LIBERTY BAPTIST THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

INNOVATION MATTERS:

THE USE OF INNOVATION IN MINISTRY STRATEGIES FOR THE LOCAL 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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LIBERTY BAPTIST THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

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ABSTRACT

INNOVATION MATTERS: THE USE OF INNOVATION IN MINISTRY STRATEGIES FOR THE LOCAL CHURCH

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Liberty Baptist Theological Seminary, 2009

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There are a tremendous amount of people that are either unchurched or de-churched when compared to statistics from earlier years in America. The purpose of this thesis is to discover how the application of innovation in the local church makes an impact on ministry strategies today. One of the commandments given to the Church today is the Great Commission, and it is to be determined by each local church how that mandate will be fulfilled. In essence, when a church chooses to use innovation in reaching out to the community, innovation in itself becomes an outreach strategy.

Abstract length: 97

DEDICATION

To my wife Marcy,

My partner in love and life.

Thank you for exemplifying Proverbs 31

Both to me and our children.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Statement of the Problem

A recent study released by Barna Research shows an alarming trend that seems to be developing across America.¹ According to the data, the figures indicate that there has been a 92% increase in the number of unchurched Americans over the past 13 years. As the study continues in its findings, it is estimated that there were 39 million unchurched Americans in 1991, compared with the fact that there were 75 million in 2004. That figures out to be an increase of 36 million people that are either unchurched or de-churched in less than a 15 year span. The increase at that rate show that something has happened to the church in America, but what? Why have the numbers risen at such an astronomical rate? These are serious questions that each and every pastor and local church must answer, and critically begin to consider what may be causing this disturbing information to rise to the surface.

To begin to look at one aspect that may help begin to facilitate a possible solution, a reference will be made to a pastor of one of America's largest churches. In the preface to one of his books, Rick Warren begins by explaining a sport that is popular in the area of California where he lives; surfing.² In the learning of that sport, there are many different things that can and should be taught, such as proper equipment and how to ride a wave. However, there is one

¹<u>http://www.barna.org/FlexPage.aspx?Page=Topic&TopicID=38</u>. This study was done By George Barna to determine criteria among the unchurched, and posted it on the website under the title "unchurched". Internet; accessed 3 August 2008.

² Rick Warren, in his book *The Purpose Driven Church*, is discussing the way in which God moves in and around the church today, and the responsibility of the church. The student is drawing from this illustration the necessity of church innovation in order to be able to move from "wave to wave", as all waves are different.

thing that Warren states cannot be taught; how to build a wave. This cannot be created, simply surfed by the surfer after training.

The "surfer" is the Church, and the "wave" is God. The church must be able to sense God moving in specific ways around them, and then react in a positive way to where God is moving. There is one specific thing that this book will focus upon; the innovation that is used not only to surf, but to be able to change to a different wave when God does. It is the intention of this author to show how the local church must become more innovative both in nature and outreach in order to effectively reach out to the unchurched and de-churched around them. It is apparent from the 92% increase in this group that there is a major disconnect between them and many local churches in America. There may well be one thing that is standing in between the local church and the unchurched; the unwillingness to embrace innovative strategies in order to reach them. While the message of Jesus Christ may never change, methods to present that message may change many times.

Over the course of the author's life, there has been true involvement in four churches. Yet in each of these churches there were distinguishing factors that made each one unique. Based upon the thesis for this book, the author will reflect upon some personal experiences for the use of innovation within each church. Every church and pastor should ask critical questions about themselves, such as how effectively is our church reaching out to the community? If not, is there another church in the surrounding area that is? What makes them unique? If a church is effectively reaching out to the community, then what is it that makes them different? These honest questions will help serve as a basis for self evaluation. The first church that the author was involved with was in a small rural community that had a population of about 1,800 people.³ The time span was from a period of 1979 until the year 1997. During this entire period, the average attendance was between 90-100.⁴ During the time span, there was basically no change in attendance for a period of 18 years. Upon reflection of the critical questions asked previously, there were no innovative methods being applied within the church to reach out in a unique way to the unchurched and de-churched within the community. Is this coincidence, or is there a connection between outreach innovation and the reaching the unchurched?

The second church the author served in was quite different, although many elements were the same.⁵ The time period at this church was from 1999-2005. This is the church that the author surrendered to the ministry in, and shortly thereafter began serving within the church as Minister of Youth. The church was very unique in that it was a church that was started with a group of 25 people in 1998, and grew to its record size in a period of six years.⁶ In the span of six years the church was averaging an attendance of 275-300. In a comparatively short amount of time, this new church had quickly become the largest church in the community. The pastor was constantly searching for new ways the church could share Christ with the city. It is important to note that this was the exact same community that the author's previous church had been located. What made the difference? Upon reflection, innovation in ministry by the pastor and the church played a large part of the success, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. This

³ Stanton Baptist Church, Stanton, KY. It should be noted that this is the local church that the author was raised in from birth until the age of 17. There had been transitions from three different pastors during this time, yet the numerical element of the church remained basically the same. The authors father served as both deacon and Sunday School director, keeping the attendance. The population of the city is determined by a sign upon entering the city stating the population.

⁴ The authors father was the Sunday School Director, which kept the attendance records.

⁵ Emmanuel Baptist Church, Stanton, KY.

⁶ Serving in leadership within the church, every leader kept a close account of attendance records.

particular church, at the time, was using a variety of new methods to take the message of Christ to the surrounding community. To further the point, the church came under a new leadership that rejected the innovation and the attendance is now numbered at approximately 100 persons per week.⁷

The third church the author served in was as Associate Pastor/Minister of Youth.⁸ At that point, this was one of the largest churches to have served in, with an average attendance of 750 in Bible Study on a weekly basis.⁹ The church was constantly attempting to find new ways to share the message of Jesus Christ to the city and beyond, as led by the pastor. The church also was known in the community as one that would "just let anybody in", no matter an individual's status or wealth. In the opinion of this author, that is definitely a good thing to be known for, as it is symbolic of the example which Christ set for His disciples. Again, a commonality between this churches growth could arguably be related to their use of innovation in outreach.

The fourth church that the author has served in, and is currently serving, is a church plant as the lead pastor.¹⁰ As is the case with the vast majority of church plants, being new and creative in ministry is commonplace. The church began in May of 2007 with a core group of approximately 10 people. The current statistics of the BWC will be discussed in chapter 8.¹¹ It can honestly be stated that there are no churches in the community that are doing ministry in the same way. There could definitely be an argument made that innovation can be directly linked with reaching the culture of the people within the community as a new church plant.

⁷ According to the current data from the record keeper.

⁸ Faith Baptist Church, Monroe, GA.

⁹As a staff member, attendance was reviewed monthly during staff meetings.

¹⁰ The Baptist Worship Center, Mt. Sterling, KY.

¹¹ As pastor of a church plant, the author keeps the records.

So what is the big deal with innovation and church outreach? There are two distinct groups within this realm that offer distinct contrast with one another, along with those that fall somewhere in between. The first group is those that have no interest, whether directly or indirectly, in being involved in new methods of outreach. There can be various reasons for this, which can range from basic disinterest to a lack of understanding the implementation processes. The second group is quite different from the first, in that they are willing to do anything to bring in new people into the church. Really, anything! But what about the local churches, and church leaders, that find themselves somewhere in the middle?

