." Amen (Matthew 28:18-20).

After the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, He gathered His disciples and commissioned them to spread the Gospel. The spreading of the Gospel would require authority to speak, to travel, to correct, to discipline, and to share. Jesus told His disciples that all authority rested within Him, and it is in this authority that they shall go. Their number one objective in The Great Commission was to make disciples.

To fully understand the power of The Great Commission, and how its proper implementation changes and builds God's church, the passage needs an explanation. "Jesus' statement 'all authority has been given to me in heaven and in earth' is a declaration of the ultimate victory of Christ."¹ With this authority, His disciples were to go to all nations and nationalities with the primary objective of making disciples. Making disciples is the main verb in verse nineteen and according to Augsburger, "the other verbs are subordinate."² Consequently, the primary calling for pastors of large and small churches is the same: make disciples of all nations.

¹ Myron S. Augsburger, *The Communicator's Commentary: Matthew*, Vol. 1 ed. Lloyd J Ogilvie (Waco Texas: Word Book Publisher. 1982), 330.

² Ibid., 330.

After an individual has heard the Gospel and accepted Jesus Christ as his or her personal and only savior, his or her next step of obedience is to follow in baptism. Jesus told his disciples to baptize in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Baptizing believers in all three names, “proclaims their allegiance to the Trinity”³ according to H.A. Ironside. Each person in the Trinity has a part in salvation; “therefore all three are recognized and confessed in Christian baptism.”⁴ Substantiating this formula for baptism is the record that the Trinity was present at the baptism of Jesus.

When He had been baptized, Jesus came up immediately from the water; and behold, the heavens were opened to Him, and He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting upon Him.¹⁷ And suddenly a voice came from heaven, saying, “This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased” (Matthew 3:16,17).

Therefore, the pastors of the large and the small churches all have the same calling. They are both to baptize in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

Next, Jesus told his disciples to teach others to observe all things that He had commanded them. This is a key element for being an obedient pastor in churches of all sizes. To fulfill this part of The Great Commission, pastors need to model their discipleship after the pattern that Jesus established. This pattern is woven into the four Gospels⁵ and unwrapped for all who are willing to read it and to teach it to others. This pattern is taught from generation to generation. The Apostle Paul understood and shared it with Timothy.

³ H.A. Ironside, *Expository Notes on the Gospel of Matthew*, (Neptune, New Jersey: Loizeaux Brothers, 1948), 400.

⁴ Ibid., 401.

⁵ Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John

And the things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, Commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also (II Timothy 2:2).

A disciple is a student who is taught by another to reproduce what has been taught both academically and practically. “Mere mental understanding does not as yet make one a disciple. The truth learnt must be practiced . . . it must become abiding truth.”⁶ It is written in Luke 6:40 that Jesus said that the disciple is not above his master, but everyone who is perfect shall be like his master. Spader and Mayes wrote that a disciple “is one who has decided not only to follow his master but also to be like him.”⁷ Therefore, God has given equal authority to the pastors of all churches to make disciples, students, and practitioners of all that He has taught so the world would see Christ in them. It is by reading and studying the life of Christ that we learn how He wants us to disciple others.

God’s command was clear. The disciples were to leave their present location and take the Gospel to the surrounding nations. Their immediate goal was to share that Jesus is the waited-for Messiah, to baptize each person, and to disciple them in everything that Jesus taught them. This was not a short-term, impersonal, process by strangers; but rather, it was to resemble a mother/son, father/daughter family model to have lasting effect.⁸

When Jesus spoke to Nicodemus (John 3), He used the analogy of physical birth to explain new birth to Nicodemus. He told Nicodemus that just as you are born physically, you must also be born again spiritually. When Jesus spoke these words,

⁶ William Hendriksen, *Matthew: New Testament Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1973), 1002.

⁷ Dann Spader and Gary Mayes, *Growing a Healthy Church* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1991), 18

⁸ Discipleship-making should be as personal as raising your family members. Just as Mothers and Fathers have an invested interest in their children’s spiritual growth so should one have the same interest in training others. Your disciplining should be academic, emotional, and spiritual.

physical birth was the result of an intimate union between a man and a woman who planned for the baby's birth nine months later. After the birth, there was an immediate bond established between the child and the parents which continued to grow year by year. This personal relationship that fosters continuous physical growth must be equally found in discipleship-making to produce spiritual growth. Jesus called this discipleship.

Originally, the Great Commission was given to eleven men who had been with Jesus for the previous three years of His ministry. They were not starting their work with a vision, with wealth, with land, with a support team, or with a building. At that point, they did not even have the power necessary to sustain such a great work. What they had was a relationship which provided them with a man who gave His life so they could find victory in their day and in eternal life forever.

The disciples were given personal instructions to teach others all things that Jesus had commanded them. Discipleship is not purely academic in nature. It must be personal, in essence, so as to transform the old nature into the new nature and to influence the next generation and its culture. Jesus purposely called his first disciples and taught them how to share the Gospel with other people. As He devoted personal time to these men, He revolutionized their thinking by transforming them from a law mindset to a grace mindset. As He taught them, they began to understand how teaching and its applications must be in lifestyle agreement. This is especially significant when those you are trying to reach are watching for your reaction to everyday life.

Becoming a disciple with a Great Commission burden means you must learn to think on your feet. Jesus demonstrated this by knowing scripture, knowing human nature, knowing religious customs, and knowing government regulation. Truly, He told

His disciples by His life that disciple-making must be culturally-oriented to have a lasting impact on those whom they seek to reach. He showed His disciples His great commission model in His life for three years before He gave them the commandment to go into all the world teaching, baptizing and disciplining others (Matthew 10). What was Jesus' discipleship model that all pastors, regardless of church size, can use?

Jesus' discipleship model which would be used to fulfill The Great Commission starts with the preparation of John the Baptist (Matthew 3). Jesus knew that John was preparing the hearts of many to receive the Kingdom news. Likewise, Jesus prepared the way for his disciples by proclaiming that He was the long-awaited Messiah. Next, He told His disciples that their main battle would not be with flesh and blood but with the evil forces of Satan. Jesus overcame Satan with the knowledge and correct application of God's Word (Matthew 4). Immediately, after the temptation by Satan, Jesus declared that His message was different from that of the established religion. He presented a Gospel for everyone in the culture by targeting all age groups. When He was finished with His message, those who heard Him knew His doctrinal position and what they must learn to do (Matthew 5-7).⁹ His teaching was founded on doing what God had asked Him to do.

Jesus did not limit His disciple-making with just spiritual and social teachings, but He interacted with his community. He went to the people, discovered their needs, and ministered accordingly. His model for the Great Commission was to tell the people and then show the people by His life the Great Commission in action (Matthew 8-9).

⁹ In Matthew, chapters 5-7, Jesus preaches about being the light of the earth and how individuals commit sins in their minds. He shares how to pray, how to fast, and how to give your offering. He gives instructions on love, faith, and a warning about false prophets. Then, Jesus tells those hearing that a wise individual will build his life on doing God's word. The author believes everyone needs to learn the doctrines of Matthew 5-7 and apply them.

Eventually, He would tell His disciples that now it was their turn to share with other people (Matthew 10).

What did the disciples see in Jesus that made Him different? What was in His life that must be in their life if they were to fulfill The Great Commission? What was there about Jesus' inner life, His core values, and personal feelings for other people that He wanted His disciples to learn?

As Jesus ministered, He showed His disciples that fulfilling the Great Commission must emanate from the whole person. The fulfillment would be more than following a law intellectually; but it would be fulfilled with dedication, with compassion, and with serving others (Matthew 11:28). The disciples were amazed when Jesus told the man who would delay his following Jesus to bury his father with these words, "Follow me, and let the dead bury the dead"¹⁰ (Matthew 8:22).

Jesus said that if you are going to make disciples, you must learn to minister to people. He showed them that you must reach them at the point of their needs. Jesus was very personable with the Centurion (Luke 7:1-10), with Peter's mother (Matthew 8:14-17), and with the man possessed with demons (Mark 5:1-18). He ministered to their needs.

His objective in The Great Commission was to reach people. When He spoke to Matthew, who was a tax collector outside of the religious circles, He told him, "Follow me." Jesus went to Matthew's home and had dinner with the other tax collectors and sinners. Jesus told those who questioned His actions why He met with the tax collectors, "I did not come to call the righteous, but the sinners to repentance" (Matthew 9:13).

¹⁰ Jesus was not being harsh. Following Him would require his disciples to leave their family. He was not suggesting that when a family death occurs, you should not attend the funeral.

Jesus showed His disciples that they would need compassion. When Jesus saw the multitude that was sick, weary, and scattered, He was moved with compassion. When Jesus saw those who labored and were heavy-burdened, He told them to come to Him, and He would give them rest. Compassion is part of The Great Commission.

Jesus was the disciples' personal model for disciple-making. In the three years that Jesus led His disciples, He did not stop to establish a local congregation. He told His disciples that He would build His church on the foundation of His doctrine, and it would be built through His disciples. The Jewish disciples might have known the standards and procedures for starting a synagogue, but the exact plans for establishing a church apart from the synagogue and temple would only become visible as they shared the Gospel.

After Peter preached on the day of Pentecost, three 3,000 people were saved and followed in baptism (Acts 2:41). The three 3,000 were from various nations (Acts 2:9-11) and most returned to their own homes, but those who remained started a house church. Acts, chapter two, says that they met daily with one accord in the temple with breaking of bread from house to house (Acts 2:42).

Peter continued to model his Great Commission after Jesus with preaching and healing as he shared the gospel. He preached a message of repentance that sins would be forgiven, but almost immediately, he was arrested for his faith. As the new spiritual leader, he established the standards for others by not denouncing his faith, and he asked God for more boldness to share the Gospel. During the next century, many more pastors and spiritual leaders would follow the same pattern.

When a pastor decides to follow The Great Commission, to begin a personal relationship with Jesus, and is willing to model himself accordingly, his church will

follow a similar pattern. A Great Commission church has the desire to glorify God in its growth. As Peter shared the Gospel, the church growth increased, making it necessary to elect more men to administratively serve others and enable the disciples to continue in the Word and prayer.

Just as Jesus reached out to Matthew the tax collector, as an example for others to follow (Matthew 9:9-13), Peter and the other apostles learned to accept Paul, a Pharisee, and eventually all other Gentiles. The outreach continues until the church eventually sends Paul and Barnabas on the first missionary trip. This was followed by several more trips to plant churches.

The Great Commission was given to eleven individuals, all with equal opportunity and all who would have equal Holy Spirit power. The disciples were not professional promoters nor sales clerks. They were faithful men whom Jesus had called to be His disciples to their generation. They were expected to take the knowledge that Jesus gave them, share it with all who would hear, and allow Jesus to establish their church with them.

Each disciple would build God's church which was culturally relevant to the community in which they lived. The method used would be diverse according to how the Holy Spirit would lead each man. The message would be the same, but the methods would differ. 1 Corinthians 12: 4-6 says, "There are diversities of gifts, but the same spirit. There are differences of ministries, but the same Lord. There are diversities of activities but it is the same God who works all in all."

How a church fulfills The Great Commission in one location may or may not work in another. The methods of a church in one location may or may not be appropriate

for the next locality. Each church must believe that God has called it to reach its neighborhood with the Gospel, and that He will provide the method to fit the area. Methods will change, but the message will always be the same. Not only will the messages always be the same, but the results will be also. Some people will respond, and others will reject the message.

The power of The Great Commission was given to reach the world with the message of salvation and discipleship. It was not given as a method to make church members, yet the early church would form local congregations. These local congregations would learn about the Holy Spirit power to make disciples that God would use to build His church. This Great Commission with its Holy Spirit power is given to all pastors with equal authority to establish God's church.

How faithful a pastor is with that which God has given him will determine whether he will hear the words, "Well done, good and faithful servant!" (Matthew 25:21).

CHAPTER FOUR

THE POWER OF FAITHFULNESS

For the kingdom of heaven is like a man traveling to a far country, who called his own servants and delivered his goods to them. 15 And to one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one, to each according to his own ability; and immediately he went on a journey. 16 Then he who had received the five talents went and traded with them, and made another five talents. 17 And likewise he who had received two gained two more also. 18 But he who had received one went and dug in the ground, and hid his lord's money. 19 After a long time the lord of those servants came and settled accounts with them. 20 "So he who had received five talents came and brought five other talents, saying, 'Lord, you delivered to me five talents; look, I have gained five more talents besides them.' 21 His lord said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful servant; you were faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord.' 22 He also who had received two talents came and said, 'Lord, you delivered to me two talents; look, I have gained two more talents besides them.' 23 His lord said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful servant; you have been faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord' 24 "Then he who had received the one talent came and said, 'Lord, I knew you to be a hard man, reaping where you have not sown, and gathering where you have not scattered seed. 25 And I was afraid, and went and hid your talent in the ground. Look, there you have what is yours.'

26 "But his lord answered and said to him, 'You wicked and lazy servant, you knew that I reap where I have not sown, and gather where I have not scattered seed. 27 So you ought to have deposited my money with the bankers, and at my coming I would have received back my own with interest. 28 So take the talent from him, and give it to him who has ten talents (Matthew 25:14-28).'"

Biblical foundation for Faithfulness

In the Parable of the Talents, the master gave each man talents and expected that man to increase them accordingly. The men with the five and the two talents each doubled what the master had given them. Each man was rewarded according to his own individual labors and was given verbal recognition as being a faithful servants.

Neither the man with the two talents nor the man with the five talents was compared to the other. Jesus did not say one had greater or lesser faith than the other. Their reward was based on what they did with what they had. But the man who was given one talent was not recognized as faithful because he did nothing with the master's talent other than hide it.

Now, ask yourself this question: why did not God give each man five talents rather than simply two, or maybe just one? According to the parable, God gives each man according to his ability. God knows the abilities of all His servants and expects them to be faithful accordingly. Each man will be rewarded as having been faithful based on that ability. The man who reproduces five talents should not think he is more faithful than the man who reproduces two. Paul wrote in Romans 12:3, "For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think *of himself* more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith." Faithfulness is not a numbers game in which those with the highest numbers are declared the winners.

The key concept in this parable is to be faithful with what has been given to you. Faithfulness that produces constant obedience to God's Word is what He wants from His pastors today. God will bless faithfulness to your calling, your walk, your church, your family, and your flock. The manifestation of a pastor's faithfulness is revealed in his obedience to The Great Commission. Gary L. McIntosh wrote, "The point of the parable is that the master will hold his stewards accountable, and it is

important to note that the faithful stewards were the ones who increased their master's investment.”¹

The Master gave each servant talents, and he was expecting talents of the same kind in return. The faithful servants returned to the master talents of equal number. They were recognized as the same as the master's. Likewise, the faithful pastor will take those individuals given to him by God and disciple them to be like Jesus, according to the ability that God has given him.

A biblical understanding of faith, and how it operates, will show the small church pastor that it takes faith to serve God, no matter what size his church. God provides faith in several ways.

First, there is faith that comes by living in the Spirit of God, which is a manifestation of the fruit of the Spirit, called faithfulness. This faith is given to all believers and matures as they walk (grow) in the Spirit (Galatians 5:22-25). Richards and Wakefield state that “faithful is the kind of person God wants to shape and we should trust that God is at work to make us reliable.”²

Second, there is a supernatural gift of faith, which God gives to some in His church. This faith is recorded in 1 Corinthians 12:9. God did not define who received which spiritual gifts, but He did say that the Spirit distributes to each individual as He wills. Larry Gilbert believes that, rather than activities preformed, the gift of faith is an enabling gift that one possesses. Faith is something you possess within you. He wrote,

¹ Gary L. McIntosh, *Biblical Church Growth: How you can work with God to build a faithful Church* (Grand Rapids, Baker Book House Company, 2003), 105.

² Larry Richards and Norm Wakefield, *Fruit of the Spirit* (Grand Rapids, Zondervan Publishing House, 1981), 109.

“The Holy Spirit reveals the qualities of the enabling gifts to you and to others as you minister to their needs.”³ He believes that this gift increases in proportion to its usage. In conclusion, faith and faithfulness both come from God, and God gives them according to His will independent of the church size.

