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Review: Effective Church Growth

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is far more significant and influential than one might suppose from this book alone. So are talk radio and grocery store magazines. Nevertheless, within the limits he set for himself, Clapp has spoken wisely and with wit and passion.

Pastors and students should be the primary readers, but lay leaders would benefit as well. The volume is easy to read and relevant. I am afraid I found it a bit unorganized, but interesting! Start anywhere. The book's lack of comprehensive structure is in that sense a benefit.

L. Russ Bush

Effective Church Growth Strategies, by Gene Getz and Joe Wall. Nashville: Word Publishing, 2000. Pp. 140.

Gene Getz served Dallas Theological Seminary for over twenty years, during which time he started several churches. He presently pastors Fellowship Baptist Church in Plano, Texas, which he planted in 1982. Getz wrote chapters 2 through 7. Joe Wall, likewise, combines academic experience with church planting and pastoral expertise. Wall founded Houston Bible Institute and was president of Western Bible College, Denver. Church multiplication receives Wall's focus in chapter 9, which he wrote along with chapters 1 and 8.

Effective Church Growth Strategies defies categorization. The dust jacket claims that the text "brings about a clearer understanding of the difference between absolutes—those things that should never change—and non-absolutes—things that may change in order to be both biblical and contemporary." The text does a solid job of addressing this issue—germane to both church planting and church growth. However, when the reader begins to understand the text as a church growth work, it shifts to a planting motif, and vice versa.

Wall begins the collaborative effort by "Thinking Biblically about Church Growth." His chapter confronts attitudes that are prevalent in church circles today. One statement Wall makes might come as a surprise to some pastors. Wall states, "Most church members are not interested in making their pastor famous or in assuring that their pastor is respected by his peers. They are more concerned that their church is ministering to their children and that their church experiences are enjoyable" (p. 2). Ministers can succumb to a myopic view of ministry where they are the center of the efforts and recognition, but Wall reminds us that the church was not founded for the pastor's career advancement. Wall's parachurch appraisal should be read by anyone considering that path of ministry. His affirming the importance of local church affiliation is a position shared by Southern Baptists. Wall states, "[Parachurch workers] seem to believe that the local church is a nice option for some involvement, but that

the real work is done through parachurch organizations" (p. 3). Wall strongly disagrees. Church growth does not naturally occur simultaneously with conversion. Additions to the universal body of Christ is not the equivalent to church growth. Parachurch success often fails to transfer to local church growth. This reviewer is aware of a parachurch campus minister in New England who opposes the planting of an evangelical church in his town. He does not see the need although there is only one evangelical church in the area to serve 132,000 people.

Wall's final contribution to the philosophical and theological discussion in the church growth/planting arena is his definition of "church." In the day of cell-groups, affinity based ministries, home churches, and parachurch activities, one must have parameters for identifying a church. Wall defines the church as "a group of professing believers who have publicly identified themselves by baptism as disciples of Christ and who intend to carry out the functions of a local church." He then mentions four functions of a church: to meet regularly, to be organized under spiritual leadership, to carry out the basic assembly functions of worship, prayer, teaching, fellowship, caring for the needy and evangelism, to administer baptism and the Lord's Supper (p. 17). One area lacking in Wall's theology of the local church is church discipline. Covenant community accountability is a crucial aspect of the local church. It is sorely lacking in many churches today, and it is unfortunately overlooked in this text.

Getz opens his chapters with an examination of the biblical, historical, and cultural principles for church planting and growth. He states, "A correctly worded biblical principle . . . can be applied anywhere in the world, no matter what the societal conditions" (p. 24) Getz rightly points out that functions (i.e., teaching) are mentioned in Scriptures, but that the methods, or forms, are left incomplete (p. 25). Too many church planters are enamoured with forms, whether they are called "Purpose Driven," "Gen-X," "house churches," or "Traditional." Getz aptly points out the transitory nature of forms and the timelessness of principles. Striving to be "cutting edge" can often end up with church leaders chasing one fad after another. It can also narrow the target group to a fragment of the population rendering church growth improbable.

In chapter 3 Getz uses faith, hope, and love as the means to evaluate church growth. These criteria reoccur throughout Paul's epistles. Getz ends this section by stating, "As seen in Paul's letters to the Thessalonians, Colossians, Ephesians, and Corinthians, God measures the spiritual maturity of the local church by the degree of faith, hope, and love expressed and reflected by its members" (p. 42). Church discipline is absent from Getz's discussion of church life in chapter 3. He consolidates Elmer Towns' six worship styles into three typical church structures. He then gives a concise treatment of the structures with the strengths and weaknesses of each. Getz contends that God's plan for the local church includes a balance of the three structures, thereby producing maturity.