There is a thought that can be resounded from the discussion of church innovation, and that is this; just because we can, should we?¹² The purpose of this book will be to determine how using innovation in local church outreach affects the local church. A reflection will be made upon the simplistic nature of *why* outreach strategies are necessary for churches in being able to fulfill the Great Commission and reach out to their communities and the world with the gospel of Jesus Christ. Specific focus will be on why certain churches have chosen certain innovations, along with the factors of why change was needed. Also, specific attention will be given to the Biblical guidelines as a standard involved with being innovative.

Definition of Terms

There are several terms that will be used which will need to be defined. When the term "innovation in outreach strategies" is used, this is in reference to updated methods of reaching a

¹² This was the question posed in Michael Crichton's book *Jurassic Park*. The scientists have discovered the ability to create dinosaurs. Yet just because they had the means to accomplish this feat, should they? There were ethical and moral factors that needed to be determined. The same can be said for implementing church innovations.

community with the message of Jesus Christ. The application of methodology should be understood in terms of the culture that the local church exists in. It should also be understood that the culture in which one local church minister's can differ from church to church.

The second term that needs to be defined is "unchurched" and/or "de-churched". The author will stand with Barna in defining these categories of people as an adult (18 or older) who has not attended a Christian church service within the past six months.¹³ However, this does not include a holiday service (such as Easter or Christmas) or a special event at a church (such as a wedding or funeral). When considering innovation in outreach strategies, these groups should be the major genre the church is to be reaching with the gospel of Jesus Christ.

The third term is the "Great Commission" as defined in the Bible in Matthew 28:19-20. This command, not option, is given by the Lord to the individual believers that make up the local church. This serves as the reason behind why churches should be so concerned with reaching the unchurched/de-churched. These verses also serve as the basis for discovering a methodology for reaching the culture in which one lives in. Hence, the word "innovation" is used for new means of reaching an ever-changing culture with a never-changing message.

Whenever the term "ministry", or "ministry strategies" is used it will be to reference the planning and means by which a church accomplishes being a "church". In understanding and applying innovation, the church needs to know why it does the specific things that it does, and make these known to the people who attend.

¹³ This definition was also determined in the same research that was used to show the dire situations that churches are in at the beginning of this book.

Statement of Limitations

Although this book addresses innovation in church outreach strategies, it will not serve as an overview of every type of innovation. Yet a case study of two types being used currently will be reviewed as an example. Instead, the focus will be on the motivations, or lack thereof, for the local church when choosing to become innovative. There will also be investigation regarding Biblical boundaries when choosing to be innovative with methodology in the local church.

There will not be a debate regarding general atonement verses Calvinism. The basis of this paper, in discussing innovation, will be the motivation of the Great Commission. It will be understood that this command was given to all churches and Christians. This allows one of the main focuses of this paper to discover why one church may or may not promote innovation, than have to debate the issues found in predestination.

Innovation and creativity by definition alone can often times seem controversial depending on the circumstances. The intentions of this work is not to create a definitive list of unbiblical oppositions when using innovations, but only a general guideline in standards for a local church to use. In the same manner, it was not the intentions of this author to make a definitive value system for churches, but only a general set of characteristics.

This study will not be a manual of church growth, no matter the outcome of the results in the data uncovered. The writer recognizes that while there will be some areas of specific innovations that churches are accomplishing with attractive results, not every idea will work within every community. The culture that one church is attempting to reach may be totally different than another church; therefore, the "vehicle" that one church uses will be different from location to location.

Statement of Methodology

The purpose of this paper is to seek what the certain innovations that some churches are beginning to use, as well as the reasoning behind the changes that served as a catalyst. The major goal will be to seek the reasons behind the change, recognizing the signs that a change may need to take place within the church, and seeking how this is applicable to churches no matter the size or denomination.

The author will demonstrate the desperate place that many churches are in as of the present time in North America. This will serve as a basis for the need for innovation to take place. This is a necessity in order to change the course that the church is currently moving towards, as the facts from the introduction purposefully prove.

There will be three major sections that the paper will be divided into, and they will each contain chapters that deal with each topic sequentially. The first major section will be the basis, as found in the pages of Scripture, that innovation must take place in ministry. The second section will contain how churches can benefit from making changes in the way that ministry is done, as well as present data from specific sources to give a general understanding of unbiblical innovations. The third section is a case study of the student's own church, the Baptist Worship Center, and the impact that applying innovation to ministry has had upon it in terms of making a difference for Christ within the surrounding community.

Section I will be about establishing a biblical basis for innovation within the local church. Chapter two will discuss the innovation in ministry of the Son of God Himself, the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus did ministry different than those religious leaders that were prevalent in His day. Jesus thought "outside the box", and because of that His ministry was set apart from all others. It is the opinion of this student that since Jesus is the ultimate example for believers in all things, innovation should be no different.

Chapter three presents the example of the apostles. These men of God were willing to do whatever God asked them to do. More often than not, this willingness led them to do ministry in ways that it had never been done before. This would have caused them to be viewed in a different light than those who were doing things the way that everyone would have been used to doing them. In combination these chapters will provide a biblical basis for establishing the acceptance of innovation in ministry.

Section II will develop a practical application for innovation within the local church. Chapter four will help determine the necessity for churches to be biblical. Some things are innovative for churches to do, but the question is should it be done? Are there biblical boundaries as to how far a church should go in its pursuit to be culturally relevant? This chapter will explore the possible solutions to this very big problem. A biblical foundation will be formed for a guideline that churches can use. Chapter five provides a presentation of the survey data that has been gathered.

Chapter six prepares a plan for implementing innovation within the local church. If an individual does not prepare for any type of change, then they can prepare to fail. The prior option is the most preferred. The same holds true for the church. The innovation in ministry

should be aimed at providing the vehicle the church needs at truly being missional to the surrounding community. This should be a part of the mission of the church.

Chapter seven will show the necessity of the pastor and church leadership when innovation is being implemented within the local church. One of the primary responsibilities of the pastor is to present the vision of the church to the people. The influence a pastor can have over their members is very persuasive, and the guidance of the pastor is essential. This portion of the paper will provide a guide that pastors can use to allow that influence to provide successful implementation of innovation in the local church.

The final portion, Section III, will provide a case study of the student's church, the Baptist Worship Center (from this point forward in the paper referred to as BWC). This will provide a practical application of many of the principles outlined in this paper to the local church level. Chapter eight will provide a history of the BWC. Included in this will be a detailed outline of the mission and vision of the church, and how innovation was and is used to promote each of these. As this section is ended, the results as an outcome will be provided as supportive evidence. Chapter nine will provide a summary with a conclusion for using innovation in the local church based on the findings.

PART I. A BIBLICAL BASIS FOR INNOVATION

CHAPTER TWO

THE EXAMPLE OF JESUS

"When the Pharisees heard that He had silenced the Sadducees, they came together in the same place... (And) no one was able to answer Him at all, and from that day no one dared to question Him any more" (Matthew 22:34, 46).

There was a rather large gap that took place in the Jewish community from the closing of the last book of the Old Testament to the time that Jesus enters the scene at the opening passages of the New Testament. It was during this period that there were many changes, both positive and negative, that took place in the Jewish society. One of the major positive changes that took place was a resolution of this people group to abstain from continually turning to other false pagan religions, which seemed to be a rather habitual occurrence throughout the Old Testament. Yet once the Scriptures reach the New Testament, this no longer seems to be a problem. On the contrary, there is a refreshing dedication to challenge any power that would inhibit the worship of the one true God.