Elmer Towns wrote, “Faith is a special ability given to some people to serve the Lord.”⁴ Kenneth Chafin quotes what Paul wrote about faith in 1 Corinthians 12:9, “By faith he means the ability to passionately believe in spiritual possibilities that faith which turns the vision into reality.”⁵ *The Preacher’s Outline and Sermon Bible* writes that the gift of faith is a special gift that enables a believer to do great things for God and His people.”⁶ Leon Morris, in the *Tyndale New Testament Commentaries, 1 Corinthians*, suggests that Paul has in mind some kind of faith associated with miraculous operations.”⁷ Towns wrote that “the traditional definition would view the gift of faith as an instrument to be used in Christian service, as one would use the Bible, prayer, or preaching to accomplish the will of God.”⁸

³ Larry Gilbert, Forward by Elmer Towns, *Team Ministry: A Guide to Spiritual Gifts and Lay Involvement* (Lynchburg, Va. Church Growth Institute. 1900), 67.

⁴ Elmer Towns, *Discovery the Power, Say it faith* [HTTP://elmertowns.com/books/online/say_it_faith%5BTowns%5d.pdf](http://elmertowns.com/books/online/say_it_faith%5BTowns%5d.pdf) , page 43.

⁵ Kenneth L. Chafin, *The Communicators Commentary: 1,2 Corinthians*. Ed. Lloyd J. Ogilvie (Waco, Word Books Publisher, 1985), 152. Chafin explains this definition with a story from his college days. He saw in the Sangre de Cristo mountains a dry hill with a few cedar trees. He friend saw a great assemble of Christian believers. Today, Glorieta Baptist Assembly is located in the spot he saw.

⁶ *The Preacher’s Outline and Sermon Bible*, Vol. 8 (Chattanooga, Tennessee, Leadership Ministries Worldwide, 1991), 155.

⁷ Leon Morris, *Tyndale New Testament Commentaries: 1 Corinthians* Rev ed. (Grand Rapids, Wm B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1987), 168.

⁸ Elmer Towns, *Church Growth: State of the Art* [HTTP://elmertowns.com/books/online/church_state_of_the_Art%5BTowns%5d.pdf](http://elmertowns.com/books/online/church_state_of_the_Art%5BTowns%5d.pdf), 131

With these definitions, this author needs to ask if the two men in the parable (Matthew 25:14-30) were functioning with the “gift of faith” or just being faithful. Since the spiritual gifts would not be permanently given to individuals until the ascension of Jesus, it must be surmised that it was ordinary faith, and the men were just being faithful. If they were somehow operating with this gift of the Spirit, it would seem that only those individuals who have this gift would hear the words, “Well done, good and faithful servant; you have been faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things.”

There is another definition of faith.

Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. 2 For by it the elders obtained a good testimony. 3 By faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that the things which are seen were not made of things which are visible (Hebrews 11:1-3).

Without this kind of faith, it is impossible to please God (Hebrews 11:6a). Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, Rahab and many other biblical individuals all demonstrated this faith by following the Word of God given to them. They accomplished great and mighty things in the eyes of God from the difficult task of building the ark to the dangerous task of hiding God’s men from the king of Jericho. God rewarded them for their faithfulness to the task given them.

Galatians 5:22 lists the fruit of the Spirit and records faithfulness as part of the fruit. How does the manifestation of faithfulness help the small church pastor know that He is doing the will of God?

Faithfulness means that some pastors will be blessed with large congregations, and some pastors will be blessed with smaller congregations; yet in the real

world, most churches are small. Gary McIntosh wrote that when you use worship attendance rather than church membership “75% of all churches have fewer than 149 worshippers on a Sunday morning”⁹ and 80% have fewer than 200 worshippers while 50% have fewer than 100. Also, He wrote that only 10% attend a worship service with over 250 in attendance. Statistically, the place for the small church has been well-documented.

Faithfulness believes that God will establish His ministry at your local location. Shawn McMullen wrote about the Kidderminster Principle. He summarizes it with these words, “Regardless of the location or size of your church you have the potential to engage in life-changing ministry that transforms your community.”¹⁰ Location and size are not as important as keeping your commitments to God. God desires pastors to commit to the Lord whatever they do, and their plans will succeed as they follow God’s will (Proverbs 16:3).

Faithfulness means to follow the example of Jesus

Faithfulness allows you to live with what God has given you, and know that He will accomplish His will in your life and in your church. This is a loving faith which permeates your heart with a deep conviction that God will build His church according to His established plans to reach His people in your town. His faithfulness works as a spiritual reminder that it is God’s church, and Jesus said that He would build it.

⁹ Gary McIntosh, *Biblical Church Growth*, 17.

¹⁰ Shawn McMullen, ed., *Unleashing the Potential of the Smaller Church* (Cincinnati: Standard Publishing, 2006), 20.

Gary McIntosh wrote in *Biblical Church Growth* that building God's church was not a numbers game. Building God's church was learning how to win people to Christ and to disciple them for the ministry. He said, "A faithful church is one that is loyal to God, and His work in the world. A church's source of faithfulness arises out of the very nature of God Himself."¹¹ The major principle in faithfulness is learning how to be faithful with that which God has given you.

From a New Testament viewpoint, Jesus laid the foundation for His church when He said, "Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men" (Matthew 4:19). He made this statement to all who desired to follow Him with a promise that He would show them how to reach the unsaved man. It was an unconditional promise based on the hearer's willingness to follow and without numerical promises implied. This same promise is given to all individuals who desire to follow Him. He will show you how to reach the lost and make them His disciples.

Jesus said that if we would follow Him, we could become like Him. "A disciple is not above his teacher, but everyone who is perfectly trained will be like his teacher" (Luke 6:40). This means that every pastor will be equipped in the same way for the same purpose to fulfill The Great Commission. The equipping by Jesus is in proportion to faith in Christ, not according to what you have in materialistic items, church location, or financial resources. The ability to build must reside in faithfulness to Jesus in order for hope to be transferred to the next generation.

By observation, Jesus taught His disciples about preaching, teaching, disciplining, healing, encouraging, correcting, suffering, prayer, waiting, evangelism,

¹¹ Gary L. McIntosh, *Biblical Church Growth*, 19.

and the Holy Spirit to come. He told them that He would be going to His Father, but they would be commissioned to reach, teach, disciple and baptize the next generation of believers. He told them that they would be His witnesses, and He would send the promise of His Father upon them “but to tarry in the city of Jerusalem until you are endued with the power from on high” (Luke 24:49). This same power is given to all believers today (Ephesians 1:13).

Faithfulness builds the Body of Christ

The power of the Holy Spirit came to the 120 disciples in the upper room. The power came as a mighty wind, the disciples were filled with the Spirit, and they spoke in other languages (Acts 2:1-4). This was the literal fulfillment that Jesus spoke and promised His disciples. It was His power they would need to fulfill the Great Commission. This same power is available to all pastors at salvation.

. Peter spoke with this power and gave an invitation to which 3,000 people responded (Acts 2:14-41) and 5,000 responded the next time (Acts 4:4). Although, some to support the beginning of large churches use these verses, it was actually the beginning of the universal body of believers. The Book of Acts tells us that the early church met in family homes of which none could have the capacity for 3,000 to 5,000 people. Paul Enns wrote that the “early believers did not have special buildings in which to meet; instead they met in homes.”¹²

¹² Paul Enns, *The Moody handbook of Theology*, forward by J. Dwight Pentecost (Chicago: Moody Press 1989), 348.

This was the beginning of the church that Jesus said He would build when He spoke to Peter, as recorded in Matthew 16:18, “And I say also unto you, you are Peter and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.” Elmer Towns wrote that the word “rock refers to the man in the sense of his ministry.”¹³ The phrase “upon this rock” means upon this man, whose ministry is soul winning, the church is established¹⁴. Henry Thiessen adds support that it is Jesus who is building His church by explaining the English meaning for the word church. “Church derives from the Greek word Kuriakos, which means belonging to the Lord.”¹⁵ By inference, Thiessen said a secondary definition for the meaning of church would be “a group of people called out from the world and belonging to the Lord.”¹⁶

What is the nature of the church that God will build for His people? It is best described as a group of believers that resembles the human body. The human body is assembled with many individual parts, and no one part by itself could claim to be the whole body. The body is the representative sum of each part functioning together. Paul shares this truth with the church of Ephesus. “And God placed all things under His feet and appointed Him to be head over everything for the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills everything in every way” (Eph 1:22-23). Also, Paul

¹³ Elmer Towns, *Theology for Today* (Dubuque, Iowa: Kendall / Hunt Publishing Company, 1989), 610.

¹⁴ Churches are built by the Holy Spirit convicting individuals of their sins, and accepting Jesus Christ as their savior. God uses man as His instruments to reach others but the church is not built in their strength. The Rock is the saving knowledge of Jesus Christ.

¹⁵ Henry Thiessen, *Introductory Lectures in Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Wm B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1975), 307.

¹⁶ Ibid, 307.

shared this same truth with the church of Corinth when he told them that you are the body of Christ and each one of you is a part of it (1 Cor. 12:27).

Millard J. Erickson said there are several references to the clear image of the church as the body of Christ. He said that Christ is the head of the church, and all believers are members. “The image of the body of Christ also speaks of the interconnectedness between all the persons who make up the church.”¹⁷ Members use the gifts and talents to build up one another and are willing to contribute to the well-being of all. Also, within the body, Christ will build His kind of fellowship. This fellowship will create understanding hearts and minds for everyone in the body of Christ. It will understand how every member affects the body with sympathy and compassion as it is expressed in I Corinthians 12:24b -26.

But God has combined the members of the body and has given greater honor to the parts that lacked it, so that there should be no division in the body, but that its parts should have equal concern for each other. If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it.

God describes His church as His bride (Eph 5:23), His household (Eph 2:19-22), His priesthood (I Peter 2:5), His flock (John 10:16), and His branches (John 15). There are no descriptions of His local church being massive or small when these terms are used, nor in the giving of the Holy Spirit power. Every church is part of the universal body of Christ and is equipped with identical spiritual gifts. These gifts are used to fulfill the purpose of Christ in His church.

The purpose for Christ’s church is best understood from Matthew 28:18-20.

Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching

¹⁷Millard J. Erickson, *Introducing Christian Doctrine*, 2nd Ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2001), 304.

them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."

Each local pastor will be equipped to reach the lost in his own area. God will provide him with all the evangelistic tools that he needs to reach his community. Also, God will show all pastors how to disciple other individuals according to the scriptures. There are no secret formulas, no established methods, and no quick solutions for pastors. Each pastor must follow the Word of God, and God will increase His church according to each man's labors.

God will help the local pastor to call an assembly together, to nurture them, to build them up, and to show them His personal concerns for them. God will equip each church with a team of leaders to help the pastors who have spiritual gifts that complete his. These men will become elders or deacons within the body and function as an extension of pastoral leadership (Ephesians 4:11-16).

God will establish two ordinances in each church. In Matthew 28:19, Jesus commissioned His disciples to go into the world, make disciples, and baptize them in the name of Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Each local pastor has that privilege of reaching and disciplining. The second church ordinance is the Lord's Supper or Communion. Jesus told His disciples as often as they assemble they should remember Him by sharing the wine and bread which represents His shed blood and broken body (Matthew 26:26-29; I Corinthians 11:23-26). These ordinances are mandated for churches of all size and for pastors with all levels of experience.

Elmer Towns, who is one of the leading advocates in the church growth movement, wrote, "The church has a better understanding of what causes growth –

biblical evangelism- and how to go about growing churches.”¹⁸ It is the primary function of the church to reach its community with the Gospel of Jesus Christ. It is the secondary function of the church to disciple them to reach the next generation. Dann Spader wrote that The Great Commission is not just a mission and is not just focused on evangelism. It is a commandment. “It is a balance of winning people to Christ, building them in the faith, and then equipping them to share in the further work of the Great Commission.”¹⁹

Is the church all about numbers? If church growth is all about numbers, who sets the standards of acceptability for all churches. If it is all about numbers, when do you reach your greatest potential? The author does not believe it is all about numbers, but does agree that numbers indicate how many have been reached with the Gospel. Numbers are important, but they should not be used to validate or invalidate faithfulness to God.

Wes Roberts and Glenn Marshall remind the pastors about the prophets Haggai and Jeremiah and ask who the most successful prophet was? Haggai was the prophet that people heard and followed. He was successful in building the temple. During Jeremiah’s ministry, Judah collapsed, went into exile and the people refused to listen to him. Who was successful? If we measure success by the crowd that follows you, then it would be Haggai. However, if we measure success by the prophet’s ability to obey God’s Word, then they both would be equally faithful.

¹⁸ Paul Engle, ed., *Evaluating the Church Growth Movement* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2004), 53.

¹⁹ Dann Spader and Gary Mayer, *Growing a Healthy Church*, 17.

Is it biblically correct to say the most faithful pastors are those with the largest churches? Is something biblically wrong with having a small church if that is the church God is building? Robert and Marshall conclude, “Success is measured in terms of faithfulness, endurance, and perseverance in the calling that God gives to us.”²⁰

The master saw what each man had done with what God gave them. God rewarded each man according to his faithfulness with that which was given him. Without faith that God has given each pastor the authority and the capability to make disciples and send them into the world, it would be impossible to be part of His building ministry. The faith that God gives a pastor must be from Him rather than based on the evidence or lack of numerical growth. God measures faithfulness by obedience to His Word.

²⁰ Wes Roberts and Glenn Marshall, 13

CHAPTER FIVE

THE POWER OF COMMUNICATING

*Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.
29 Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart,
and you will find rest for your souls. 30 For My yoke is easy and My burden is
light (Matthew 11:28-30).*

Today, many well-meaning Christian leaders have been very successful in building mega-churches. There are countless numbers of church growth conferences that openly share their knowledge as the key to everyone's success if they follow their methodology. The prevailing religious marketing leaders have adopted the business world approach that implies that their methods, their programs, their church designs and their philosophies will produce overnight growth.

Although there is substantial evidence that many churches have grown as the result of these conferences, it must be noted that their methods do not apply to all churches. Gray L. McIntosh said, "That for church leaders to be effective they must understand that churches have different needs depending on size. A small church is not just a miniature version of a large church but an entirely different entity."¹ Bob

¹ Gary L. McIntosh, *One Size Doesn't Fit All: Bringing Out the Best in Any Size Church* (Grand Rapids, Fleming H. Revell, 1999), 19.

Russell, a mega church pastor with a nine-thousand seat worship center said, “Many church leaders go to conferences looking for a quick fix or easy solution to their problems. Those ideas may be helpful but what works in one culture may not in another. What one church adapts as positive change may be a source of division in another.”² Thom S. Rainer wrote that one common mistakes many pastors follow is to think, “The latest cutting-edge methodologies are an end in themselves.”³

Have these conferences placed undue burdens on the small church pastors to conform to an unwritten set of rules and guidelines that might not be in full agreement with God’s plan for their churches? Why must the pastor be defined as the new CEO? Why must new programs and numerical growth establish success as if the church is a Fortune 500 Company? Is the church really an organization that has the same visions and goals as corporate America? Glenn Daman said, “In the business model, the priority is on programs and methodology. In the church, the priority should be obedience to the standards of Scripture, spiritual transformation, and living in connection with its head, Jesus Christ.”⁴

There is a real danger when America accepts the new definition of a successful church in business jargon such as numerical growth, increased financial gains, and how many innovations were installed. The danger is the resolve of the small church pastor. There is an ever-present danger that this new model will lead to comparisons and feelings

² Bob and Rusty Russell, forward by Max Lucado and Thom S. Rainer, *When God builds a Church: 10 Principles for Growing a Dynamic Church, the Remarkable Story of Southeast Christian Church* (West Monroe, Louisiana: Howard Publishing Company, 2000), 6.

³ Thom S. Rainer and Church Lawless. *Eating the Elephant: Leading the Established Church to Growth* (Pinnacle Publishers, 2003), 7.

⁴ Glenn Daman, *Leading the Small Church: HOW TO DEVELOP A TRANSFORMATIONAL MINISTRY* (Grand Rapids, Kregel Publications, 2006), 26.

of inadequacy in the small church. Within our mix of conferences and church publications should be the truth that success must be measured in obedience to God and a clear understanding of how He is working in each community. It is a fearful reality to have men communicating to men with the absence of God communicating with man concerning church growth strategy.