As a Southern Baptist, I find myself in agreement with Getz and Wall throughout the text, with the exception of chapter 7, "God's Plan for Church Leadership." Getz understands the position of elder as supracultural (p. 88). However, he notes that elders appeared in churches consisting of primarily Jewish believers, while the overseer was used for leaders of primarily Gentile converts (p. 84). He does not explain the synagogue's leadership that apparently influenced the early church. Given the above, Getz's claim for elder leadership does not seem warranted.

Chapter 8 contains another one of the few weak points of the text. Under "Need-Oriented Evangelism" Wall accepts C. Peter Wagner's view of the "gift of evangelism." The view includes the premise that only about ten percent of Christians have the gift. Wall states, "The congregation at large is not pressured to imitate those with the gift of evangelism" (p. 105). The remainder of the church is to be involved in servant evangelism and other service ministries. Wall weakly states, "This process implies that all church members should be trained to communicate the gospel clearly" (p. 105). Every Christian is commanded to evangelize. To make evangelism the domain of a select few is to silence the church and cripple the Great Commission. This mentality is too pervasive without the further encouragement of this text.

The final chapter, "Church Growth by Multiplication," is Wall's finest. He clearly demonstrates the need for a church planting movement. Megachurches have a definite role to play in evangelizing the world, but they cannot do it alone. In fact, Wall presents a convincing scenario of the power of multiplication versus building a megachurch. His presentation solidifies this reader's conviction that we must develop not only church planters who are committed to planting churches that plant churches, but we must also send out pastors committed to leading their established churches to replicate.

Getz and Wall offer a solid contribution to the study of church planting and growth. The work would have been improved if they had fleshed out many of their comments. They presented thought-provoking information only to move on to another provocation leaving the reader still wanting to engage the previous issue. They have a vast pool of experience and knowledge. It would be of great benefit if they expanded *Effective Church Growth Strategies* and gave full treatment to the issues they have raised. In its present form it is a book worth reading, but the church planter will have to look elsewhere for implementation of many of the concepts it presents.

William E. Brown

The Twenty-One Most Powerful Minutes in a Leader's Day, by John C. Maxwell. Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 2000. Pp. 369.

John Maxwell has written approximately twenty-two books concerning leadership or significant aspects of leadership throughout the last decade. Through his books and ministries, John Maxwell has attempted to help people maximize their personal and leadership potential. In the introduction of *The Twenty-One Most Powerful Minutes in a Leader's Day*, John Maxwell gives the purpose of his book as "a leadership development tool." He also gives the foundation from which his principles came. "Every leadership lesson I've ever taught has been based on scriptural principles." Maxwell says, "I'm bringing the leadership contained in the Bible to the forefront." Thus, this review will critically analyze this work to determine if John Maxwell has accomplished his purposes. This review will focus on a couple of positive aspects of this book, and a few negative aspects of the book after summarizing the format of the book. In the end, this review will conclude that John Maxwell does not achieve his purpose because he applies his principles to Scripture instead of applying scriptural principles to leadership.

Maxwell designed this book as a twenty-one-week study in leadership. The principles discussed are taken directly from another of Maxwell's books, *Twenty-One Irrefutable Laws of Leadership*. He gives five days' worth of material for each week. The first four days discuss one of the laws of leadership, and the fifth day helps to bring it all together by focusing on practical application of the law discussed for the week.

The best feature of this book is the teaching on David. The book focuses on David in chapters 1 and 11. Maxwell has also published a tape entitled "Giant Killers" which discusses David. Throughout this teaching, he remains exegetical, brings out solid principles from Scripture, and then applies them to leadership. This reviewer recommends Maxwell's teaching on David to anyone.

Another positive aspect of this book rests in the influence which it may have on the secular world. John Maxwell has developed a following from potential leaders in Christian vocations as well as leaders in secular vocations. The book contains the potential to move some secular leaders closer to understanding the wisdom of the Bible. Maxwell does not express the gospel as clearly as he could have, however.

Perhaps the worst aspect in this book is Maxwell's use of Scripture. This reviewer expected to read an expository exegesis of the Word of God applied to leadership. What he found, however, was twenty-one laws of leadership taken to the Bible in an attempt to find support. To be fair, none of Maxwell's laws of leadership is heretical or detrimental. This reviewer just wishes he would draw all of his twenty-one laws of leadership out of Scripture instead of deriving pragmatic laws and then attempting to use the Bible as a proof-text. Perhaps Maxwell could do more exegetical studies as he did with David. Because such an accusation should not be made without supporting evidence, this reviewer will now offer a few examples.