This dedication was challenged at several points, one of which involved the same man who washed his hands to recues himself at Jesus' crucifixion due to pressure from religious leaders; Pontius Pilate. The cross of Christ was the second major point in time that this man had been intimidated by the commitment of the Jewish people, as the first involved placing a golden eagle in the temple.¹⁴ Upon this utter blasphemy of Pilate in the eyes of the Jews, over 5,000 of God's chosen people marched to his vacation home and demanded that it be removed. At first

¹⁴ John Maxwell, *The Maxwell Leadership Bible*, (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2002), 1190

Pilate refused, giving the people one of two options; leave or be beheaded. Without hesitation, the people of Israel knelt down in resolve to let Pilate know that they would rather be killed than not follow the law of God. Seeing the determination of these men to follow God, Pilate backed down and had the eagle removed from the temple. The explicit determination and resolve to worship the one true God had certainly been established since the closing of the Old Testament. Yet there was also a negative consequence to such a resolve that had taken place as time had passed, and that was the establishment of traditions and legalism by religious leaders.

As Jesus entered the situation when the Gospels opened, Jesus was absolutely and entirely revolutionary as He constantly challenged the status quo.¹⁵ Jesus was the most revolutionary person to ever grace the face of planet earth. In being revolutionary, He used very innovative means to accomplish His purposes in the plain sight of those in the audience as a challenge to the mindset of the day. There were cultural barriers that no one was willing to cross until Jesus chose to break those using very innovative methods to drive the point home to those watching. As a matter of fact, the entire set of circumstances that surrounded Jesus' entry into the world at His physical birth was extremely creative. Who else but creative a God could have conceived the idea of making a bright star shine in the direction of where Christ was born so that both obscure shepherds in a field, as well as wise men from a far and distant land, could be directed to the place where a baby born of a virgin was located (Mathew 1-2, Luke 2)? Everything about Jesus from His birth to His death screams innovation, which at a minimum demands attention in regards to being innovative in church function and ministry today.

Many churches struggle today with various forms of traditions that have slowly crept in, causing them to reject anything that will cause change. Jesus used innovation in challenging

¹⁵ Thomas S. Rainer & Eric Geiger, Simple Church, (Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 2006), 16

certain traditions that were Biblically insignificant on many occasions, one of which occurred when Jesus is confronted by the Pharisees specifically concerning their traditions (Matt. 12:8). During this encounter Jesus' disciples were accused of picking the grain from a field and eating it, causing the Pharisees to accuse them of breaking the law. According to McGarvey, this accusation was absolutely false.¹⁶ The law of the Torah did not forbid eating food or preparing food on the Sabbath day. What these religious leaders were really insinuating was that Jesus and His disciples were offending them by breaking the traditions that they had instituted to make sure the "real" commandments were being followed. Jesus answers these men by making a statement that must have totally confused and confounded their worldview. Jesus makes the following perspective known:

If you had known what this means: I desire mercy and not sacrifice, you would not have condemned the innocent. For the Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath. (Matthew 12:7, 8).

Jesus is making two very specific points that go to the very core of why many churches choose to reject methodology that is different and innovative from tradition. The first response is found in verse seven, which is a reference that is taken from the Old Testament (Micah 6:8). In this statement, Jesus states that the first thing these religious leaders need to know is that mercy for the physical need of hunger on these "innocent" men is more meaningful to God than sacrifices that could have been made on the altar. The religious leaders of that day, as well as many churches today, would rather reject an individual because they did not fit the "mold" of what these leaders thought they should be. Yet Jesus said that these individuals are innocent. Does this not mean that churches need to be innovative in reaching out to those who may not fit the "mold" of other churches and have been rejected? Then Jesus proceeds to make a second

¹⁶ J. W. McGarvey, *Commentary on Matthew and Mark*, (Cincinnati: Central Book Concern, 1882), 192

point where He essentially states that He, not traditions, control the Sabbath. This is something He proved time and time again in the Scriptures, even with the Healing of a lame man on the Sabbath to prove His point in placing people over practices that have no standing in the Scriptures (Matthew 12:9-15). How innovative!

There are several applications that can be taken from this encounter, as Jesus literally opens the doors to new methods of innovative ministry by breaking the trappings of traditions which easily entangled many people in Jesus' day, as well as people today. In the next few passages, Jesus states that it is not only a priority in the sight of God to make mercy a priority for others. Jesus takes it a step further. The Savior shares that it is "lawful" to do things that are good for others on the Sabbath. Does this have an impact on how churches conduct their worship service? Can a church worship with contemporary music in order to make others who may not attend a traditional service do so in order to make them a priority? Since Jesus is Lord of the Sabbath, what about churches that are innovative in reaching people who cannot attend on Sunday morning by worshipping on another day? These are valid questions that Jesus, while not specifically addressing the exact subject matter, most certainly addresses the motives and heart of the themes.

There are also certain types of churches that are so steeped in legalism that the people are confused in their perception of the grace of God. Jesus used innovation to enlighten people concerning legalism that had been established by the religious leaders. Jesus also used innovation in challenging certain legalisms that were Biblically insignificant on many occasions, one of which occurred in a confrontation between Him and the Pharisees (Matthew 22:37-40). Immediately after dealing with a defeating humiliation for the Sadducees, the Pharisees apparently presume an opportunity to do something that the previous group couldn't do; trump

Jesus with traditions they thought were respected by the people in a public setting. The lawyer of the group steps up to Jesus as a representative, and essentially asked Jesus which one of the 613 commandments that they had established (in order to "help" the people keep the simple 10 that God gave Moses) was the most important. The answer that Jesus gave was simply to "love God" with every aspect of one's life as well as to love other people. Yet Jesus, being innovative, directly challenged these steep legalistic guidelines by telling everyone under the sound of His voice that every other law could be fulfilled by keeping these two simple rules in life. That was and is truly profound and innovative!

There are some applications of this passage in regards to innovation that should not be overlooked. The Pharisees, being the main sect of religious leaders in this day, had a focus placed on the obedience of the letter of the law instead of the spirit of the law. Yet it was the spirit of the law that God was concerned most about. God is more concerned about the motives behind why people were following the guidelines of legalism than impressed that they were. The religious leaders had forgotten about this important aspect of obedience by placing a heavy yoke of laws to obey upon the people. Jesus challenged this by stating His yoke was easy, and His burden was light (Matthew 11:28-30). This is a direct contrast to these leaders, whose yoke was heavy and burden was even worse. Churches need to be certain that they are not so legalistic as to place heavy burdens upon the people using unreasonable standards. This will only help to create an atmosphere of bad motives in following God among the people.

Even in the Old Testament, there are word pictures and symbols that are used which depict the nature of the Lord Jesus Christ. Yet in the small prophetic book of Micah, there is an interesting depiction of Jesus that is made in regards to His role in the life of the Jewish people; the "breaker" (Micah 2:13). The breaker will be the one who frees the penned up sheep. Kaiser gives the following word picture for the text:

In that sense the Messiah will be the liberator and champion of all who are oppressed, downtrodden, abused, hurt, and left defenseless. This person will himself personally take up the cause of his flock and lead the charge as he sets his people free.¹⁷

Even in this context of the Old Testament, Jesus pictures as someone who was setting people free from the bondages that had taken hold of their life.