In the midst of multiple methods, pastors must make choices that place a heavy burden on their personal live, their families, and their churches. Yes, God has placed other godly men to help them, but He also has directly told pastors that they will find rest by abiding in Him. “Jesus said that rest is a yoke of wisdom that unites persons with Him. He offers rest, for He is not only the bearer of the wisdom of God, He *is* that Wisdom. Such rest, as interpreted in Hebrews 4:1–11, is the singleness of relationship with Christ, the rest of knowing His provision as a completed salvation. Discipleship is thereby kept from being a legalistic striving and is instead a joyous fellowship.”⁵

The author believes that this rest comes by knowing what God has promised, how He demonstrated it, and how it applies to the local church. In faithfulness, the local pastor must apply what God reveals about church growth. Joy Dawson wrote, “Many times, God tests us by telling us to do things without our having the faintest idea why we are to do them. We need not understand why. We need only to know who is speaking. He, God, in His infinite knowledge and wisdom, knows why . . . with our limited knowledge and wisdom, we need to obey.”⁶ The small church pastor will find rest in his

⁵ Myron S Augsburger and Lloyd J.Ogilvie, *The Preacher's Commentary Series, Volume 24: Matthew*. Nashville, Tennessee : Thomas Nelson Inc, 1982 (The Preacher's Commentary Series 24), 18.

⁶ Joy Dawson, *Intimate Friendship with God: Through Understanding the Fear of the Lord* (Grand Rapids, Baker book House, 1997), 25.

search for church growth when he understands the promises Jesus made in the Gospel of John and demonstrated in the Book of Acts. Within these biblical books are the principles which God will use with all pastors to build His church. Elmer Towns wrote, “Methods are many, principles are few; methods may change, but principles never do.”⁷

The author believes that God made many statements about the Holy Spirit in the Bible, which was for the future, and that some of the fulfillments of these statements are revealed in Acts. The statements in John imply that the Holy Spirit will share with the disciples what is needed to build God’s Church. These statements will show that God expected to communicate with His disciples and their disciples by the Holy Spirit.⁸

This communication will be defined as different from prayer. This communication comes from having the Holy Spirit abiding in you and actively involved in your ministry. It is not a communication that comes from praying, but it is a conscious presence of God speaking through the Holy Spirit to direct the pastor’s daily life. This level of communication is given to those whose burden is heavy and to those who genuinely “yoke up” with Him. This does not mean that His followers would not pray to Him. It means that God will originate the communication by the Holy Spirit to direct His disciples’ directions. It is God’s desire that we share all our ways with Him, not to trust in our ways, but as we acknowledge Him, He will direct our own labors.

⁷ Paul E. Engle, Ed., *Evaluating the Church Growth Movement: 5 Views* (Grand Rapids, Zondervan, 2004), 48.

⁸ The author believes that in John 16:7-15, Jesus told His disciples when the Holy Spirit comes, He would share all things with them. This sharing would include the building of His church which is confirmed in Acts.

The Promise of the Holy Spirit's Communication

¹⁶ And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever—the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him; but you know Him, for He dwells with you and will be in you. I will not leave you orphans: I will come to you. ²⁶ But when the Helper comes, whom I shall send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, He will testify of Me. ²⁷ And you also will bear witness, because you have been with Me from the beginning (John 14:16-18; 15:26-27).

Jesus promised His disciples that communication would continue in His absence.

By communication, the author means God would give directions to the early church leaders after the ascension of Jesus that would agree with His teaching. The communication would direct the early church pastors in the organization of His Church and establish a model for others.

Jesus promised that God would send another just like Him who would help the small church pastor. The helper or the comforter literally means One standing alongside to help you. He will be “another,” meaning He will be just like Jesus, and He will know how to build His church. He abides in you and has an official title as the Spirit of Truth. It is the Holy Spirit who will communicate the truth to all pastors about discipleship, faithfulness, and building His church. Jesus said that they would be able to testify to the fact that the Holy Spirit is like Him because they had been with Jesus.

⁷ Nevertheless I tell you the truth. It is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you; but if I depart, I will send Him to you. ⁸ And when He has come, He will convict the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: ⁹ of sin, because they do not believe in Me; ¹⁰ of righteousness, because I go to My Father and you see Me no more; ¹¹ of judgment, because the ruler of this world is judged.

¹² “I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. ¹³ However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come. ¹⁴ He will glorify Me, for He will take of what

is Mine and declare it to you.¹⁵ All things that the Father has are Mine. Therefore I said that He will take of Mine and declare it to you (John 16:7-15).

In The Great Commission, Jesus promised He would be with His disciples until the end of the world. This promise is reinforced with Jesus telling His disciples that the Holy Spirit would be the convicting force in the world. The Pastor would be the voice while the Holy Spirit would be the agent of change in a person's life by accepting Jesus Christ as Savior.

Also, Jesus said that the things that He could not speak now, the Holy Spirit would reveal to them. In the future, the Holy Spirit will share what He has heard and share it with the disciples. He will take the truth of Jesus and share it with those who are His followers. This will take place in the future.

The fulfillment of the Holy Spirit's Communication

God promised that when the Holy Spirit came upon the disciples they would receive power to be His witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and Samaria and to the end of the earth. This Holy Spirit power will not be limited by location, by nationality, nor by time. It will be a power given to all generations to reach the next generation with the Gospel of Christ. Jesus made the promise in the Gospels and its fulfillment is recorded in the Book of Acts.

After the day of Pentecost, when the apostles were assembled together, the Holy Spirit came upon them. The filling of the Holy Spirit and the evidence of that filling would become the "mark" of faithful individuals. Peter first demonstrated the power to communicate under the Holy Spirit's leadership when he spoke to the devout men from

many nations (Acts 2:5). It was Peter who was led by the Holy Spirit to explain to the crowds that what was happening was the outpouring of the Holy Spirit as the prophet Joel predicted (Acts 2:14-21). When the church in Jerusalem recognized the neglect of certain widows, the apostles told them to select seven men of good reputation and full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom. These men would oversee this part of the church body. It was the filling of the Holy Spirit and evidence by wisdom that these men were chosen (Acts 6). This same wisdom is given to all pastors to administer the affairs of the local church. If any pastor thinks he is lacking in wisdom, he only needs to ask God for it (James 1:5).

It would be by the power of the Holy Spirit communicating with the apostles that they would know about the deceitfulness of Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5). It would be by the same Holy Spirit communication that Stephen (Acts 6, 7) would understand about those who stoned him to death. In Acts 7:51, Stephen knows that the people were resisting the Holy Spirit in their life. In Acts 8:29, the Holy Spirit told Phillip to go to the chariot and stay near. In Acts 9:32-42, the Holy Spirit came and comforted those in need. Acts 10:19, 11:12, 13: 2, 15: 28, and 16:6 are all references to the Holy Spirit coming alongside and giving directions to the spiritual leaders.

In Acts 13, it was the Holy Spirit who instructed them to separate Barnabas and Saul for missionary work. It was the same Holy Spirit who led in their missionary journey. In the Jerusalem council conclusion, it was recorded that the Holy Spirit communicated to them that it seemed good to lay no greater burden (Acts 15:28). It was the Holy Spirit, who forbade them from going through Phrygia and the region of Galatia (Acts 16:6). Paul would state that it was the Holy Spirit, who made the elders overseers of their flocks (Acts 20:28).

Jesus said that He would build His church, but it would be necessary for Him to leave, and the Holy Spirit to come and abide in them. It is the communication (Acts 13:2) of the Holy Spirit sharing what Lord wanted His disciples to know (John 15:26; 16:13). This interaction with the believer is the pastor's power to build God's church. Henry Blackaby wrote, "The Spirit takes the will of the Father and with work of the Son and seeks to make them a reality in the believer's life."⁹ This revealing of God's will and the work of God by the Holy Spirit was biblically expressed in I Corinthians 2:9-10 that states that the things that have not been seen nor heard, that God has prepared, are revealed to us through His Spirit. For the Spirit, He searches all things.

Jesus came to this earth to seek and to save sinners. Those who would place their trust in Jesus would become His children and have the opportunity to live the abundant life. They would be sealed with the Holy Spirit (Eph. 1:13) and by the Spirit separated into His service (2 Thess. 2:13). In 1 Thessalonians, the pastor is reminded that the Gospel was given to him not only in words but also in the Holy Spirit. Jesus said that after His departure His disciples would receive the Holy Spirit, but they were to wait in Jerusalem until they were endued with the power from on high. This power will build His church that is given to all who believe in him.

The power of the Holy Spirit to intervene in every pastor's life will manifest itself in compliance with God's Word. Pastors who come in faith to God, believing that He is the rewarder of those who diligently seek Him, will experience the clear communication of the Holy Spirit. This communication kept the early disciples in the Word rather than

⁹ Henry and Richard Blackaby, *Hearing God's voice* (Nashville, Broadman and Holman Publishers, 2002), 63.

in administration. This communication experienced by the early Church was also promised to pastors today.

It is profitable to attend church growth conferences. It is profitable to read church growth literature. It is profitable to have a church growth mentor. Although these are all profitable, it is more beneficial for pastors to hear the voice of the Holy Spirit directing their growth. Jesus promised, and the book of Acts reveals, that the Holy Spirit originates communication with leadership. This communication is given to all pastors to advance the Kingdom of God.

CHAPTER SIX

THE POWER OF LEADERSHIP

Understanding Biblical Leadership

17 From Miletus, Paul sent to Ephesus for the elders of the church. 18 When they arrived, he said to them: You know how I lived the whole time I was with you, from the first day I came into the province of Asia. 19 I served the Lord with great humility and with tears, although I was severely tested by the plots of the Jews. 20 You know that I have not hesitated to preach anything that would be helpful to you but have taught you publicly and from house to house. 21 I have declared to both Jews and Greeks that they must turn to God in repentance and have faith in our Lord Jesus.

22 And now, compelled by the Spirit, I am going to Jerusalem, not knowing what will happen to me there. 23 I only know that in every city the Holy Spirit warns me that prison and hardships are facing me. 24 However, I consider my life worth nothing to me, if only I may finish the race and complete the task the Lord Jesus has given me-the task of testifying to the gospel of God's grace. 25 Now I know that none of you among whom I have gone about preaching the kingdom will ever see me again. 26 Therefore, I declare to you today that I am innocent of the blood of all men. 27 For I have not hesitated to proclaim to you the whole will of God. 28 Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers. Be shepherds of the church of God, which he bought with his own blood. 29 I know that after I leave, savage wolves will come in among you and will not spare the flock. 30 Even from your own number men will arise and distort the truth in order to draw away disciples after them. 31 So be on your guard! Remember that for three years I never stopped warning each of you night and day with tears. 32 Now I commit you to God and to the word of his grace, which can build you up and give you an inheritance among all those who are sanctified. 33 I have not coveted anyone's silver or gold or clothing. 34 You yourselves know that these hands of mine have supplied my own needs and the needs of my companions. 35 In everything I did, I showed you that by this kind of hard work we must help the weak, remembering the words the Lord Jesus himself said: It is more blessed to give than to receive. 36 When he had said this, he knelt down with all of them and prayed. 37 They all wept as they embraced him and kissed him. 38 What grieved them most was his statement that they would never see his face again. Then they accompanied him to the ship (Acts 20:17-38)

What is spiritual leadership? Stephen A. Macchia quotes McLean and Weitzel's definition of leadership as, "a person involved in a process of influencing and developing a group of people in order to accomplish a purpose by means of supernatural power."¹ Leith Anderson quotes John Mott, the founder of the Christian Student Movement, as to his definition of leadership. A leader is "one who knows the road, who can keep ahead, and who can pull others after him."²

Gary McIntosh says that effective leadership is a combination of four ingredients.

First, a leader must be a person in the position to get the job done. Second, a leader must have the power or authority to decide. Third, a leader must be an individual who can influence others to accomplish a purpose. Lastly, a leader must have the control and muscle to take a task from beginning to completion. Simply put, he states that a leader is the person, "who sets the direction."³

Is biblical leadership taking its definition from a worldview mindset? Is it more biblical to define a biblical leader in terms of how he has fulfilled the commandments of God? Did all of God's leaders have influence to change others? When you really think about it, did God more often refer to His men as leaders or disciples? Should we measure the effectiveness of leadership in terms of faithfulness rather than numbers of followers, buildings built, budget sizes, or website designs? Some of the most respectable biblical leaders in this century, whom most people would consider successful, have morally fallen because they were not the kind of leader that God desires. Yes, they were the image of worldly success, but they had failed at meeting God's standard for leadership.

¹ Stephen A. Macchia, forward by Haddon Robinson, *Becoming A Healthy Church; Ten Traits of a Vital Ministry* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1999), 121. Quoted in McLean and W. Weitzel: *Leadership: Magic, Myth or Method*. No publishing company or publishing date provided by Macchia.

² Leith Anderson, *Dying for Change: An Arresting Look at the New Realities Confronting Churches and Parachurch Ministries* (Minneapolis: Bethany House Publishers, 1998), 187.

³ Gary L. McIntosh, *One Size Doesn't fit All: Bring Out the Best in Any Size Church* (Grand Rapids: Fleming H. Revell, 1999), 52.

The Apostle Paul was a very unlikely candidate for any meaningful church to consider as their leader when he was Rabbi Saul. By his own admission, he was trying to destroy believers and their places of worship. He was a feared man because he had the power, the authority, the influence and the means to destroy the Christian church.⁴ After his calling on the road to Damascus, Paul was a leader of a biblical kind. His address to the leadership of Ephesus was a capsular view into the leader's life, labors, influence and love.⁵ This biblical capsule of a successful ministry is one that all pastors should have and share with others. It is most valuable for the small church pastor who seeks confirmation of his calling and his life ministry.

Paul's life was an open book for all to read. The leaders he called to Miletus knew about his exemplary lifestyle (Acts 20:17). He outwardly demonstrated his love for God with tears, great humility, and by enduring severe trials. As a pastor, he preached and taught everything these men would need for their ministry, and it was equally taught to the Jew as well as to the Gentiles. As a leader, he was aware of the Holy Spirit's leadership and shared that knowledge with other pastors.

How did he measure his success? His life would not be worth much if he did not finish the task that God had given him. He would run the race until he finished sharing the Gospel with the last person God gave him. Without hesitation, he boldly told these pastors that he had faithfully shared everything with them and that God was no longer holding him accountable (Acts 20:25-27). As a pastor of pastors, he challenged them to

⁴ It is written in Acts 9:1-3 that he was still breathing threats and murder when he requested permission to bind any Christian he should find and bring them back to Jerusalem. After his conversion, the disciples were still afraid of him (Acts 9:26).

⁵ This author believes Acts 20:17-38 illustrates the authority, respect, and love which a pastor and his leadership team can have for one another. Paul told them that he withheld nothing from them and warned them of the dangers coming to the church. At his departure, there was a sincere and compassionate good-bye.

remain faithful to their calling, to keep their lives pure, and to watch over the flock that God had given them (Acts 20:28). He warned them to watch for wolves inside and outside the body of Christ who would seek to destroy what he had taught them. To help them with this task, he committed them to God and to His Word, and reminded them that if needed, they might have to financially support themselves.

Paul was a pastor with influence. When he finished instructing the elders of Miletus, he led them in prayer. After prayer, there was an emotional outburst rarely seen among men today. They all wept and embraced Paul (Acts 20:36-38). It was difficult for them to accept the fact that Paul told them that they would never see his face again.

What made Paul a successful leader among leaders and one worthy to follow? His actions verified his words. What he preached, he lived before others. Regardless of his many personal sufferings, Paul constantly praised God for His grace. He was humble, yet extremely bold in proclaiming the truth. He did not hesitate to share the truth, and he shared it equally with all who would listen. He expected the Holy Spirit to lead his life, and he considered his life nothing while finishing the work of God was everything. He was not naïve to the spiritual dangers that would destroy a church, therefore, he warned others to guard what God has given them. Paul had established his life as a reputable, valid, and genuine role for others to follow. He was a living example of what it meant to be a disciple of God who touched the spiritual and emotional hearts of men.

Was Paul the exception or the rule? Is it possible for all pastors to have such an influence? Are life-changing abilities, powerful preaching, and Holy Spirit leadership found in all small churches and larger churches equally? Was Paul considered a great preacher and a great missionary because he founded and built churches or because he

changed lives? The answers are obvious. Paul was a great leader of men because he changed lives. The greatest legacies that a preacher can leave are people who will testify that he helped to change their lives. The life-changing process for the pastor accelerates with his call to full-time ministry.

The Call and the Role of the Pastor

And I, brethren, when I came to you, did not come with excellence of speech or of wisdom declaring to you the testimony of God. ² For I determined not to know anything among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified. ³ I was with you in weakness, in fear, and in much trembling. ⁴ And my speech and my preaching were not with persuasive words of human wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, ⁵ that your faith should not be in the wisdom of men but in the power of God (1 Corinthians 2:1-4).

Paul was a small church pastor and a traveling missionary. He had been called by Jesus Christ without knowing what was actually happening to him. He might not have understood how his spiritual transformation happened, but he was fully aware that after his calling he was no longer the same. His testimony in I Corinthians 2:1-5 is a humble declaration acknowledging that it was not his style of preaching or any personal wisdom which he proclaimed to impress his hearers. He wanted them to know that he was not confident nor could he boast of his own powers to change a life. His only desire was to preach the Gospel of Jesus Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit. He did not want anyone's faith to be on Paul but rather in the power of God.

Glenn C. Daman wrote, "Biblical leaders provide the church with a godly model to follow and proclaim the message of God's Word in a relevant and life-changing way, so that the people of the church, individually and corporately, grow in discipleship as

they influence others people for Christ.”⁶ Paul’s testimony in I Corinthians 2:1-5 and Daman’s definition of leadership brings two important truths for all pastors. We must keep our stature open so people can see that power of the Holy Spirit is leading, and we must lead in such a way that people will make disciples of other people.

When Jesus announced His public ministry, He offered a call for other men to follow Him and in this calling He gave His training objectives. If you really follow me, I will make you fishers of men (Matthew 4:19). The call of God to all pastors is to make them fishers of men. The fishers of men would become His tools to direct the lives of other people.

When God called Abraham, it was to be a leader of thousands. When God called Moses, it was to lead His people out of bondage to the promised land (Exodus 3:10). When God called Joshua, it was to lead His people into battle to capture the promise land (Joshua 1:1-9). When God called David, it was to lead His people as the king of the nation (1 Samuel 16:1-13). When God called Jonah, it was to lead people to repentance (Jonah 1:1-3). When God called Nehemiah, it was to restore the walls of Jerusalem. When God called Paul, it was to reach and to lead His people. When God called Timothy, it was to lead and to build a church work in Ephesus. Some of these men did not fully understand the calling of God, and some even felt unworthy of it, and some ran away from it. God spoke to them and they eventually responded.

When a pastor has a calling from God, that pastor surrenders his life to God. His own concept of a successful ministry subsides in his relationship with God and his faithfulness to fulfill what God commands. “No longer will you need to worry about

⁶ Glenn C. Daman, *Leading the Small Church: How to Develop A Transformational Ministry* (Grand Rapids, Kregel Publications, 2006), 53.

your success or image. Instead, you will experience pressure that comes through the care and concerns of the church. You'll know that you're not truly in control, that you don't have all the solutions, and that some things you just can't fix."⁷ The pastors with God's calling will have a primary concern for reaching people with the Gospel and disciplining them to fulfill Ephesians 4:11-16.

The Call and the Role of Disciples

When Jesus called men to become fishers of men, it was a call to be His disciples (Matthew 4:18-25). Jesus made it clear that if we love Him we should keep His commandments. The author believes that part of keeping His commandments involves a personal commitment to those who are following you. Jesus started with twelve disciples and personally trained them (Matthew 5-9). Jesus verbally demonstrated to the twelve disciples how to share the Word and minister to emotional, physical, and spiritual needs. The most noticeable characteristic of Jesus' ministry was His availability to the twelve disciples, and those they taught. Jesus dealt directly with lepers, the centurion's servant, Peter's mother-in-law, and the man demon-possessed. He forgave the sick man, restored the blind, and brought the little girl back to life.

After Jesus showed the disciples how to minister to people, He then sent them into the world. He told them to go and preach that the Kingdom was at hand, heal the sick, cast out demons, and cleanse the lepers. He told them to keep their ministry personal.

⁷ Wes Roberts and Glenn Marshall, forward by Larry Crabb, *Reclaiming God's Original Intent for the Church* (Colorado Springs: NavPress Publications, 2004), 63.

The author believes that Jesus was teaching His disciples that in the gospel ministry the people come first. Jesus said that He came to seek and to save the lost, which means He would have a personal interest in all who came to Him. Ruth A. Tucker shares what happens to a small town community when a giant Wal-Mart comes to town. She saw the small mom and pop store disappear. “When a town dies, a community suffers. The loss touches every aspect of hometown life. So then also when town churches die.”⁸ When the mega store comes to towns, the communities lose more than the mom and pop stores but more important it loses the personal relationship that it had with the store- owner. In the mega store, you are a consumer rather than a neighbor or a friend who needs your expertise. The store-owner is no longer a personal friend but an impersonal corporation, and the everyday operations are controlled by the chief executive officer, whom you may never see.

The ‘Mega’ concept captured our public school system in the early fifties. Prior to that America had many, many schools with a greater parental awareness and involvement. Parents were involved with the school principals, teachers, and extra curricular activities such as sports. Schools never scheduled events on established church nights like Wednesday or Sunday. During the fifties, there was a change in school philosophy that said consolidation of smaller schools into a larger school districts would lower school costs and increase educational opportunities. Only one major problem was not seen: the absence of personal relationships and parental influence.

Unfortunately, the mega-store philosophy has invaded the church and sacrificed the personal contact with the pastor was sacrificed. Church members need to have a

⁸ Ruth A. Tucker, *Left Behind in a Megachurch World: How God Works through Ordinary Churches* (Grand Rapids: Baker books, 2006), 36.

pastor who will care for them as Jesus told Peter. Jesus told Peter that in the same manner that you love me, take care of my sheep and feed the sheep that I gave you. Peter, your primary responsibility is to care of people, therefore, disciple them in the same manner that I disciplined you (John 21:15-19).

Hans Finzel wrote that one major mistake pastors make is putting paper work over people work. “Jesus spent more time touching people and talking to them than in any other action.”⁹

The Characteristics of a Christian Leader

A disciple is not above his teacher, but everyone who is perfectly trained will be like his teacher (Luke 6:40). Jesus was disciplining men to be like Him, therefore when a Christian leader has been fully trained; those in His presence should be able to say that this man has been with Christ. When Jesus said that He would build his church, and the gates of hell would not prevail against it, He was not talking about a building. He was talking about building the lives of people. A pastor must have a quality of leadership that reaches into the hearts of people. This quality must be exemplified in the pastor’s character.

“Character is who you are when no one else is looking.”¹⁰ Gary L. McIntosh wrote, “Biblical church growth requires pastors who will shepherd the flock of God with character (integrity of heart) and competence (skillful hands).”¹¹ Henry and Richard

⁹ Hans Finzel, *The Top Ten Mistakes Leaders Make* (Colorado: Chariot Victor Publishing, 1994), 45.

¹⁰ Wes Roberts and Glenn Marshall, 75.

¹¹ Gary L. McIntosh, *Biblical Church Growth: How You Can Work With God to Build A Faithful Church* (Grand Rapids: Baker House Book Company, 2003), 99.

Blackaby, quoting from a national study by Kouzes and Posner, said the number-one trait that “people most admired and valued in their leaders”¹² was honesty.

Jesus spoke the truth about His calling, about prayer, about fasting, about tithing, about loving, about trusting Him for eternal life, about spiritual persecutions, about His death, burial, and His resurrection. Even though the religious leaders refused to believe He was the way, the truth, and the life, Jesus continued to faithfully preach God’s message. This honesty in sharing the truth is expected of all pastors.

I Timothy 3:1-7 provides a list of qualifications for a pastor. Any man who desires to be a pastor is accepting a calling that demands good works. Good works that have a lasting influence for God’s Kingdom are the result of living under that power of God in such a sacrificial style that His traits permeate the pastor’s life. The author will narrow his focus on the traits in verses two and three and the summary in verse 7.

The pastor who is honest will understand his own life and his interaction with other people. His honesty will be shown by being one who is blameless before others. To be blameless is not to be without sin, but to have nothing hidden in his life that could be used against him. He will be temperate, meaning one who can make sound judgments and actions. The sober-minded pastor knows the purpose of his life and makes decisions accordingly to accomplish his calling with much self-control. Good behavior suggests an orderly or well-planned life that gives account of time, gifts, and finances. Hospitality is a characteristic that tells people you are open to share your home and your life with them. The pastor with spiritual characteristics will be apt (able) to teach, and his teaching will exhibit his ability to share the truth in hostile and friendly environments with grace and

¹² Henry and Richard Blackaby, *Spiritual Leadership: Moving People on to God’s Agenda* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2001), 104.

gentleness. Lastly, a pastor's character will be known not just in his church but also in his community. A pastor with a high degree of honesty will have a good testimony in his community.

Leroy Eims wrote, "Once a leader knows what God wants him to do, he must clearly communicate God's direction to the people and help them see how they fit into the undertaking."¹³ Jesus told His followers to disciple others in everything that He taught and showed them. He told them that when He left, the Holy Spirit would come alongside them and be their guide in all things. It will be the Holy Spirit who would guide them.

The Pastoral Function According to Church Size

Gary L. McIntosh wrote that pastoral leadership differs according to church size. "Pastors need to adjust their ministry skills to fit the church where they serve."¹⁴ A small church with under 200 worshippers is highly relational with influential families in key leadership positions. According to Elmer Towns, in this size church "everyone is involved in the decision-making process, and the church is lay owned and operated."¹⁵ As the church increases in size, the leadership influence moves away from key families to residing in committees (201-400) then to residing in select leadership. Regardless of church size, God expects the pastor to feed the flock that He has given them.

¹³ Leroy Eims, forward by Charles Swindoll, *Be a Motivational Leader* (Wheaton, Illinois: Victor Books, 1986), 53.

¹⁴ Gary L. McIntosh, *One Size Doesn't Fit All: Bring out the best in Any Size Church* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House Company, 2005), 65.

¹⁵ Elmer Towns, *21st Century Tools and Techniques*, class notes page 34.

“The Greek word for leadership is *proistemi*, which means to ‘stand before.’ This same word is translated ‘to manage,’ as in one’s family (1 Timothy 3:4); ‘to direct,’ as in the affairs of the church (1 Timothy 5:17); and ‘to rule,’ as in governing (Romans 12:8)”¹⁶ When Jesus gave the Great Commission, He told His followers to disciple (teach) each nation all that He had shown them. When Jesus spoke to Peter after the resurrection, He asked Peter if he loved Him. After Peter’s first response, Jesus said to him, “Feed my flock” (John 21:15) and after asking the second time, Jesus said to him, “Tend my sheep” (John 21:16) and finally the third time, he said to Peter, “Feed my Sheep” (John 21:17). The author believes that Jesus was sharing with Peter that if you are going to pastor God’s sheep, it must be because you love Jesus Christ.

A leader who loves Jesus Christ will keep his priority of building God’s kingdom in the right order. God has called His disciples to seek and to save the lost and bring them to the saving grace of the Gospel. This leader will model his own life and the lives of his congregation after the pattern established by Jesus Christ.

¹⁶ Gary L McIntosh, 67.

CHAPTER SEVEN

THE POWER OF BIBLICAL ORGANIZATION

¹¹ And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, ¹² for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, ¹³ till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ; ¹⁴ that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting, ¹⁵ but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head—Christ—¹⁶ from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love (Ephesians 4:11-16).

Every organization needs to know why it exists and whom they are serving. The majority of healthy church books that this author has read devoted countless pages unfolding new growth paradigms and introducing the latest secular methods. Most books simply acknowledge that the Bible tells us why each church exists, whom the church serves, and how it is to be organized, then share their methods for growth. Elmer Towns wrote, “Methods are many, principles are few. Methods may change, but principles never do.”¹ The danger to the small church pastor is in trying to adopt a large church

¹ Elmer Towns, *21st Century Tools and Techniques* (Class notes, Liberty Theological Seminar, 2005), 69.

growth method without completely understanding the biblical organization principles established by God for all churches.

Why do all churches exit? They exist to fulfill The Great Commission that states churches should reach the lost and train the saved to be like Jesus. Immediately, the principle in The Great Commission is to be people-centered in such a way that it would encourage and strengthen their relationship with God. If the church is to be people-centered, what does God want it to do with them? Aubrey Malphus answers that question by saying, “The church must point people to their primary and true need: life transformed through Christ.”² Once that relationship has been established and disciples multiplied, the body of Christ became visible as a collected body of believers or a called-out assembly. The formation of this newly established assembly unfolds in the book of Acts.

Organizational Principles Found in Acts

There are eleven organizational principles found in the book of Acts. These eleven principles are foundational for all churches.

The first principle is that the church is built by the power of the Holy Spirit and not by the power of self. In Acts, chapter one, Jesus told His disciples to wait for the power of the Holy Spirit that when the Holy Spirit comes, they would know about His influence. The second principle is that the church is built by sharing the Gospel message. In Acts 2, Peter boldly shares the Gospel, and people gladly received the Word and followed in baptism. The third principle is that the church is to meet for fellowship with believers. In Acts 2:42-47, those who met together were all believers. This was not a

²Aubrey Malphus, *Advanced Strategic Planning: A New Model For Church and Ministry Leaders* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House Company, 1999), 110.

seeker- sensitive fellowship. It was a fellowship where those who were actively serving God could worship Him.

The fourth principle is that church leaders who shared the Gospel were not doing so by preference; rather it was by conviction. In chapters four and five, after Peter and John were told they could not preach the Gospel, they responded by saying, “We cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard” (Acts 4:20) and “We ought to obey God rather than men” (Acts 5:29). The fifth principle is that the church expected honesty among its membership. In Acts 5, Ananias and Sapphira lost their lives when they lied to the Holy Spirit. The sixth principle is that the church apostles would devote their time to prayer and ministering the Word and are to delegate new church ministries to other spirit-filled men.

The seventh principle is that the church is to be aware of the dangers in sharing their faith. In Acts 7, Stephen preaches the full gospel message with historical support but when he finished, he is cast out of the city and stone. There would be a cost for serving God, and the ultimate cost of a sacrificial life was set in place. The eighth principle is that the church will always face opposition in high places. Saul, the Pharisee, led the way by destroying Christians and their places of worship. The ninth principle is that the Gospel must be presented to all people regardless of their religious background, race or nationality, as recorded in Acts 10.

The tenth principle is that the church is to be active in missionary work, as written in Act 13, 14, 16-21. Spreading the Gospel in each location is the only way to establish a new assembly of believers. Within these chapters are the many trials and tribulations that missionaries will face while presenting the Gospel to different cultures. The last

principle is that of perseverance. When Paul reached the city of Rome, he was placed under house arrest for two whole years. During that time, he preached and taught the things of God.

Now that the fundamental principles have been discovered that relate to the expectation of church growth, what are the organizational principles that the early church established which should be accepted as universal for all churches? First, there must be leadership that devotes time in prayer and in ministering the Word (Acts 6:3). These leaders must delegate responsibilities to other individuals (Acts 6:1-7). Second, there must be a way to defend the faith (Stephen – Acts 6). Third, spiritual leadership must be appointed as churches are planted. At the end of Paul’s first missionary trip, it is recorded that elders, plural, were appointed in every church (Acts 14:23). The principle of plurality³ is important in understanding how spiritual gifts operate and in understanding Ephesians 4:11-16. Lastly, it is noted that other organizational principles, such as leadership qualifications for elders and deacons, have been recorded in I Timothy 3 and Titus 1:6-9. Also, 1 Corinthians 12:27-28, adds to these principles the whole concept of team leadership. Team leadership is necessary in developing a spiritually-mature church organization.