Since Jesus is our physical representation of God, it would be a fair assumption to conclude that God is innovative as well. This can be well established by the means in which God communicated to mankind throughout history, as well as in creation. As the Genesis account of the creation week concludes, the Bible states that "…He rested from His work of creation" (Gen. 2:3). The word for creation in this text comes from the Hebrew word "*bara*", which is a primitive root that means "to create" or "do" in an absolute sense.¹⁸ In other words, from the very beginning stages of the Scriptures, God was creating and making things that had never before been imagined or conceived previously at any point in time. This act of creation required God to "do", as stated by translation, something that was innovative and thus revealing His creative nature. While this is only the first example of the innovation of God the Bible is filled with many more, such as communicating to a confused prophet through enabling a donkey to speak to him personally (Numbers 22:21-30, 2 Peter 2:16).

As imitators of Christ, it is the responsibility of Christians to be innovative in how they reach out to others in their communities. This holds true both for church leaders as well as church strategies, since each are compromised individually of followers of Jesus Christ. As a

¹⁷ Walter Kaiser, *The Messiah in the Old Testament*, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing, 1995), 151

¹⁸ William Young, Young's Analytical Concordance to the Bible, (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers), 210

matter of fact, Jesus requires all of His followers to pass the information they may have of His testimony in their lives on to others in the way that one acts and speaks. Paul summed this up by stating:

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).

Just as passing information on to others in discipleship includes prayer and Bible study, should it not also include innovation? If Jesus was both revolutionary and innovative in His earthly ministry for reaching past the status quo, shouldn't churches be following that example today? Instead it seems that many churches have become satisfied with doing church as usual, instead of being unusual, vibrant, and creative in methodology. If the example of Jesus is taken seriously, then there is no other alternative but to conclude that this is no longer an acceptable attitude.

CHAPTER THREE

THE EXAMPLE OF THE APOSTLES

"Be imitators of me, as I also am of Christ" (1 Corinthians 11:1).

During the time that the early church was being established after the resurrection and ascension, Jesus Himself had raised up a rare breed of men that were going to build upon the foundation that He had laid during His earthly ministry. These men had eaten, ministered with, and spent countless hours being trained by the Lord for this ever important task. These men were the Apostles. According to Elwell the very word that is used to describe them is an indicator of their purpose.¹⁹ The word which is used in the English is actually a deviation from the original Greek root word "apostellein", which is defined as "to send". This was the specific intention that Christ had in mind after returning to Heaven for these special men; to build upon His foundation the building blocks for the Kingdom Church. It is interesting that this word also echoes a two-fold part for the person that this term is given. The first is the responsibility of the individual to deliver a very accurate and understandable message that was given by the person who sent them. The second was the full authority as a representative of the sender entrusted to the person being sent. In the case of the apostles, the person whom was sending them was the Lord Jesus Christ. This means that they were sent with this specific mission in mind as the early church was being conceived.

For the purposes of this project there will be a study of the lives of two of these apostles; Peter and Paul. These men played a very important part in the establishing of the early church, and made many personal sacrifices including their very lives to see the church thrive. This was

¹⁹ Walter Elwell, Evangelical Dictionary of Theology, (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2001), 85

their determination in finishing the mission well that was given to them by Jesus. The book of Acts contains many historical examples of the actions these men took in making the early church a reality. It is most certainly noteworthy that the backgrounds of these two men were on opposite ends of the spectrum. For instance, Peter was a fisherman, which would have made him appear "untrained" in the eyes of the religious leaders. Paul, on the other hand, was a religious zealot who before knowing Christ adhered to the strict religious regimen of the orthodox Jewish training. These will make for interesting insight as Christ confronts them and pushes them to innovate past the boundaries that they had set themselves for ministry. The following contents of this chapter will be a discovery of the innovation that these men used in the process of making their mission a reality.

The example of Peter

Out of all the disciples that were made known in the New Testament, Douglas states that the Apostle Peter is one of the most vividly drawn and charming by the Gospel writers.²⁰ Throughout the gospels, Peter is given many detailed accounts regarding both his emotional and physical responses to the various situations that he encountered during Jesus' earthly ministry and beyond. Initially called in following Christ after already becoming interested in the Messiah during John the Baptists' ministry, the apostle began listening to Jesus after He called him to serve in full-time ministry as a "fisher of men" (Mark 1:16 - 20). It is interesting to note that whenever a list of names is given among the disciples of Jesus Christ, the apostle Peter is always listed first. This can be seen as rather important because it shows that there is a significant amount of leadership that can be placed in Peter during the growth of the early church in the book of Acts. This is not to say that the other disciples were not leaders, as can be readily

²⁰ J. D. Douglas, New International Bible Dictionary, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1987), 773

evidenced by the arguments that took place concerning who was going to be at the greatest position in the future kingdom of Christ (Matthew 20:20 -- 28).

The Apostle Peter had a very special task as indicated by Jesus during one specific conversation that took place. This conversation takes place in the first chapter of the Gospel of John, where Jesus is approached by Simon Peter's brother Andrew and asked where He was staying. After finding out this information, Andrew quickly goes to get his brother Peter and share the good news of finding the Messiah. As Peter is approaching Jesus, the Messiah tells Peter that his new name is going to be called Cephas:

"...when Jesus saw him, He said, "You are Simon, son of John. You will be called Cephas" (which means "Rock") (John 1:42).

After making this statement at their initial meeting, Jesus makes another reference to this in the Gospel of Matthew. It appears in the Scriptures as follows:

"And also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the forces of Hades will not overpower it" (Matthew 16:18).

There has been an immense amount of speculation to determine exactly what it was that Jesus was attempting to communicate in that phrase. There have been many from the Roman Catholic position that would use this phrase to establish the primacy of the Pope over the church, stating that Peter was proclaimed as the first pope. This paper is not being written to determine this specific question; however, the position of this paper is the same as that of Towns when he comes to this conclusion over what Jesus was trying to communicate:

"It seems obvious, by the virtue of the close proximity of the words, that Jesus intended there to be some distinction between Peter, the man, and the church... Therefore, a twofold identity exists between Christ and Peter, *petros* and *petra*. As a believer in

Christ, Peter was identified with the Savior. As an apostle, he was an inspired recipient of foundational truth; Peter was identified with the foundation of the church".²¹

It is important to note this because it will allow an understanding of the significance of the decisions that Peter was making concerning the use of innovation. He was the leader. Peter understood that if he was not obedient at the onset regarding innovation in ministry, this would set the tone for how the early church would decide to "do" ministry. His decisions were important, and at the same time this pressure also caused Peter to think carefully before making any decisions to make changes. In essence, "all eyes were on Peter", and the Holy Spirit was teaching him not to be so rash, as in his times while Jesus was on earth during ministry. For example, he could no longer just pull out his sword and cut someone's ear off because he was upset and things weren't going his way (John 18:10). Instead, the Holy Spirit was teaching Peter his new position and the attitude that should go along with it. Notice the words that were used by the apostle as his understanding grew from the old Peter that would get let his emotions get the better of him in the gospels, to the new Peter writing to the disporia in the book of 1 Peter 2:11-12, 17:

"Dear friends, I urge you as aliens and temporary residents to abstain from fleshly desires that war against you. Conduct yourselves honorable among the Gentiles, so that in a case where they speak against you as those who do evil, they may, by observing your good works, glorify God in a day of visitation. Honor everyone. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the Emperor."