Organizational Principles Found in I Corinthians 12

I Corinthians 12:1-7 is an exhortation to keep the church from becoming ignorant of spiritual gifts. It emphasizes that there are diversities of administration, gifts, and actions but they are all given by the same Holy Spirit. This “manifestation of the Spirit is

³ This author is not suggesting a plurality of senior pastors, but he rather believes God gives spiritually-gifted leaders who function according to the gift God has given them. (I Corinthians 12, Ephesian 4:11). The author is not discussing forms of church government.

given to each one for the profit of all.” (I Corinthians 12:7). I Corinthians 12:8-11 gives a list of spiritual gifts that God provides to the church with an understanding that it is the Holy Spirit who gives these gifts as He wills. These gifts are part of the organizational structure of the local church. How they are received and how they are used increases or decreases the spiritual growth in the body of Christ. The operation and the gifts should be understood before organizational programs are introduced to the church.

I Corinthians 12:12-28 uses human anatomy to explain how the gifts and their operation work as a living organism in the local church. Just as the human body represents one unique individual, likewise, so does each church. Just as the human body is one with many parts, likewise, so is the church. The adult body has 206⁴ bones, a muscular structure, a respiratory system, a digestive system, and nervous system and a circulatory system. They must all function together for the body to operate without doing harm to it. I Corinthians 12:14-26 stresses how each part of the body is important to its overall existence and that no one part should be stressed over another. Each part has a role that God has established and it must function accordingly within the body without hindrances. Also, the body is one unit with many parts; subsequently, when one part suffers, the whole body suffers and when one part is honored, the whole body rejoices. This analogy is applied to the church in I Corinthians 12:27-31.

The individual members are part of the whole body, and within the body, God has appointed their parts. Within the church body, there are apostles, prophets, teachers, miracles, healings, helps, administration and varieties of tongues. The placement of these individuals and gifts should be understood in the same manner as how God has placed the

⁴ Howard Hugh Medical Institute, *Ask a Scientist*. The author knows that adults have 206 bones while children have 300 hundred. As children age, their bones fuse. Available from http://www.hhmi.org/cgi-bin/askascientist/highlight.pl?kw=&file=answers%2Fstructure%2Fans_021.html

human body parts. No gift that God has placed in the church can function in the place of another. No one gift or person represents the sum total of the church. Paul states this truth with rhetorical questions in verse 29. Just as the Corinthians understood that no one body part functions alone in the body, likewise, they would understand that no single individual or no single spiritual gift directs the whole church organization. It would take a team of individuals to keep the church organization functioning to produce disciples for Christ.

Organizational Principles Found in Ephesians 4:11-16

Ephesians 4:11-16 details a biblical strategic plan for maturing the members of any church. This biblical plan can be implemented regardless of church size, location, denomination, geographic local or financial situation. This is God's way to allow pastors to keep in prayer and in the Word. This is God's plan to involve the membership in developing and using their spiritual gifts. This is God's plan to protect families from prevailing evil. This is God's plan to provide a measuring block for maturity. Lastly, this is God's way to show the world the love that the body of Christ has for each of its members.

God appointed individuals to be gifts to the local church. These men have specific purposes as indicated by their titles. Apostles were divinely-appointed by God and were witnesses of the resurrection. The prophet was the one who proclaimed God's Word for the purpose of edifying the church. The evangelist is the one who travels from place to place sharing the good news about salvation in Jesus Christ alone. The pastor-teacher is the "shepherd" who leads the church and who has a responsibility to teach its

members. Why are these gifted men given to the church, and how does their function define a biblical church organization?

These men have the organizational function to train other individuals to be about the work of the ministry. They are the ones who explain why each ministry exists, how it functions within the body, and what biblical characteristics, gifts and talents keep it going. They are not expected to do all the work, but to show others how it is done and why. When the members of the church are trained to lead each ministry, the whole body is edified. God expected His church to be a collection of many people working together as one unit. Hans Finzel wrote, “God never intended those godly leaders (Ephesians 4:11) to lord over their charges as dictators, but to equip them to do the work that must be done.”⁵ If this is the principle; that leaders should train others and delegate meaningful ministers to them, why are some pastors reluctant to follow it?

Hans Finzel offers six good reasons why it is difficult for some leaders to delegate ministerial responsibilities. The reasons are “The fear of losing authority, work being done poorly, being done better, depending on others, the unwillingness to take the necessary time and lack of training and positive experience.”⁶ If the principle of training others for the work of the ministry is to be implemented, then leadership must recognize the importance of every member to the body of Christ. The working members of the body are to bring edification to the church; therefore, the wise leader will train them and release them.

Ephesians 4:13 tells the church the organizational purpose for their ministries and how to measure its progress towards maturity. God wants the organization to keep

⁵ Finzel, 85.

⁶ Finzel, 99.

functioning until they are in the unity of the faith and have the full knowledge of Jesus Christ. Therefore, the implementation would begin with the teaching of the life of Christ and the major church doctrines such as salvation, eternal security, God, Holy Spirit, sin, Heaven and Hell. This teaching would continue in the church until everyone agreed. How will this teaching be evaluated? The measuring standard will be Jesus Christ.

Successful ministers are measured in making mature disciples to the fullness of Jesus Christ. The measuring block is not the church down the street, nor is it the latest television pastor. The church organization has a never-ending task to develop ministries that edify its members and mature them to Christ-likeness. This is a lifetime ministry that will meet with challenges from Satan.

Ephesians 4:14 warns its readers not to behave as immature children who are not ready to face the challenges in life and who are easily swayed to follow each worldly pleasure. It warns us that there are other doctrines and false teachings that the immature might think are more appealing than God's way. The author is currently teaching a course written by Dr. Caner, the President of Liberty Theological Seminary, called *When Worldviews Collide*. The course presents the major doctrines of Hinduism, Buddhism, Judaism, and Islam, and explains to the reader how to confront the errors. After several weeks, it became apparent that one week was insufficient time to learn a major world religion; therefore, the author gave the assignment a new emphasis. The author asked his students to concentrate on learning Bible doctrine, and thereby, they would be able to confront other worldwide religions. Study God's Word and "Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth" (2 Timothy 2:15).

Ephesians 4:15-16 tells the organization that everything must be done in the motive of love and in the expression of love. According to I Corinthians 13:1-8, if we have all the spiritual gifts and show charity to others but lack love, our organization or our church, will be like a clanging cymbal that has no message. Love is expressing our relationship with God, which must be shared in the body of Christ.

How does a church know when it is functioning according to the organizational strategy written in Ephesians 4:11-15? When the whole body functions as one unit, all the members understand how they are dependent on one another. They understand that it is the effectual work of everyone that causes the body to grow to the edification of itself. John Maxwell wrote, “People who build successful team members never forget that every person on a team has a role to play, and every role plays its part in contributing to the bigger picture.”⁷

When a small church functions within the principles found in Acts, I Corinthians, and Ephesians, it finds church pride within itself as a church that is fulfilling The Great Commission. It will not compare itself positively or negatively with any other church because other churches are not their measuring block for success. Their success is seeing the pastor disciple the saints for the work of the ministry and seeing that ministry mature the believers into the image of Jesus Christ.

⁷John Maxwell, *The 17 Indisputable Laws of Teamwork: Embrace Them and Empower Your Team* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 2001), 19.

CHAPTER EIGHT

THE POWER OF TRANSFORMATION

I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. 2 And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God. Romans 12:1-2

George Barna wrote, “I will describe a ministry as being effective when lives are transformed such as people are constantly enabled to become more Christ-like.”¹ Paul wrote that those who really desired to live as Christ did must be transformed which means to change. The change gradually occurs as your mind is renewed. James Denney said that the purpose for the Christian with the renewed mind “may prove, i.e., discern in their experience what the will of God is.”²

This transformation has two basic components. The first component is giving the mind the right information to make correct biblical decisions in all walks of life. The second is applying this information in all walks of life. Transformation is both academic

¹ George Barna, *The Habits of Highly Effective Churches: Being Strategic in Your God-Given Ministry* (Ventura, California: Regal Books, 1999), 15.

² James Denney, *The Expositor's Greek Testament, Vol. 11 ed. By W. Robertson Nicoll* (Grand Rapids: Grand Rapids Book Manufacturers, Inc., Reprint 1974), 688.

and practical. Millard J. Erickson said, “If we are to bring our actual practice unto conformity with our beliefs, we will have to reflect and even meditate upon those beliefs.”³ Every generation needs Christians who know the importance of studying God’s Word for everyday situations. Showing the world the practical side of living for God was the exhortation that the apostle Paul gave Timothy in I Timothy 4:15. Paul told Timothy to meditate on these things and give himself entirely to them, that his progress may be evident to all. When the two components of transformation are balanced, a gradual change occurs in the life of the Christian.

Transformation by Hearing and Studying God’s Word

The psalmist asked in Psalms 119:9, “How can a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed according to your Word.” It is amazing that with all the new methods for church growth, all the new programs, all the new technology, and all the new small cell group promotions, the answer for change is still God’s Word. The small church pastor and the large church pastor are on a level playing field when it comes to transforming a person into the image of Christ when using His Word.

One time when Jesus was speaking, His words were difficult for some disciples to follow; therefore, they walked away. Jesus asked the twelve disciples if they would also walk away. They responded by saying, “Lord to whom shall we go; you have the words of eternal life. Also, we have come to believe and know that You are the Christ, the Son of the living God” (John 6:68, 69). When Jesus prayed to His Father in John 17:17, He said, “Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth.” The Word has the power to separate us from the world.

³ Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1983), 1244.

Hebrew 4:12 says that God's Word is living and active. It can penetrate and divide. It can judge the thoughts and the attitudes of the heart. Transformation starts with sharing God's Word. If you only have a small building and God's Word, that is enough needed to change a life. If you only have one Sunday School classroom and God's Word that is all you need to change a life. Actually, all you need to change a life is the Word of God; everything else is extra.

When Paul wrote to Timothy, he reminded him that it was the Scriptures that made him wise unto salvation in Jesus Christ. He told Timothy that all the scriptures are from God and are followed, "so the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work" (II Timothy 3:16). Also, Paul encouraged Timothy in II Timothy 2:15 to be diligent to present himself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the Word of truth.

Leroy Eims wrote that any pastor who desires to learn the power within God's Word should take five steps. These five steps have transforming power for the pastor and those he disciples. According to Eims, the five steps to taking in the Word of God "are hearing, reading, studying, memorizing, and meditating."⁴ Hearing the Word from other pastors or teachers provides additional insight to Scripture and stimulates our thought processes for deeper study. Reading the Word orally and silently allows the Holy Spirit to trigger cross references in your mind. As you read and take notes, you are organizing your thought patterns and dissecting the Word. When you memorize scriptures and their references, the Word becomes part of your life forever. Meditation means to dwell upon the Word in order to discover how it applies to your life.

⁴Leroy Eims, forward by Robert E Coleman, *The Lost Art of Disciple Making* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1978), 82.

If you want to be like Christ, you must devote time to learn about Him and His work. Jesus came to this earth to make men fishers of men and men of God who were willing to follow Him. The disciples spent three years traveling with Jesus and watched everything that He did and said. Their lives were being transformed by living in His presence. “When God finds a person who will place as his first priority a life of intimate, personal, dynamic fellowship with Him, He directs His power, guidance, and wisdom into and through that person. God has found a man through whom He can change the world.”⁵

Transformation by Application of God’s Word

In Matthew 7:24-29, Jesus told the parable of the two individuals who built a house. One built his house on sinking sands while the other built his house on solid stone. When the rain poured, the house built on the sand was destroyed, and the house built on the stone was still standing. Then He said, “Therefore, whoever hears these sayings of mine and does them, I will liken him to the wise man who builds his house on the rock.” Transformation starts with hearing the Word, for it tells you what will happen; but applying the Word to your life is also needed. If there is no application, if there is no doing what you have heard and read, you will be like the foolish man who builds his house on the sand.

When Paul wrote to the Philippians, he encouraged them to live for Christ, and to keep meditating on the things that were true, just, pure, and of good report (Philippians 4:8). Then he told them that knowing what to do was only half of transforming their

⁵ Leroy Eims, forward by Theodore H. Epp, *Be The Leader You Were Meant To Be: Biblical Principles of Leadership* (Wheaton: Victor Books, 1980), 19.

lives. If they wanted the transformation power that comes with hearing and reading God's Word, they would need to follow the words in Philippians 4:9, "The things which you learned and received and heard and saw in me, these do, and the God of peace will be with you."

In the Apostle James' letter written to the twelve tribes which were scattered abroad, he wrote about the deception of thinking one can have faith without works (James 2:14-26) (doing). Those who have a transformed life, live trying to do the will of God. For those who have been transformed, and who are really living by faith, their life will manifest the life of Christ and His will.

James challenges them to live with wisdom, "but if you do not have wisdom, then ask in faith (doing) and God will provide what you need" (James 1:5,6). But he warns them: do not ask while really thinking that God will not grant you wisdom. James tells them to "receive with meekness the implanted word which is able to save your soul" (James 1:21). James knew that if these scattered believers were to have their lives changed by the hearing of God's Word, they must become doers of the Word and not hearers only, who deceive themselves (James 1:22-25).

Paul told young Timothy to be an example to believers in word, in conduct, in love, in spirit, in faith and in purity (1 Timothy 4:12). In order for Timothy to be that example, he would have to learn God's Word and other people would have to see the visible applications in his life. If Timothy were going to show people how he was profiting from his relationship with God, he would have to show them a life that was transformed by hearing and doing.

George Barna wrote, “I am willing to bet that when the Lord examines a church, His criteria will have little to do with attendance statistics, budgeting complexities or program breadth. His analysis will hinge on the depth of a peoples’ commitment to making their faith real and pure.”⁶ All church pastors are called to transform the lives of those individuals God gives them. This transformation power is found in the Word of God and the in doing of the Word. Those pastors with their faith in God will make fishers of men with these two components.

⁶ George Barna, 17

PART II. PRACTICAL FOUNDATIONS FOR GROWTH

CHAPTER NINE

THE POWER OF PRAYER

If My people who are called by My name will humble themselves, and pray and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land (2 Chronicles 7:14).

Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. ⁸ For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened. ⁹ Or what man is there among you who, if his son asks for bread, will give him a stone? ¹¹ If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask Him! (Matthew 7:7-11).

If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you. ⁸ By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit; so you will be My disciples (John 15:7).

Biblical Insights to Prayer

The author has heard many good preachers and evangelists use II Chronicles 7:14 as if it were a credit card with no contractual terms. All credit cards have terms of use and they are issued to individuals or corporations who promise to use them accordingly. If they are used fraudulently, the contract agreements are invalidated. II Chronicles 7:14-22 is God's response to a contract Israel had made with Him. If future generations desire to

use these verses as their own contract, they should enter it with the same spiritual mindset that King Solomon did with the nation of Israel.

God spoke to King Solomon and said, “Ask what I shall give you” (II Chronicles 1:7). Solomon asked for wisdom and knowledge to lead the people he inherited from his father, King David. He would need this wisdom and knowledge to build God’s temple in Jerusalem.

King Solomon said he would “build a house to the name of the Lord my God and dedicate it to Him” (II Chronicles 2:4). He gathered the building materials, the timber, the gold, and the artisans needed. Everything was built according to a detailed plan that would glorify God at completion. Also, he constructed the temple furniture. After the building was finished, it was time to dedicate it to God.

The temple dedication was a nationwide event. “Solomon assembled the elders of Israel and all the heads of the tribes, the chief of the fathers of the children of Israel unto Jerusalem” (II Chronicles 5:2). This dedication service involved the priests, the Levites, the trumpet players, and the singers. King Solomon stood beside the altar of God spreading his hands before the congregation, and then he went on his knees and offered praise and prayers to God.

King Solomon asked God to have respect for the prayers of His servant and to harken to the supplications of His people. In II Chronicles 6:22-42, King Solomon offers a contract to God in which each part started with either “if” or “when” and closed with “then.” King Solomon presents a possible national situation before God, and asks whether God would respond favorably should it happen.

²⁴ *If Your people Israel are defeated before an enemy because they have sinned against You, and return and confess Your name, and pray and make supplication before You in this temple, ²⁵ then hear from heaven and forgive the sin of Your people Israel, and bring them back to the land which You gave to them and their fathers (II Chronicles 6:24-25).*

The temple dedication lasted eight days. The days were filled with worship, prayers, and sacrifices. “King Solomon sacrificed 22,000 oxen and 120,000 sheep and goats” (II Chronicles 7:5). After the dedication, God spoke to King Solomon and responded to the request of the nations.

God told King Solomon that if the rains stop, if locust invaded the land, and if pestilence came to the land, He would then heal the land. If the people called upon Him, humbled themselves, sought Him in prayer, and turned from their wicked ways; then God would heal their land in response to their obedience to his Word. Then God turns to King Solomon and tells him what he must do in order to have his prayer contract sealed (II Chronicles 7:12-22).

II Chronicles 7:14 should not be used as a modern-day prayer promise that God will heal any nation. Rather, the whole narrative from chapters one to seven should be used to teach prayer. It should be approached with much reverence and respect, and with historical reference, if its prayer principles are going to be used by the small church pastor. It should be used to illustrate how worship, dedication, and sacrifice are all part of approaching God in prayer.

Most pastors who use these verses in their messages are trying to encourage their congregation to humble themselves before the Lord, turn from their sins, and if they will, then the Lord would bring healing. The principle of honestly confessing your sins and God granting forgiveness is well established in the New Testament. Nevertheless, a

confession without understanding about what sins have been committed and against whom will not bring healing. The healing that would come to Israel would be in direct relationship to the condition within the contract they made with God in II Chronicles 6:22-40. The Israelites understood their sins and how to respond to God when they sinned. They asked God that if we sin, and if we confess our sins, then would You be faithful to hear our prayers and forgive our sins? Israel wanted to know that if they sinned, they would still have an audience with God who would hear their confessions and heal them.

Today, we need to reteach the principles of prayer that incorporate our established relationship with God and without inappropriately borrowing from past generations. In Luke 11:1, one of Jesus' disciples says to Him, "Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught His disciples." Jesus gave them what is referred to as the Lord's Prayer which many pastors use as a teaching model. What are the principles for prayer found in the Lord's Prayer that Jesus was seeking to teach his disciples? What was His intention for prayer? Why did He want His disciples to learn this prayer?

Principle number one is our relationship with God. Jesus wanted us to know that God, our Father is in heaven, and His name is to be respected. Principle number two is God's will is to come before the will of all others. Principle number three is God will provide for our daily needs. Principle number four is our daily need for forgiveness of sins. Principle number five is our need to forgive others as God has forgiven us. Principle number six is our need not to be led into temptation and the last principle is protection from evil. These seven principles, which Jesus taught, are essential for a spiritual relationship with God and a mature relationship with others. The author believes

that Jesus was teaching His disciples the importance and the simplicity of prayer that is needed in order to teach prayer to others. Prayer should be respectful and relational.

What is biblical prayer? The publisher of *All The Prayers Of The Bible* wrote that “the Bible records no fewer than 650 definite prayers of which no less than 450 have recorded”¹ answers, yet there is no set definition for prayer given. Possibly, the author chose not to define prayer on the valid assumption that its definition and its purpose would be clarified after reading his book. E. M. Bounds wrote, “Prayer in its highest form of faith is that prayer which carries the whole man as a sacrifice offering.”² Eugene H. Peterson spreads his definition over several pages. He wrote, “Prayer means that we deal first with God and then with the world.”³ Peterson adds to this definition by saying that “prayer is answering speech; it is not primarily ‘address’ but ‘response,’”⁴ then continues his definition by writing, “prayer is language used to respond to the most that has been said to us, with the potential for saying all that is in us.”⁵ Frank C. Laubach wrote his book about prayer right after World War II. In his book, he encourages all who read it to continue with the same prayer zeal they had while the war was at its worst, because the battle is not over. He simply says, “Prayer at its highest is a two-way

¹ Herbert Lockyer, *All The Prayers Of The Bible: A Devotional and Expository Classic* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1989), vi.

² E. M. Bounds, *Prayer And Praying Men* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1977), 17.

³ Eugene H. Peterson, *Working the Angles: The Shape of Pastoral Integrity* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1987), 41.

⁴ Peterson, 45.

⁵ Peterson, 50.

conversation.”⁶ The author defines prayer as communication with the one and only true God.

It is necessary to specify that there is one and only one true God. America is a multi-cultural nation with diverse religious beliefs which have many false gods. Some people are defining prayer as, “an active effort to communicate with a deity or spirit either to offer praise, to make a request, seek guidance, confess sins, or simply to express one’s thoughts and emotions.”⁷ Today when you are teaching about prayer, you must include I Timothy 2:5, “for there is one God and one Mediator between God and man, the Man Christ Jesus.” Prayer must be directed in faith to the one and only God.

Jesus wanted His followers to pray for the needs that would help establish His church on earth. The Father knows what we need (Matthew 6:8). Jesus said that we should ask according to His will, and it will be given to us (Matthew 7:7). Jesus told us not to worry, for He knows how to give appropriate and good gifts to His children (Matthew 7:10-11). He said that we will have enemies and to pray for them (Matthew 5:44) and not to pray for personal glory (Matthew 6:5-8). Jesus said that we would need people to labor with us, but the laborers would be few (In Matthew 9:37). He said that if we expect to receive from Him that we should ask in His name and abide in Him (John 14:13; John 15:7). He knew that we would carry a tremendous burden; therefore, we should come to Him with our needs and learn of Him (Matthew 11:28-30). Jesus taught His disciples to pray and the Book of Acts shows how they prayed.

⁶ Frank C. Laubach, *Prayer: The Mightiest Force In The World* (Old Tappan: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1946), 99.

⁷ Wikipedia, *Prayer* extract from Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia, reference found at [Http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Prayer](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Prayer).

After Jesus ascended to heaven, the church leaders “continued with one accord in prayer and supplication” (Acts 1:14). After the three 3,000 accepted Jesus as their savior and were baptized, the apostles “continued steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship in the breaking of bread and in prayer” (Acts 2:42). Peter and John went to the “temple at the hour of prayer,” and the Apostles emphasized the importance of prayer by saying, “We will give ourselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the Word” (Acts 3:1; 6:4). Cornelius saw a vision of an Angel of God who told him that his “prayers and alms have come up for a memorial before God”, and Peter confirmed the message when he told Cornelius, “your prayers have been heard and your alms are remembered in the sight of God” (Acts 10:3; 10:31). When Peter was kept in prison “constant prayer was offered to God for him by the church” (Acts 12:5). The church and its members were expected to communicate their concerns and needs to Jesus. Jesus wanted His worship center to be known as a house of prayer. “It is written, ‘My house shall be called a house of prayer, but you have made it a ‘den of thieves’” (Matthew 21:13).

God wrote, “Men ought always to pray and not to faint” (Luke 18:1). “Watch and pray that ye enter not into temptation” (Matthew 26:41). “Pray without ceasing”(I Thess. 5:17). “Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit” (Eph. 6:18). “In everything, by prayer and supplication . . . let your request be made known unto God” (Philippians 4:6). God wants you to be in constant communication with Him, believing in faith that He wants to be an active part of your life.

Pastors should have such a close relationship with God that they know when He is speaking to them. Chapter 5, The Power of Communication, referenced the number of

times in the Book of Acts that God spoke directly to His leadership. By the power of the Holy Spirit, God initiated a conversation that directed His people. This level of communication in prayer should be sought and taught by all pastors.

There is a verbal dialogue that can only be understood when two people talk to one another. This verbal exchange cannot be taught for it is something you gain as you communicate freely with someone. The best example of a free-flowing dialogue would be in the Psalms. Several authors have suggested that Psalm 92 is one of the best examples of a man who intimately knows God and speaks to Him with that understanding. The Psalmist who struggles with the difficulties in life and the wickedness that surround him found understanding in his relationship with God. When a pastor has this kind of relationship with God, he can faithfully proclaim Matthew 7:7-11 in his prayer life.

God delights in the pastor who is willing to ask, to seek, and to continue the knocking until he has heard from God. For this is the pastor who has established a trusting and confidential relationship with God, and who knows without a doubt that God will answer his prayers. Not only will God answer his prayers, but also the answer will match the request. He believes that God knows exactly what he needs as an answer to his prayer life. In Acts 4:29 Peter said, “Now, Lord, look on their threats, and grant to your servants that with all boldness they may speak your Word.” Peter had absolute faith that God wanted the Gospel preached and that God would give him boldness in the face of opposition. This boldness was evident, for Peter was arrested again for preaching and teaching. When he was questioned about not following the orders not to preach or teach in the name of Jesus, he told them, “We ought to obey God rather than men.” (Acts 5:29).

How does a pastor establish a close, personal prayer life with God so that he can understand God's will? The only way a prayer life can be established is to pray. A pastor must verbally or silently seek God in everything that he does. God desires that the pastor seek His council in prayer. Also, your prayer life is greatly enhanced as you read and meditate on His written Word. The written Word provides many, many evidences of men who have prayed to God that reveals that they had a deep and well-established relationship with God. They had fought the battles, struggled with temptations, overcame the weight of sins, endured the ridicules of men, and suffered the pain of silence.

These are the pastors who can read II Chronicles 7:14 and understand why God responded to His people with such a great promise. These pastors know that God desires to answer the prayers of those who know the probability of falling into sin and the dreadfulness of knowing that without God's help there is no escape. These are the pastors who are willing to do God's will. They will come to Him with a repentant heart of confession and praising God that He heard their petitions. In their relationship, which was built in faith and with a constant desire to know the will of God, they believe that whatever is needed to fulfill His will will be provided.

Practical Insight to Prayer for the Pastor

Every pastor should have a daily prayer life with God. The pastor's close relationship with God will transfer itself to all other areas of his life. When the pastor has an open, daily, meaningful, and spiritual talk with God, it keeps him accountable and refreshed.

Pastors need to devote much of their personal prayer time just to getting to know the mind of God. When a pastor seeks to know God's will, he will begin to understand God's will for his life. As the pastor learns about God, his new knowledge becomes a measuring block for his own life. The author suggests that the pastor should keep a prayer journal with one segment being his time with God.

Praying for his family should be the next item on the pastor's prayer list. He should pray for his relationship with his wife, his children and his extended family. The prayer should include their physical and spiritual health, biblical wisdom, protection from evil and temptations, understanding of world events, and their relationship with God. Pastors need to constantly pray that their families would be protected against the unreasonable expectation of their congregation, and that, at the same time, their family would exhibit God-honoring characteristics.

Lastly, the pastor needs to pray for his church. The pastor has answered God's call to take care of "His sheep." Therefore, he needs to pray that all members grow to a spiritual maturity that demonstrates the life of Christ in the individual and the body of Christ when together. The author believes that the pastor should ask for wisdom everyday that he might become a leader who can disciple others. His prayer should include a request that he would know how to delegate, how to fellowship, how to prioritize, how to administer, and how to confront.

Practical Insights to Prayer for the Church

The need for prayer (communicating with God) may not attract large church crowds on a prayer night. The author discovered that people are willing to pray in

smaller groups. The sum of small prayer groups is often greater than the larger one.⁸

The author has found that people feel comfortable praying with the same people at the same time each week and suggest these small prayer groups for others churches.

A Saturday morning prayer meeting will attract those who work late during the week. By having an early morning prayer time on Saturday, you not only attract your church members but also individuals who want to pray, but have no church home.

Sunday morning prayer time before the morning service has an appeal for some church members. Numerous church members want to pray for the pastor and the church services each week. This is an important issue and one close to their hearts and their desires to meet for prayer.

Another practical avenue for prayer is the prayer chain and e-mail prayer links. The prayer chain has appealed to many congregations for years. The e-mail prayer is a link to a new generation, and it allows anyone who could not attend the “live” prayer meetings to you join in “on-line” prayer.

The Sunday School class has proven to be most effective for prayer participation. The Sunday School class offers a safe place to share individual needs that can be reviewed each week. Each class has a ‘prayer person’ who records the weekly prayer request and reviews them the following week.⁹ The same concept of prayer can be incorporated into any church ministry that meets weekly.

⁸ Grace Church held the traditional Bible study and prayer each Wednesday night in the sanctuary. A well-attended prayer meeting would have between fifteen to twenty people. When Grace church incorporated prayer into the adult Sunday school, teen ministry, music ministry, children’s ministry, the number of participants more than doubled.

⁹ Grace Church discovered that when people share their prayer needs and they are recorded, there is an increase participation in the prayer time. This participation has been most effective in small groups such as established Sunday School classes.

The last prayer group is the pastoral staff. The pastoral staff understands how the church operates, who the members are, what their problems are, and what the present and future needs are. This group should have a scheduled weekly prayer time in addition to spontaneous times of prayer.

CHAPTER TEN

THE POWER OF PLANNING

Understanding Missions, Vision, and Planning

³And they said to me, “The survivors who are left from the captivity in the province are there in great distress and reproach. The wall of Jerusalem is also broken down, and its gates are burned with fire” (Nehemiah 1:3).

⁴ Then the king said to me, “What do you request?” So I prayed to the God of heaven. ⁵ And I said to the king, “If it pleases the king, and if your servant has found favor in your sight, I ask that you send me to Judah, to the city of my fathers’ tombs, that I may rebuild it” (Nehemiah 2:4,5).

¹¹ So I came to Jerusalem and was there three days. ¹² Then I arose in the night, I and a few men with me; I told no one what my God had put in my heart to do at Jerusalem; nor was there any animal with me, except the one on which I rode. ¹³ And I went out by night through the Valley Gate to the Serpent Well and the Refuse Gate, and viewed the walls of Jerusalem which were broken down and its gates which were burned with fire. ¹⁴ Then I went on to the Fountain Gate and to the King’s Pool, but there was no room for the animal under me to pass. ¹⁵ So I went up in the night by the valley, and viewed the wall; then I turned back and entered by the Valley Gate, and so returned. ¹⁶ And the officials did not know where I had gone or what I had done; I had not yet told the Jews, the priests, the nobles, the officials, or the others who did the work. ¹⁷ Then I said to them, “You see the distress that we are in, how Jerusalem lies waste, and its gates are burned with fire. Come and let us build the wall of Jerusalem, that we may no longer be a reproach.” ¹⁸ And I told them of the hand of my God which had been good upon me, and also of the king’s words that he had spoken to me. So they said, “Let us rise up and build.” Then they set their hands to this good work (Nehemiah 2:11-17).

Nehemiah was the king’s cupbearer who knew the commandment of God to rebuild the walls around Jerusalem. When he received the news that the walls remained down and were a reproach to God, Nehemiah’s heart reached out to Him. He was seven

hundred miles away and was only the king's cupbearer. He had no finances sufficient to repair the wall, no staff to rebuild the wall, and no material to rebuild the wall. He did have resources that are available to all pastors. He would plead his case to God in scripturally-based prayer.

Nehemiah understood the mission given by God was to rebuild the wall. He realized that without the help of God, he would have no opportunity to complete the task. Nehemiah used his prayer resource, and God responded by giving Nehemiah an audience with the king. Nehemiah had a vision in his head which included going to the king, asking for building material, and asking a safe passage to Jerusalem. The king granted all that Nehemiah needed and sent him to Jerusalem.

Now, Nehemiah had to develop a plan that would inspire the Israelites to organize and rebuild the walls. After surveying the ruins for several days, Nehemiah called the people for a meeting. He knew that they were aware that God had told them to rebuild the wall, but it was not their top priority. How Nehemiah convinced the Israelites to complete the wall was part mission understanding, part vision casting, and part strategic planning. The triad of mission, vision casting, and strategic planning are all concepts that a pastor must integrate into his church.

Gray McIntosh writes that “churches tend to reach their peak in health around their twentieth year, after which many plateau and begin to decline. The majority of churches (70 per cent) do not reach age one hundred.”¹ Malphurs plots the rise and the fall of the average church by using S-shaped curve called the Signoid Curve. “The S-

¹ Aubrey Malphurs, 39.

shaped curve is essentially the life-cycle pattern of the church.”² The solution for preventing the church from dying is to introduce a clear mission statement, an exciting vision presentation, and a well-developed strategic plan every ten years or less.

What is a mission statement? A mission statement tells everyone why you exist. It tells your congregation what you are seeking to accomplish. One mission statement that fits all Christian churches would be Matthew 28:18-20:

¹⁸ And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, “All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. ¹⁹ Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.” Amen.

The Great Commission has not changed since it was spoken by Jesus Christ. Likewise, a mission statement should not change from year to year. It tells new and existing members why you exist and what you are seeking to accomplish. It tells the congregation this is what we are supposed to be doing.