Did Peter just say to honor everyone? This is a stark contrast to the former way that Peter used to behave, and it almost seems that he was speaking to himself as much as anybody else.

Every leader has most likely gone through these emotions at some point or another; wanting to be obedient to God, yet at the same time wanting to maintain the respect of those whom you are ministering to, as well as keeping a good standing in the community. In many

²¹ Elmer Towns, *Theology for Today*, (Belmont: Wadsworth Group, 2002), 629

ways, these are the issues that many pastors and church leaders face when being led by God to do something innovative in ministry. There is a desire and an inner yearning to do something that would reach a people group outside of those that are already involved in the local church, and God is calling church leaders to do something drastic and outside of the box. The vision from God has been planted as a seed in the leaders mind, and every so often God brings the idea back to the forefront of everyday thoughts and ponderings. Yet there is that nagging feeling that is constantly holding them back. It may appear as a self-rhetorical question framed like this: "what will my congregation think if I brought this up?" Or "what in the world would they think in the community if I did something like that?" Another one that has held many good leaders back is this; "what will happen if I put all this time and resources into such a project and it failed?"

An example of this is found in book of Acts, which details an encounter that Peter experienced between choosing what peers would think or what God would think. In Acts 10:9-16, God is dealing with Peter in sending him to see Cornelious. The Bible is always purposeful in sharing the various encounters between God and man, and there is always a significant reason for it. In this passage, the reason God made this encounter happen is because if it hadn't, then quite possibly Peter would have not went with the men that would take him to go and see a gentile. Why? In the Jewish customs of the day this would have been considered a serious fraction of cleanliness. According to Wiersbe, this represented a very controversial topic of the day. He writes:

"Why did God use a vision about food to teach Peter that Gentiles were not unclean? For one thing, Peter was hungry, and a vision about food would certainly "speak to his condition," as the Quakers say. Second, the distinction between "clean and unclean foods" was a major problem between the Jews and the Gentiles in that day... God used this centuries-old regulation (Lev. 11) to teach Peter an important spiritual lesson... God was not simply changing Peter's diet; He was changing his entire program!" $(pg. 445)^{22}$

This was certainly a challenge to reach out in innovation to a people group that would put Peter to the test. As a matter of point, Peter even answered "no" to God three times before he finally began to catch on to what He was trying to show him. The importance of this is that Peter was so concerned about what other people and leaders would think of him, versus the innovation God was calling him to use, that he almost was willing to tell God no than go through with it.

There is also something else that can be drawn from this passage, and that is that Peter had to make a choice concerning whom he was going to try to please in life. In the beginning stages of this encounter he was probably resisting God in the vision because he wanted to be obedient. He might have thought that when God was asking this question it was only rhetorical, possibly a challenge to be remain obedient. This is why many pastors and church leaders decide not to do certain things in ministry; they think that maybe God would never really ask them to do something that seems so outlandish. Yet He does and He will! Peter experienced this firsthand, and even though he struggled in the beginning with making the right choice, he finally does. Any idea in innovation that has the end result of fulfilling the Great Commission and stays within Biblical guidelines (which will be discussed in a later chapter) is from God, for satan wants no man, woman, boy or girl to inherit eternal life in Christ. This should be an encouraging thought that will help push church leaders over the edge in making the right decision for obedience in the end, just like Peter.

²² Warren W. Wiersbe, *The Bible Exposition Commentary*, (Colorado Springs, Chariot Springs Publishing, 1989), 445

The answer to that problem of wanting to please those that are watching the pastor or leadership and fulfilling the desires that God has placed into the hearts of the leader also happens to be a rhetorical question: who do you most want to please? As in any instance, Jesus states the solution best in this passage:

"No one can be a slave of two masters, since either he will hate one and love the other, or be devoted to one and despise the other" (Matthew 6:24).

In essence, Peter had to choose whom he was going to please. It has been said, and rightly so, that a follower of Christ cannot say the words "no" and "Lord" together in the same sentence. Thankfully Peter did not get confused, as many leaders do, into thinking that they are going to please God by pleasing the crowd. In some instances this will be the case; it most, it will not. Yet it is significant when looking at the example of this great man of God to notice that his decision to be innovative in obedience to God played a significant impact on the early church. The church was constantly growing and expanding due to the fact that Peter refused to allow both the spoken and unspoken "rules" of the day to determine what he was and was not going to do in ministry. This outcome should also speak volumes to church leaders today in what God is willing to do in the life of a church that is willing to cross into the boundaries of ministry innovation. Imagine the lives that could be touched within the community if churches would think outside the box and use innovative methods to reach out to them.

The Example of Paul

If ever there is an example of someone who constantly and consistently challenged the status quo of the unnecessary orthodoxy in the early church it was the Apostle Paul. Yet this would have never been expected after one takes into account the background and pedigree of this

great man. Paul gives the testimony to his heritage in Philippians 3:3-6, and to be honest it seems to be a very impressive resume. To start things off in this chapter, he begins by sharing how people should not put confidence in their earthly credentials. Within this context the apostle basically lists seven different categories that could contribute to bragging rights if he so chose to use them. The seven areas were: circumcised on the eighth day, an Israelite, from the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew in heritage, a Pharisee, a zealot in religious diligence, and blameless in following the law. In short, Paul was as religious as an individual could be in terms of background and formal training. With his qualifications, Paul would have been a rising star within the religious community.

So what was the "gamechanger" for the apostle? What caused him to switch from an orthodox Jew who was a religious zealot to be a dynamically innovative leader of the early church? What passion drove him to leave the ranks of the orthodox Jewish religious leaders to become a marked man as a preacher of the gospel of Jesus Christ? The answer to that may very well be the innovative God who chose an innovative way to change the very heart of very stubborn man!

The conversion experience for the apostle Paul is recorded in the book of Acts, the ninth chapter. In the text, Paul had requested and received a letter of permission from the high priest to the synagogues that were in Damascus. This letter allowed Paul to be able to arrest any person that claimed to be a follower of Christ and take them to Jerusalem as a prisoner to be punished. Yet something very interesting happens on the road in between Jerusalem and Damascus that changes everything. An illuminous light from heaven flashed all around him, blinding him instantly. Then the very voice of Jesus Christ spoke to him from the heavens

beyond, and asked why this mere human was persecuting Him. What was Paul's response? He uttered these words:

"Who are you, Lord?" (Acts 9:5)

The Greek term for the word "Lord" in that passage is translated "kurios", which also means "master".²³ This term is used consistently throughout the entire New Testament as a reference point to the Lordship of both God the Father and Jesus Christ the Son. It is the opinion of this student that at the moment that Paul uttered these words, based on the experience that had just immediately happened to him, that the life of Paul was changed forever. Paul knew that this experience could have only happened if God had been involved with it, and if this was the Lord Jesus Christ who was making this happen, then He was going to be his Lord as well! The original innovator, God Himself, created this amazing set of circumstances to happen to the apostle Paul and changed him drastically. There can also be another parallel that can be drawn from this experience that is recorded in this passage. Perhaps even beyond just the salvation experience that was created for Paul, God was up to something even bigger. Maybe God was using this amazingly innovative experience to prepare Paul for the future innovation that he would be chosen to use as an apostle to the Gentiles? If this conclusion can be based on just the decisions and statements made by Paul during the remainder of his ministry, then perhaps it can be stated as fact. Yet in order to truly grasp this concept, one must really step back and take a look at many of the decisions that this man made during the course of his ministry.