What is your vision statement? “The vision statement paints a picture of what you will look like.”³ A vision statement paints the best possible scenario of reaching people with the gospel of Christ. The vision statement for The Great Commission is a pictorial statement that visualizes every church member leading and bringing new converts to church. It shows growth in the worship hour, in Sunday School, in discipleship groups, and corporate maturity. The vision statement gives a picture of what the church will look like when we are doing what is written in the mission statement.

² Aubrey Malphurs, 45.

³ Aubrey Malphurs, 53.

What is strategic planning? Malphurs defines strategic planning as “the process that determines how your ministry will accomplish its mission.”⁴ Nehemiah understood that God wanted the wall built around Jerusalem and the city restored. Nehemiah went to Jerusalem and spent several days working on a plan to present to the people. To be successful in motivating the Israelites, Nehemiah had to do more than simply present a mission statement, he had to share a vision. What would it be like when the wall is built? How would it help protect each family, and how would it remove the reproach from the city? This was the vision and it had to be followed with a well-planned building strategy. Nehemiah’s strategy was to have everyone build the wall nearest to their home. His strategic plan changed to meet the challenges, but the vision and the mission remained the same. This plan made the vision everyone’s.

Walking through the Steps

The pastor and his staff should seek God in prayer to confirm the mission statement, vision presentation, and planning. The senior pastor should rely on the Holy Spirit to confirm that his mission statement agrees with the Scriptures and the life work of Jesus. He should share this mission statement with his staff and council members, for there is wisdom in the counsel of many. For instance, the council might restructure the mission’s statement for clarity.

After the mission statement has been defined, the next step is to communicate it to the congregation. This communication tells the congregation what the mission statement looks like when it is fully implemented. It paints a positive picture that captivates everyone’s mind and heart.

⁴ Aubrey Malphurs, 156.

The first place of communication is the pulpit on Sunday morning. The congregation must know that the senior pastor and staff are 100 percent in agreement with the mission statement. The best person to communicate this is the senior pastor. The vision statement must be more than verbal. The vision statement must paint a mental picture that places the congregation into it. The members must see how they will participate in fulfilling the church's mission statement.

Mission and vision statements need to be posted in areas where people meet. Post them in your main foyer and in each classroom. Put your mission statement on your letterhead and in your bulletin. You want maximum exposure so they both become part of everyone's goals and expectations.

A mission statement for purpose and a vision statement for expression of the purpose will motivate your congregation for service and build hope for the future. To activate both, you will need a well-planned strategy. How you will fulfill the mission statement is the question the strategic plan answers.

Nehemiah's plan was to assign each family to rebuild the wall closest to their home. His building strategy implied that the wall constructed nearest to the builder's home had the greatest probability of completion. When Jesus gave The Great Commission, He said to start in Jerusalem. It was the place of the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus. It was the center of religious inquiry, and the place where all the disciples were to wait for the Holy Spirit power. It was closest to their hearts.

The plan for fulfilling The Great Commission that would bring hope to your congregation is to start in your home. The strategic plan would tell people to start with those you are most concerned about reaching and who are most accessible to you. The

plan would teach everyone how to share the gospel and then send them to their families. After reaching families, it would concentrate on those in the congregations, and then move to extend family and friend opportunities. This part of the strategic plan would be called ‘Evangelism.’

The second part of the plan would show your congregation how new converts would be disciplined. Jesus said that the disciples must reach and teach people; therefore, a good strategic plan for The Great Commission would have a teaching plan. The teaching part would be fulfilled by starting new member classes which teach the fundamentals of the faith, and how to develop spiritual maturity habits such as Bible reading, Bible study, Scripture memory, and prayer. This part of the strategic plan would be called ‘Discipleship.’

The third part of the plan would show your congregation how new converts would be assimilated into the congregation. Assimilation is important for the new convert, for without it there will be no bonding, no common unions, and no close relationships. Jim Petersen wrote, “We are told to be devoted to one another, to serve one another, to bear with one another in love, to share with those in need, to forgive each other, to look not only after one’s interest but also the interest of others and more.”⁵ How can we do this if there is no real coming together as a family? This is called ‘Fellowship.’

Fellowship provides a place where people can openly communicate their true feeling in grace, and knows that others in the group understand, and encourage this level of sharing. When an individual feels ‘safe’ within a fellowship, a true family member

⁵ Jim Petersen, *Lifestyle Discipleship: The Challenges of Following Jesus in Today’s World* (Colorado Springs: NavPress Publishing Group, 1993), 153.

has been established who knows that the Christian life is a transformation, which has its temptations and trials, which are not unique to one person, but are common to all.

A Strategic Plan for Growth

The small church pastor who knows he has limited space, limited conversion possibilities, and limited financial recourses must still plan for growth. The growth plan must have two distinct parts that work in unison. The first part would be spiritual growth, and the second part would be numerical growth.

Ecclesiastes 3:1 reads, “To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven.” As a small church pastor, you are ministering to reach as many people as possible with the gospel and to training them to according to its teachings. This is your purpose and this is your season; therefore, thank God for what He has given you and evaluate what must be done in your church to accomplish this task.

If your church has 75, eighty-five, or 85 and 105 adult members, the following strategic plan will apply to all for increased spiritual growth. What is the strategic plan for spiritual maturity? Remember that spiritual growth is not measured numerically, but will be seen in persons who are transformed by teaching and practicing the truth. First, restate your mission plan as The Great Commission, then present a vision that triggers the power of imagination and promotes congregational participation.

Second, your vision statement determine what, who, where, how, and when it will be accomplished. For example, you may have a vision that everyone in your congregation will memorize The Great Commission. Memorizing Matthew 28:18-20 answers the “what” question. Everyone in the congregation answers the ‘who’ question.

The teaching of various methods of memorization answers the ‘how’ question. By establishing a memorization time table, such as within two weeks, answers the ‘when’ question. By suggesting that memorization can be done in any place and at anytime, this will answer the ‘where’ question.

Lastly, a good strategic plan has accountability built into it. By giving each person an accountability partner, the probability of success is increased. When the author has asked small group classes to memorize scriptures without assigning accountability partners, only a few people completed the task. When the same groups of people were asked to memorize scriptures with a partner, everyone was able to complete the task.

What strategic plan might work for the small church pastor to increase his numerical growth? Jesus told us to go fishing for men. In John 21, there is a story about how some of the disciples had fished all night, but caught nothing. Jesus asked if they had any meat to eat and they said, “No.” “And Jesus said unto them, ‘Cast the net on the right side of the ship, and you shall find’” (John 21:6). Even in the smallest of towns, even after you have exhausted all your energy, there still might be someone that Jesus wants you to reach, and He will show you where they are.⁶

The first part of a strategic plan for numerical growth is to believe that God wants you to reach people and has given you the tools to accomplish this task. Your objective is to develop a plan that uses all the spiritual gifts and physical tools that God has given you. Keeping with your mission statement as The Great Commission, now you must paint a picture which portrays increased crowds in each ministry. The picture would include the addition of new workers for each ministry, who enjoy disciplining new

⁶ The author used John 21:6 to reinforce the idea that God has inexhaustible knowledge. When pastors have exhausted their prospect list then they should ask God and follow accordingly, even if they have traveled that road before and it led nowhere.

church members. From the vision statement you must plan the ‘what,’ ‘who,’ ‘where,’ ‘how,’ and ‘when.’

The mission statement answers the ‘what’ question. The ‘who’ would include the whole congregation being part of evangelistic team who will reach the community. If your target area is youth, then your youth leaders and teens are the primary ‘who’. The ‘where’ is the location⁷ that you plan to target. The ‘how’ is the method such as door to door presentations, small group home evangelism, newspaper evangelism, special services for outreach, or a community picnic. The list is endless. The ‘when’ is answered by establishing a church calendar of events and outreaches designated for evangelism.

Proverbs 29:18 reads, “Where there is no revelation, the people cast off restraints; But happy is he who keeps the law.” This Proverb has a simple two-fold message. The first message is that when God’s Word is not clearly presented to people, they fall back to their old sinful ways. The second message is that the people who know and keep God’s Word are happy.

When a pastor seeks to share God’s Word and applies it to a mission statement, vision casting, and a strategic plan, he is implementing Proverbs 29:18. With this implementation, the spiritual and numerical blessing that God has for his congregation will unfold for all according to His will.

⁷ Evangelistic locations are places where you would find your targeted individuals. Also, ‘where’ locations would include knowing what publications would reach your target.

PART III. A CASE STUDY

CHAPTER ELEVEN

A CASE STUDY OF GRACE CHURCH

History from 1959 to 1994

Grace Church began its worship services in the home of Reverend Moses Sabina on April 30, 1959. Later, it moved the Sunday morning services to the Smithtown Theatre on Main Street, with evening services and prayer meetings in various individual homes. The well-known location of the movie theater with its comfortable seating, airy atmosphere, and absence of a denominational sign was a drawing card for the early church. Evangelism was the motivating force that generated excitement leading to the formation of Grace Church.

Within six months, the church purchased a large mansion at 450 Edgewood Avenue, Smithtown, New York. The mansion was an attention-getter as many people came to the church to see the interior of the mansion. The techniques used for reaching and motivating church members were still evangelism, word of mouth, and the Sunday School department. The church incorporated itself as Smithtown Baptist Church, and the name would remain for the next 27 years.

The organizational structure grew as the church increased membership. Deacons and trustees were elected and a church council established. Sunday School was the largest department with age group classes for everyone. The author was told that finding capable men and women to minister was not a problem in the early years.

During the mid-60s, the evangelism excitement was still evident, and the church outgrew its temporary sanctuary in the mansion. The building project was a revitalization stimulus for the older and the newer members plus the construction brought attention to the church grounds. Adding to the draw for new members was the addition of air-conditioning to the new sanctuary. The Sunday School department was rapidly increasing with the addition of an active youth ministry. The worship service attendance continued to increase.

In the mid-70s, it was evident that evangelism was still strong, and word of month was still promoted as the way to spread the Gospel. Outreach ministries included boys' and girls' clubs, women's missionary circle, men's and women's retreats, youth weekend ministries, and an adult recreational program with other churches. There were many ways to become involved for everyone. It was during this time that the first generation of children were reaching early adulthood and starting families which added to the comfortable atmosphere of a small church.

In the late-70s, the plans for a new sanctuary were approved. The new sanctuary would be fully equipped with the latest sound equipment, microphones, a media room, padded pews, stage lighting, modesty railing, baptismal tank, and adjustable ceiling lighting. Once again, the new facility was a revitalization catalyst for the older and the newer members. The building construction was completed in the early 80s.

In the early 80s, the church was over 21 years old. It had established rigid biblical doctrines and ministry methods were fixed. The new building construction's enthusiasm was only camouflage for deepening spiritual and personal problems left unaddressed for years. A church split occurred.

During the mid-80s and the early 90s, change was disastrous. A new pastor was called who had progressive ideas to reach the next generation, but the traditional church leadership had other thoughts. At first, the innovative concepts were readily accepted, especially the updating of the sanctuary and the foyer with newer color and a changed pulpit platform appearance. Unfortunately, it seemed that Smithtown Baptist Church lost members with each new change. From 1989 to 1993, Grace Church was in a survival mode.

It was difficult for the older members to understand all the new changes that represented progress especially as the church started to decline. The pastor changed the church's name from Smithtown Baptist Church to Grace Church to reach the community.¹ He dropped the Sunday Night service. He changed deacons to elders and then elders back to deacons. He changed the music style and dropped Sunday School. The Pastor had a vision to reach the next generation, but the church was not ready for the changes. He lost communication with his leadership, finances dropped, and attendance sank to fewer than 60 people.

¹ Smithtown's largest religious faith is Catholic. The pastor changed the name from Smithtown Baptist to Grace Church to remove any barrier that the word 'Baptist' might have in reaching more people. Today, it is seldom that visitors think Grace is a Catholic Church. Grace Church's doctrines are still Baptist today.

History from 1994 to 2007

In the mid-90s, a new pastor with a young family with five years of experience, who was raised on Long Island, was called to pastor Grace Church. Grace only had sufficient funds to pay a small salary and no housing allowance was available. The pastor moved his family into the living quarters of the old mansion and immediately made it livable. He added new windows, a new kitchen, and new washroom, new carpeting and repainted each room. This was the beginning of revitalization of Grace Church. The revitalization did not begin with a spiritual project, but with a common project from which all would benefit. It started with paving the parking lot.

Today, Grace Church has over 110 member families, two worship services, two Sunday School hours, two praise bands, active women's and men's ministries, children and youth ministries, two full-time pastors, three part-time staff members, a discipleship ministry, family and marriage ministries, and many more opportunities to reach and disciple the people of the Smithtown area. What happened in the last twelve years that changed a small church of under sixty people to over 110 member-families? What spiritual leadership and organizational changes were introduced? How did the leadership grow and what was the role of prayer and communication? What were the failures that led to success?² What were the tools of transformation and how did the power of the Holy Spirit direct the pastor and the congregation?

These questions are answered in the yearly summary of Grace Church in these areas. These summaries will show the small church pastor how the Holy Spirit directed Grace Church. It will reveal how The Great Commission command statement stabilized

² This author believes that you can learn from your failures. Learning from our failure helps you avoid repeating them and provides a greater opportunity for success.

the church's direction and prayer ministries. The summary will also show the progress toward becoming organized according to Ephesians 4:11-16, the power of prayer, and leadership participation. The summary will show that if you become faithful with what you have, God will honor your labors with the words, "Well done, my good and faithful servant."

Great Commission History

From 1994 to 1996, there was a heavy emphasis on building a healthy church body that could internally uplift the struggling membership. Reaching out to older members who had left the church was important, but not as important as keeping those who had been the partial cause of problems from returning. It was a time of spiritual healing and seeking a new direction. Grace Church had tried small home studies, Evangelism Explosion and several other growth methods until it narrowed its focus to the Purpose Driven church concepts.

The new pastor spent a week at Saddleback absorbing the teachings of Rick Warren and his staff. The pastor rewrote Saddleback's four basic training guides (101, 201, 301, 401) to fit Grace Church but only 101, the new member's class, was a match for the church. The Purpose Driven model was stated as Grace's direction for the next eight years but it never was assimilated into the church mindset.

Pastor Rick Warren wrote, "Our job as church leaders, like experienced surfers, is to recognize a wave of God's Spirit and ride it. It is not our responsibility to make waves, but to recognize how God is working in the world and join Him in the endeavor."³

³ Rick Warren, *The Purpose Driven Church: Growth Without Compromising Your Message & Mission* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1995), 14

After eight years of not catching this ‘wave,’ it became obvious that Warren’s vision and the vision of Grace Church were different, yet both would accomplish the same goals.

In 2005, Grace Church narrowed its primary mission statement to Matthew 28:18-20.

And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. 19 Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age. Amen.

Rather than our previous five purposes,⁴ the new mission statement was narrowed to three. It was agreed that these three would never change. Our mission would be to reach people, to baptize them, and to teach them to be disciples of Christ.

In 2006, The Great Commission was reintroduced to the church council and the church members as our new mission statement. The Great Commission became our standard for service and ministry. It provided the reason for all of our ministries and made our congregation aware of new opportunities to reach and to teach the gospel.

During the later part of 2006, it was determined that Grace Church understood its mission, but was lacking a new strategic plan to fulfill The Great Commission. It was missing a working plan to reach the lost and a practical plan to disciple them. Were people being saved? Yes, almost every week one to three people raised their hand for salvation but this was not happening as a result of our outreach ministry or evangelistic training.⁵ Grace Church needed a Great Commission plan. The plan would unfold with

⁴ Grace Church adopted Rick Warren’s five purposes from his book, *The Purpose Driven Church: Growth Without Compromising Your Message & Mission* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1995), 103-106. He states the five purposes as worship, ministry, evangelism, baptism, and discipleship.

⁵ There was no formal evangelism class or outreach ministry. There was no structured discipleship class stressing evangelism. Members invited friends who heard the gospel during the service.

the help of the Holy Spirit and encompass Grace's leadership, biblical organization, communication, prayer life, and personal faithfulness.

The Leadership History

From 1994 to 1998, Grace Church's leadership team was transitioning from a pastoral leadership style which rapidly changed programs without a plan, to one which was more people-centered than program-oriented. During this time, the leadership team consisted of many seasoned leaders who were ready for some stabilization and a much clearer mission direction. Also, the board had a large number of members who had no direct involvement with any church ministry. They were an advisory board without the ministry experience necessary to understand the daily and weekly operations of a church.

The pastor and four people handled the organizational selection process for the church council of deacons and trustees. This group would pick the number of men equal to Grace's constitutional requirement each year. At the annual business meeting, these men would be elected to the board by a simple majority. This system was filling the required constitutional positions with some men who were not spiritually mature enough for the position. According to Grace Church's current senior pastor, these men were never a problem, but they were not much help in ministering in the church body.

In 1998, the constitution was changed by removing the minimum deacon and trustee requirements. In 2000, the pastoral staff started discussing new requirements for deacons and trustees, and by 2002, agreed that in the future, men elected to the church council must be actively involved in a vital church ministry. Men who are functioning as

leaders in a ministry understand about the church's direction and how each ministry relates to the other.

As the church attendance started to increase, so did the demands on the pastoral staff. It was no longer possible for the pastoral staff to have "hands-on" involvement with every ministry, yet it was difficult to cut the apron strings. If the leadership team were to mature, the pastoral staff would have to disciple them to go about the work of the ministry and delegate authority to do so. It would not be an easy process.

By 2003, the church council was ready to assume more control in ministry leadership. When church projects were assigned to board members, they were given the authority to work within financial parameters and within an established period of time. They were given the authority and responsibility for the starting and finishing of a given project. This delegation of authority strengthened the leadership team.

In 2005, the leadership team was responsible for submitting their annual budget and ministry calendar. The pastoral staff explained that ministry leaders knew best what their financial needs would be during the year. By being responsible for ministry scheduling, they would enable the church to avoid ministry-scheduling conflicts. Conflicts were first discussed with the ministry heads. Everyone agreed that church-wide functions had the first priority in scheduling.

In 2006, monthly council meetings were reestablished on the first Wednesday of each month. This allowed the council members to schedule other meetings around council dates, and it brought more cohesiveness to the men. This bonding manifested itself similar to a small cell group, where members felt safe to share their agreements and disagreements with full acceptance.

All pastors have the responsibility to disciple a leadership team that functions to assist in the ministry work. When the leadership team understands The Great Commission, captures the vision, and embraces the strategic plan, the pastor has established a team that will labor with him. This level of teamwork enables the pastor to disciple the church membership to organize according to Ephesians 4:11-16.

Biblical Organization History

In 1994 there was no adult Sunday School, no men's or ladies' fellowship, no youth group, no greeters, no hospitality groups, no children's ministry, no Bible study groups and no planned organizational structure. There was no formal infrastructure for ministries. The church was meeting Sunday morning at 10:30 A.M. for one worship service and on Wednesday night at 7:00 P.M. for the mid-week prayer time. There was one Sunday morning Bible class for all children from first grade to sixth with teachers rotating every week.

As the church attendance increased, the first organizational changes began in the children's Sunday School. Every time the attendance increased, new grade-based classes began and by 1998, there was a toddler's class, kindergarten class, first grade class, second and third, and a fourth to sixth grade class. Teachers were still rotating every week on a six-week cycle. These changes happened by natural growth rather than according to the church planning strategy founded on the mission statement. There were no teen or adult classes.

From 1999 to 2003, attendance continued to increase and the need for organizational changes became a question for the church council. Questions about why

do we exist, and what our goals were forced, discussions about reorganization to accomplish the task. The church was functioning between the old Purpose-Driven model and the emerging Great Commission model. It began to seriously discuss the organizational instructions given in Ephesians 4:11-16 as a new leadership model. The pastoral and leadership staff needed to teach others how to do the work of the ministry.

In 1999, Grace Church started a children's program on Wednesday night that became an immediate success. The church succeeded in training adults to teach and train children in God's work. In 2000, it began an organized youth group with a structured curriculum that forced teachers and students to become involved in a systematic discipleship ministry. In 2002, Grace started an informal Sunday morning adult bible study that was the beginning step to restarting a new church-wide Sunday school time. A 9:30 to 10:30 Sunday School was started. It would take three more years before teachers would commit to teaching for one full quarter.

By 2004, church attendance was again increasing and the sanctuary was about 75 percent full each week. The pastoral staff believed it was time to restructure the morning worship time by adding a second service. The second service would require doubling the volunteer base, doubling the children, teen, and adult ministry leadership. The addition of the second service made the church council and ministry leadership more aware of the importance of good organizational structure and timely leadership.

Within nine months of having two services, the general opinion was that members did not know everyone. The close family atmosphere was being lost, and this was having an adverse affect on some older church members. This necessitated another organizational change within our adult classes.

The Southern Baptist Convention has been using a helpful concept for centuries (1845-2007). It has been organizing adult Sunday classes into small cell groups in order to build a family-style atmosphere. Grace Church started with two adult classes to try this concept. Each class had a teacher, a prayer leader, and a social director. At the end of six months, these classes brought back the closeness that these members had lost when the two worship service were introduced.

By 2005, the pastoral staff and church leadership understood that according to God's Word, Grace Church must organize with the purpose of training members to minister to others. This biblical mandate had been used when each new ministry was started. To aid in the organization, a paper work trail of organizational charts, job descriptions, ministry goals, and ministry guidelines was established.

Several organizational changes were made in 2006. First, it was necessary to increase the time between services from fifteen minutes to thirty minutes. The thirty minutes allowed the members and visitors from both services more time to fellowship. Also, it gave the altar call ministry more time after the first service to counsel people.

Second, there was a need for a Sunday morning ministry coordinator. The coordinator would oversee the ushers, the greeters, the hospitality committee, media room and other emergencies. The coordinator was the 'go to' person on Sunday mornings and relieved the administrative squeeze from the pastors.

Third, the Wednesday night service was moved to Friday with a goal of reaching more families. This organizational move tightened Grace Church's ministry flexibility as previously many non-scheduled events for adults were on Friday nights.

In 2007, Grace Church entered a new stage of organizational development. It was time to ask the present leadership to find individuals who they could train as their disciples. Each ministry leader was asked to pray and find individuals who could meet the spiritual and church requirements for ministry. Based on past progress, it was decided that it would take two years for this to produce biblical results.

How did Grace Church make all these changes? Did it take a large staff to plan and follow each organizational change? No! Grace Church has two pastors who functioned as a team. The senior pastor presented the vision and the associate pastor developed the vision. They jointly worked on a strategy and when the senior pastor approved, the associate pastor implemented it with council leadership. A small church can be well-organized with the power of the Holy Spirit and called laborers with a willingness to follow The Great Commission.

The History of Transformation

God has blessed Grace Church with sustained periods of individual and corporate spiritual transformations. These transformations had their greatest and longest-lasting impact when they originated from Grace Church rather than Grace Church borrowing them from another church.

In 1994, Grace Church was at its lowest point spiritually, financially, numerically, and even emotionally. It had come to the end of a pastoral leadership style that was unstable, and began with hopes that a new pastor would make a spiritual difference. It would not be the new pastor, but the Holy Spirit working in a new pastor

that would make the difference. If God were not willing to make the change, the church would continue to sink deeper and deeper into spiritual disharmony.

The Sunday morning worship hour was the adult service that allowed individuals to read and hear God's Word. The only opportunity the new pastor had to preach the transforming power of God's Word was at that one service. Therefore, he devoted over twenty preparation hours each week for this service. From 1994 to 2002, the senior pastor preached God's Word and week after week hearts were changed and salvation decisions were made.

Transformation could be measured according the individual's willingness to apply Romans 12:1, 2 to their life. It reads:

I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. 2 And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.

Grace Church has seen many individuals over the last twelve years change their life just by giving more attention to Romans 12:1,2. One church member mentioned that his transformation was so gradual that for the first time he could acknowledge it had happened. Another member said that the Word of God had transformed what he wears and watches on television.

Grace Church believes in the power of God's Word to change a person's life. Therefore, it constantly finds ways to involve more and more people into Bible studies, church services, children and teen programs, family outreaches and Scripture reading. Each ministry may only have eight to fifteen members, but collectively the sum is over two hundred members.

Collective transformation is most evident in the summer months. During this season, Grace's ministry philosophy changes to what is called the "School Model." The School Model accepts the fact that during the summer, students do not study, therefore, Grace changed its ministry emphasis from teaching to fellowship. Fellowship is part of Grace's strategic plan to fulfill The Great Commission

Summer is a time of increase in family fellowship. This allows individual groups to be transformed into one family fellowship. Each Friday, there is a family-themed dinner, games and sports, praise time, a special ministry speaker, and a prayer time.

This collective transformation allows for several nights that no services are scheduled to allow for family vacations, trips over the Fourth of July week, and to ease the hustle and bustle of Vacation Bible School. Summer is our time to have family camping trips, weeklong children's daytime ministries, and family camping as planned fellowship time. Interwoven in the transition is the Word of God as it is presented in a different style.

As part of the leadership team, it was vital to follow what Jesus wrote in Matthew 7:24-27 concerning becoming a doer of His Word not just a hearer.

Therefore whoever hears these sayings of Mine, and does them, I will liken him to a wise man who built his house on the rock: 25 and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it did not fall, for it was founded on the rock. 26 "But everyone who hears these sayings of Mine, and does not do them, will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand: 27 and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it fell. And great was its fall.

A clear sign of transformation is the increased activities of church members, especially when The Great Commission is being accomplished. To make a disciple a

doer of The Great Commission, they must see the examples of others. At Grace, ministry leaders are constantly looking for individuals who are willing to become helpers.

Helpers become part of any ministry without making a commitment to becoming a leader in that ministry. For several months or even a full year, they follow the direction of the leaders. Gradually, they are given more responsibilities as the leader senses a spiritual transformation. Usually, helpers know within several months if they are a fit for the ministry. If they feel their spiritual gifts and talents do not match a particular ministry, Grace Church knows that they are more likely to try another one.

The transforming power of the Holy Spirit is most evident in the skeptic who comes on Sunday morning. Many have left after the worship service, complaining that the senior pastor was talking about them. After hearing God's Word for several weeks, and accepting Jesus Christ as their Savior, they usually seek membership and baptism. During our baptism service, everyone gives a testimony and this is when the congregation hears about the transforming power of God's Word.

Grace Church encourages all new members to continue their transformation by joining the new member's class. (It starts one week after baptism). This is a six-week class that uses the Book of James to teach Bible reading, study, meditation, Scripture memory, prayer, and fellowship. This is the beginning of a life-long journey for spiritual transformation that requires active participation from inception to completion.

The History of Prayer

From 1994 to 2006, constant daily prayer has been offered by the Pastors and especially by the long-term membership. From 1994 to 2005, Grace Church had the

typical Wednesday night Bible study and prayer time. It was consistently one of the least-attended meetings in the church.

In 1999, a children's ministry started on Wednesday nights and many members became children leaders, thus reducing the already small attendance at the prayer meeting. In 2001, a new youth ministry which required more laborers took a few more from the prayer time. As each new ministry started, it was obvious that the Wednesday night Bible study and prayer group was the labor pool. This was gladly accepted, but something was needed to increase the attendance and to teach the vital importance of prayer.

The church leadership tried changing the prayer time. For years, the prayer time was from 7 to 7:30 PM followed by the Bible time. Grace reversed the order, but the results were the same. Next, Grace gave the leadership of the Wednesday night prayer time to another individual, but the results were still similar. The shrinking prayer meeting continued until 2006.

In 2006, the church moved the Wednesday night service to Friday night, to reach more families by means of the teen and children ministries. This was a huge success, but it was the end of the organized church-wide prayer meeting, but the change revealed something that had been overlooked.

The time of prayer had moved from one church-wide meeting to many, many small prayer groups. These prayer groups had prayer that was more specific to the ministry needs than the church-wide meetings. Also, those who prayed in these groups knew the real ministry needs and why they must be met.

Now, Grace has prayer groups that meet Thursday and Friday that pray for choir needs. There is a one group that prays on Saturday morning from 8 to 9:30 am for several area churches. A small group prays for the Sunday morning service at 8:50 am each Sunday. There is an active prayer chain that communicates by e-mail and telephone. Lastly, each week, there is a general prayer sheet available for all members. It is also e-mailed.

One other area of prayer that is having an impact is the Sunday School and Bible study prayer times. Grace has asked each Bible class to have a prayer person who records the prayer request each week, e-mail them, and ask for a follow-up each week.

Grace has not forgotten about the church-wide prayer time but it has found that more people are praying in small groups on a more personal level than before. Our method has changed and it will change again, but our purpose of communicating with God will never fade away.

A small church pastor can pray just as intensely and with the same power as the congregation of 10,000 members can. God has the ability to hear everyone at once at all times but in order for God to hear, pastors must continue to pray and pray with their people.

The Power of Communication

Grace Church is not a Pentecostal church. It believes in the spiritual gifts that are necessary to operate God's church today. It strongly believes that the Holy Spirit will communicate with this generation in the exact way that Jesus said He would. This communication would convict, direct, reprove, and guide Grace Church's leadership and

members to fulfill The Great Commission. How is this level of communication achieved? What does it look like in Grace Church?

This level of communication manifests itself in the absolute belief that God wants all individuals to come to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ and to be disciplined to train others. God says that in His Word and the pastors and the teaching staff communicate it each week as they prepare for each Sunday. Preaching messages and teaching Bible studies are not open for private interpretation but must be presented in accordance with God's Word in order for transformations to occur. As the Pastors are preaching and the teachers are teaching, it is the Holy Spirit who gives the Word of God the penetrating power needed to change a heart.

Grace Church has been blessed by hearing God speak and by responding to Him at the right times. It was evident that God directed the organization of His church in each of the three building programs undertaken by Grace. Unfortunately, the need to build a physical facility in the late 70s was greater than hearing the Holy Spirit's call to minister to people. God was speaking to Grace to feed the sheep rather than construct another barn.

The barn was built and it was filled, but the sheep were not being protected from the forces of evil. God wanted a spiritual change, but the church leadership did not recognize that He was talking to them. They chose to follow a man rather than to follow what God really wanted, and it cost them almost one full generation. When they reached the bottom, they almost made the same mistake, but God intervened within the heart of several church leaders, and that was the beginning of a new spiritual growth cycle at Grace Church.

Today, the communication power of the Holy Spirit is most evident in the leadership team as they are now much wiser and more patient. They are willing to trust God's Word that there is wisdom in the counsel of many while still expecting leadership from the pastoral team. There have been many times when the council waited for clear leadership from God before making a decision. In times when there was silence, tension, or no clear word of knowledge about a council topic, it was tabled. It was tabled with an understanding that God would tell them more about the topic before they could proceed.

From 2003 to 2006, it had been an accepted fact that Grace Church may not always get it right the first time. By the power of the Holy Spirit, it has been humbling to know that Grace is not perfect though change for the betterment is natural. Grace depends on the Holy Spirit to keep it from making needless errors, and to show mercy when we do.

CHAPTER TWELVE

SUMMARY

God told the church of Philadelphia, “I know your works. See, I have set before you an open door, and no one can shut it; for you have a little strength, have kept My Word, and have not denied My name” (Revelation 3:8). This first century church was holding fast God’s Word. Though it had little strength, yet it was powerful in reaching its community.

It is not biblically correct to assume that God’s blessing rests on any church regardless of whether it is large or small. Gods’ blessing rests on the church that keeps His Word. The Great Commission is the commandment that God expects all churches to fulfill.

God has provided all pastors with the Holy Spirit power, His written Word, organizational instructions, two-way communications with Him, leadership instructions, and a promise never to leave nor forsake them.

Pastors who remain faithful to God will receive His blessings based on what they did with what God has given them. Regardless of their church size, God expects all pastors to reproduce themselves with faithful men who can teach and preach the Word without compromise.

When the Word is faithfully preached and taught, a transformation happens in an individual's life that is absorbed by the church, the family, and the community. These transformed individuals become the prayer-warriors who will lead the next generation to Jesus Christ.

All pastors should measure their faithfulness to God based on their obedience to His Word. Pastors have been called to fulfill the Great Commission and to build God's church according to His Word. The pastor of God's church has been called to make disciples for today and for the next generation.

It is possible to have a spiritually mature church without having numerical growth each year. It is impossible to have a healthy church with numerical growth absent of fulfilling The Great Commission.

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