In what ways was Paul innovative in ministry over the spoken and unspoken "rules" of the day? In the opinion of this author, there are several. It is one thing to do something that goes

²³ Robert Young, Young's Analytical Concordance to the Bible, (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers), 620

against conformity every once in a while. If someone does this, then it could be challenged that possibly they just had a burst of creativity every so often and were not really innovators. However, Paul was a man that was consistently making decisions that were totally opposite of the type of decisions he would have formerly made as a rising star of Orthodox Judaism. To be quite honest, sometimes the apostle Paul even challenged his own peers in Christian leadership positions with his innovative ways of thinking (as will be discussed later in this chapter). So in what ways was he innovative?

The first way that Paul showed his innovative ideals was in his choosing of faith/faithfulness over that of circumcision. This was a very big deal during the days of Paul's ministry. In Orthodox Judaism, circumcision was regarded as a very important matter. As a matter of fact, Acts 15 records a prime example of Paul challenging the status quo on this tradition. In this specific passage, the apostle Paul was in a city called Antioch where the church was thriving with Gentile converts. Yet in the middle of all this excitement, a group of converts from the traditional mindset of Orthodox Judaism began harassing these new converts, telling them that in order to truly receive salvation they must be circumcised. This turned into such a controversy that Paul and Barnabas returned with them to Jerusalem to discuss the matter with all of the other apostles. The Christian converts from the Pharisee group were outraged that these Gentiles were not being circumcised. Paul began to share that they did not need to be, because nothing would be gained from doing so. He testified that at their salvation experience, they were living a life of faithfulness that can only happen through the power of the Holy Spirit. There was no longer a need to circumcise the flesh, because the Holy Spirit was circumcising the heart of these new followers of Christ. To make a long story very short, everyone who had a say at this meeting agreed.

As a point of note, Paul goes as far to refer to the act of circumcision as the dissenters who challenged him wanted it to be done as "the mutilation" (Phil. 3). Paul's innovative way of thinking was moving past all these rules and regulations that the religious leaders wanted to place on the followers of Christ, and instead made only faith in Jesus Christ as the focal point of the Christian life. Far too many churches today are more concerned with molding and shaping a new convert into what that particular church deems as "acceptable", rather than guiding them on their own personal life-changing journey where the Holy Spirit begins to teach them what He wants them to become. Why does this happen? Perhaps because this is the easy way to make people "look like" a Christian to others. This is a very important lesson that churches and church leaders need to understand. In a nutshell, the apostle Paul was choosing to place grace over the law. He was challenging the traditional mindset of his day to break away from the legalistic attitudes that they were clinging onto, and instead move towards grace. If churches allow grace to take place in the life of their new converts, as well as potential future ones, they won't have to be nearly concerned if these individuals did not instantly fit into the "mold" of what they believe a Christian ought to look like.

A second major area where Paul was quite the innovator in thinking was how he chose the unacceptable (gentiles) over the acceptable (Jews) in reaching out with the gospel. It was in Acts 13:42-52 where the ministry of Paul began focusing on the gentile over the Jew. The reason for this is could be described as follows:

"Paul's final message in the synagogue declared that God had sent the Word to the Jews first, but they had now rejected it. Therefore, Paul would now take the Good News to the gentiles; and he quoted Isaiah 49:6 to back up his decision. He was ready to go to the ends of the earth to win souls to Christ!"²⁴

²⁴ Wiersbe, *Exposition Commentary*, 458

In essence, Paul was moving his focus to people that had 1) been neglected by the church in the sharing of the gospel, and 2) were going to be very receptive to the message. This is readily seen by the vast amount of gentile converts under Paul's ministry and the amount of churches that sprang up in various cities as a result of it. The gentiles were hungry for the Word of God, something that would fill the deep inner longings of their life. This relationship with Christ vastly surpassed the false gods and idols that surrounded these individuals in the communities which they lived in.

Since it was obvious that Paul was successful in his innovative focus from the Jews to the gentiles, there is a natural question that follows; what made him so successful? Of course, he was called to do this task and had the power of the Holy Spirit in his life and ministry. This important fact must not be overlooked. Yet churches today have been commissioned, called, and empowered by God to do the same thing in the Great Commission. So what was it about Paul's methodology in reaching this people group? Why was he able to achieve something that had not been done previously in history on a mass scale like this? The answer to this question can help churches, church leaders, and pastors accomplish this same task in reaching out to the cultures that are in their communities. This answer lies in the next area where Paul chose innovation.

The third major area where Paul chose innovation over the convention traditions of his day was being willing to try new methods when the old one would not work! A prime example of this line of thinking occurs in Acts 17, when he spoke to the people of Athens from the middle of the Areopagus. Paul came to reach these people on his second missionary journey, and knew that these men spent the majority of their time on nothing but the telling and hearing of new philosophical ideals. With this in mind, Paul approached these people with a mixed title, not just

as an evangelist or pastor, but as a teacher of a new "philosophy".²⁵ With the message that Paul presented to the people, they realized quickly that there was a problem that was directly related with the polytheism that was currently being practiced. This allowed the apostle to have some leverage within this community, giving him the image that he needed to be able to legitimately present the message of the gospel of Christ. Shortly after this the people began to plead with Paul to hear the message that he was sharing in the streets. They actually were begging Paul to share with them from a public platform the message of Christ. It would appear that both Paul's planning and approach was working according to the way he was wanting. It is important to note that at the end of his message, the Bible states that the objective was completed and converts were made (Acts 17:34).

The next reasonable question to ask is; why? Why was Paul willing to shift his approach when dealing with the presentation of Christ's message at Mars Hill than the average service at the synagogue? The most likely answer to that question can be the gut-level reaction that Paul experienced while spending the first portion of his stay in Athens, as found in the beginning of this story:

"While Paul was waiting for them in Athens, his spirit was troubled within him when he saw the city was full of idols" (Acts 17:16).

An explanation for this can be found in a passage that Paul would later write through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. As the called apostle to the gentiles, Paul had a passion to see people that were enslaved to sin be freed through the gospel. Because of this, Paul was willing to sacrifice the way he would have preferred to do ministry, or felt the most comfortable, for the method that needed to be used to reach that specific culture. To emphasize this desire, the

²⁵ Charles F. Pfeiffer, *Baker's Bible Atlas*, (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2003), 229

Scripture was penned in 1 Corinthians 9:20-22 where he states that he will become all things to all men in order to win them over to Christ. What exactly does Paul mean by this statement? One source sums those thoughts and passions up in this way:

"How far Paul was willing to go in this regard is recorded in Acts 21:18-27. Again, he did not accommodate himself to sin, or to error, but to social custom. This implies a willingness to do more, not less than the law required. It certainly does not condone sinful activity and compromise in order to "win" some."²⁶

Paul believed that innovation in ministry was so essential in reaching out to the lost around him that he was willing to sacrifice his own personal freedoms and preferences in order to make that happen. This type of determination could and should be shared by churches across the board in using innovation in order to reach the community around them. A consistency among Paul in using innovative methods was this; the methods and atmospheres of delivery changed, the message never did. This important dimension of innovation will be discussed in more detail at a later chapter.

Did Paul ever face obstacles in being innovative? He most certainly did. One of the most significant instances that Paul received criticism by the actions of others occurred in Galatians 2. An important aspect in this encounter was that the barriers did not come from outside of the church leadership, but from within it. In this passage it was the apostle Peter when he was, by his actions, undermining the outreach that was taking place within a gentile community of believers. While Peter was first with this group, he ate with them. At first thought, one may remember the vision he had previously. Yet later, when other Jewish leaders appeared, he began to stop doing this. Why? He was afraid of looking unclean. In response to these actions all the other Jews that looked to Peter for leadership began to stop eating with the

²⁶ Jerry Falwell, *Liberty Bible Commentary: New Testament*, (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1982), 440

gentile believers as well. Many pastors fear being innovative because of the same scenario, thinking, "what if my key leaders aren't willing to take the risk with me?"

What did Paul do when the traditional leadership got in his way concerning unnecessary traditions and trappings? Paul challenged the traditional leadership (Peter) when it was wrong. According to the Scriptures Paul publicly confronted Peter, in the midst of the gentiles and Jews, about these shameful actions. Paul was willing to risk the possibility of public humiliation in order to reach the gentiles with innovative methods. Why is this important? They would never have reached more people if they would have reverted back to the "old" way of doing things as Peter had. There would have been a very much different picture of the rest of the New Testament if this confrontation had not occurred. It is also important to note that apparently Peter accepted this rebuke as well deserved, as he later called Paul a well beloved brother in Christ (2 Peter 3:15-16).

In conclusion to the example of the apostles, there can be one major theme that ties the example of both these men's innovation together; people matter more than procedures. Since winning people to Christ is how church leaders fulfill the great commission, there must come a point where following "standard" procedures and refusing to cause any waves ends and innovative outreach begins. According to the way that both Christ and the apostles chose to do ministry, this is the proper conclusion to draw from the data. In an ever-changing culture, it will take different methods to reach those without Christ in different communities. While no one method will work in every area, it is the responsibility of church leaders to discover what methods do in their area of influence which God has placed them.

PART II. A PRACTICAL APPLICATION FOR INNOVATION

CHAPTER FOUR

THE NECESSITY FOR CHURCHES TO BE BIBLICAL

"Everything is permissible, but not everything is helpful." Everything is permissible", but not everything builds up. (1 Corinthians 10:23)."

A question was posed at the introduction of this book which asked a simple and basic question when it comes to innovation, and that is this; just because we can, should we?²⁷ To rephrase a verse in Scripture, this is essentially what the apostle Paul was writing to the church at Corinth in 1 Corinthians 10:23. This question was posed in the book by Michael Crichton after scientists had discovered that they had the power to re-create extinct creatures and once again give them life. There was no question that they had the power to be able to accomplish this amazing feat. Yet in the back of some of the scientist's minds, there was a nagging doubt about whether or not they should actually follow through with the freedom that they had discovered. In the case of the scientists, they did decide to follow through and with disastrous results. The warning from this story was clear, and that is to be very careful not to the abuse the power or liberty that has been afforded to either an individual or a group of people.

In the exact same sense, that is the message that Paul is trying to deliver to the church at Corinth. In Christ they were afforded a very great amount of religious liberty that these people might not have been afforded before in their previous religion. On one hand, this is a very exciting thing to be able to discover. The fact that a person's life is not based on a bunch of rules

²⁷ Crichton, Jurassic, 76

and regulations, but instead it is afforded up on the freedom that is found in the sacrifice of Christ's death on the cross. This fact is quite liberating. However, on the other hand there is also a sense of danger that the person who has been set free might abuse the freedom that has been found in Christ by doing things beyond the bounds of biblical teaching. Paul was giving this warning to the believers in Corinth, as well as giving this warning through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit to every person, church, and church leader today.

There is also a freedom that churches throughout history have had in Christ, not to be bound by rules and regulations based upon tradition, but the boundaries that had been placed in the Scriptures for her. There is also in this freedom a responsibility, as Saucy sums up in this statement:

"That which was begun in the Scriptures, as men and women were called to acknowledge the Lordship of Christ, continues today in fulfillment of Christ's promise to build His church. Not only is Christ building his church, but it is the primary instrument through which He ministers in the world. As Christ was sent by the Father, so the church bears the ambassadorial role for its Lord as sent ones with a message of reconciliation to the world."²⁸

This is an amazing gift, yet an amazing responsibility, that believers and church leaders have been given as representatives of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ here on earth. In coming to terms with this responsibility, there also needs to be a deep desire within church leaders to retain the biblical boundaries set in Scriptures. The reason for this desire should come from the understanding that the church is the "primary instrument" that God is using to minister in the world today. This provides a tremendous opportunity for churches to take part in what God is doing to reach this era for Christ.

²⁸ Robert Saucy, The Church in God's Program, (Chicago: Moody Press, 1972), 7

The Problem of Innovation

A new question now begins to arise, and that is understanding the methods of innovation that are becoming popular or yet to be discovered in this era of churches. A basis has been made both from the ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ, and from the apostles Peter and Paul that in fact innovation is biblical. The Son of God was very innovative in His ministry, doing things that no other individual would have done. Yet in the midst of all these innovative things that Jesus was doing, no line was crossed that pass from the realm of righteousness into the realm of sin. The same holds true for the apostles Peter and Paul. Both of these men went to places that no other person would have gone to, and spoke to people that no other person would have spoken to. In this sense they were very innovative in the way that they chose the methodology of their ministry. In the middle of all these new ideas and methodologies, these men did not cross into the realm of sin, either. While this is a very intriguing thought; it also begins to immediately pose questions in the mind of the individual that understands what exactly has taken place. Is there any means where church leaders today can come to the same conclusion about understanding innovation that these apostles did? Just because churches have freedom in Christ, are churches free to do whatever it takes to share the gospel with people? In a nutshell, can the ends justify the means? These are certainly sincere and honest questions that church leaders have concerning innovation that need to be answered.

To gain a view of what types of innovation are becoming popular within the context of the church today, one must grasp some idea of what is available. For understandings sake, two examples will be taken from a recent source concerning the types of innovations within churches that are becoming dominant in today's culture.²⁹ As this may be the best means to coming to terms with postmodern church innovation, it will also provide a case study to provide solutions to some of these questions that many church leaders face. It is sometimes hard for church leaders to be objective about a church in which they serve. By looking at other churches, leaders can have an outside perspective in which a rational judgment can be made concerning the biblical guidelines that a church is, or is not, following.

The first example of a church that has chosen a specific mode and means to be innovative has been dubbed the ancient-future church.³⁰ In this type of local Church setting, the pastor and leaders have chosen to be innovative by reaching into Christianity's rich history by the means of ancient rituals and biblical customs, and then make these things relevant to people today. This specific type of innovation can have an interesting appeal to those who may be somewhat put off by the generic church symbolism found in mainstream churches today. Some of the rituals that may be used in this type of innovation would be foot washing, group readings of creeds, or perhaps public confession to a small group. All of these items can be done at one time during a worship service through the various stations, or it can be made to have in order and a process that includes everyone in attendance. Some of these churches may make this the main focus of the worship service, or it may be only made into a small segment. The main idea of this type of church innovation can be to have a rich atmosphere of worship where all of the senses are being engaged by those in attendance. This can be seen in contrast to many churches which ultimately emphasize the listening skills of the audience through preaching, thereby ultimately engaging one of the sensory modes and neglecting the rest.

 ²⁹ Elmer Towns, Ed Stetzer, Warren Bird, *11 Innovations in the Local Church*, (Ventura: Regal Books, 2007)
³⁰ Ibid., 95

This is a very interesting type of innovation that is being made in churches today, and the point that this innovation is making can be well understood among many who attend church. There is more than one basic way in which a person is engaged by something, and the ancientfuture church certainly stresses this point. Yet when discussing innovation and its application in many local churches, would this form of innovation be biblical? There are certain aspects of this form of innovation that cannot be ignored, such as if the preaching of Scriptures is being devalued by this process. While the focus of engaging all the senses is necessary, the neglecting of certain mandates for the sharing of the gospel cannot be ignored. Another issue would be whether or not this type of innovation would be effective in different communities and cultures. Of course the answer is no, but there is still the reality of discovering of how some of these can be applicable in creating community within church members lives. Since there are these various issues that must be processed when discussing innovation, one cannot just simply dismiss the whole idea of inserting ancient and early church worship forms in the current worship setting of a church as unbiblical. The reason for this is that the early Jewish community highly valued placing these traditions in worship to make the Scriptures relevant to the Jewish people.³¹

A second type of church and the example of innovation in churches is the Decision-Journey model.³² From this church perspective of innovation in ministry, the journey with Christ is not a single moment experience but rather something that happens over a period of time. There is some validity to the way a church may use this style of ministry, and it might come from a variety of areas. One example can come from Luke 14, where Jesus instructed the large crowds that were following Him to count the cost before they made that commitment. The Decision-Journey model allows for this to take place for those who may be in attendance. There

³¹ J. Julius Scott, Jewish Backgrounds of the New Testament, (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1995), 165

³² Towns, Innovations, 197

is also recognition that sometimes there are issues that need to be overcome in the mind of the person who is considering following Christ. In realizing this important fact, this model is in a sense providing a haven for a decision for Christ to be cultivated.

There are many benefits to this type of church, and these should be recognized. However, many church leaders question the principles that this type of innovation is based on. A prime example would be in the inclusion of those who are non-Christians to be a part of the Christian community within the local church. In this case, how can the distinction between the two groups being made without infringing on one of them and their needs? A question that can quickly arise among the discerning church leader is this; are one of these groups allowed to take precedence over the other? Or on the other hand, what can be done to provide ministry for both groups? Is such a concept even possible? These are serious questions that need some type of biblical guidance in order for church leaders to make informed decisions regarding application to their respective churches in which they serve. Such issues cannot and should not be taken lightly.

In observing some of the issues and questions that can arise from using innovation in the local church, it would seem as if it is a risky business to meet the needs of a community and be innovative in the first place. The answer to that thought is yes, it is risky to be innovative in ministry. Yet it is something that is very much needed in our society today. One pastor of a prominent church that is using innovation in ministry said the following of the intense urgent need for its use:

"It is apparent that the truth of the gospel is not welcome in our politically correct society that embraces all "truth" as equal. If ever there was a time when Christians - real Christians - need to be looking to innovate their evangelistic efforts, it is now. We must

uncover new ways to share the good news of Jesus Christ in our churches, our homes, and our society."³³

In essence, the point being made is that innovation is necessary. And since innovation is a necessary thing that churches need to be applying, it is very much worth the risk. Churches and church leaders need to be willing to sacrifice the comfort and convenience that is so easily afforded to them and take risks to reach those that are outside of their comfort zones. Since the need for innovation is necessary in churches today, so is the need for churches to sacrifice and risk in order to fulfill that need of innovation. A prominent Christian leader that was a force to be reckoned with in using innovation in church outreach strategies³⁴ stated that churches must always be willing to risk something for the cause of Christ. The following is a statement that was made concerning the use of innovation and sacrifice during the beginning stages of his ministry:

"It always cost you something to do a work for the Lord. If it does not cost you anything, it is not worth doing."³⁵

Since innovation is necessary, and sacrifice must be made in order to accomplish using it, there needs to be some type of criteria in order for a church to determine whether or not certain types of innovation should be applied to them. In order for pastors and church leaders to better understand how to make a specific determination on such a broad question, the refinement of several key issues must be broken down. By breaking down these issues, churches and church leaders can better grasp whether or not a specific innovation is or is not biblical. Yet there are even more specific questions than this, such as determining whether or not certain innovations would even work from one church community to another. For example, one methodology may work great for one church within a particular ministry setting and may be absolutely biblical in

³³ Jonathan Falwell, *Innovate Church*, (Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 2008), 5

³⁴ Macel Falwell, *Jerry Falwell: His Life and Legacy*, (New York: Howard Books, 2008), 245

³⁵ Jerry Falwell, *Falwell: An Autobiography*, (Lynchburg: Liberty House Publishers, 1997), 206

nature. However, that biblical method of innovation may not be applicable to a different church in a different setting because of the culture change from church to church. Just as different cities are fostered by different cultural elements, so the mode of specific innovations need to change to the specific environment in which ministry is taking place.

In order to make a determination on whether or not innovation should be implemented within a specific local church by church leaders and church members, this author has developed three questions. It is essential that these three questions be answered when applying innovation within the local church. In order to make the implementation, the answer to these three questions must be "yes". The essential questions of implementing innovation are:

- 1. Is the innovation not unbiblical?
- 2. Is the innovation pursuing the right purposes of both the kingdom of God at large and the local church?
- 3. Is the innovation applicable within the local church's culture of community?

It is the intention of the rest of this chapter to explain how a church can give a proper answer to each of these questions. In doing so the local church can discover what they can and should he willing to risk, as well as what they should not, in order to be innovative in ministry.

Innovation must not be unbiblical

In order to make a determination for answering the first question, some clear boundaries must be set to define exactly what it is that would constitute something being unbiblical. The first thing to notice is a specific terminology of the question. Instead of using the phrase

"biblical", the term "unbiblical" is used. There is a primary reason for this, and that is a difference of perception between the two words. In order for something to be biblical then it must be found within the Scriptures. That is not the case when it comes to using innovation. Since the word "innovative" in and of itself is defined as "introduce something new", this means that a church who is being innovative may be doing something that has never been done before within the context of the church.³⁶ Therefore the innovative method being used may not be found in Scriptures. This does not necessitate that a church doing this is wrong or doing something sinful. It simply means that the church in question is doing something cutting edge in ministry.

A prime example of this would be an illustration of steeples in America.³⁷ Many churches today who consider them self to be both conservative and traditional have a steeple on top of their church building. As a matter of fact, this may be viewed as a distinguishing characteristic of the building that would clearly define the church building as being a church in the eyes of those in the community. Yet if someone were to rewind the years of America's history about 400 years, this building would be looked down upon because it had a steeple. In that era of history, the use of steeples and outside symbols of Christianity were considered to be in poor taste. The point of this example is to show that something that is now considered traditional and acceptable was once considered too cutting edge. The problem is not that steeples were once unbiblical and now they are biblical. As a matter of fact the Bible does not speak about steeples being on a church building at any point of the early church's formation.

 ³⁶ Falwell, *Innovate*, 7
³⁷ Towns, *Innovations*, 15

As cultures change, then so do methodologies of doing ministry within these cultures. There is nothing inherently sinful about adapting to such changes. Yet there is a problem when innovation crosses into the realm of being "unbiblical". Doing something that is unbiblical, for the purposes of usage within this question, means that somewhere along the way something has been done that is opposed or condemned within the Scriptures. So the approach to answer the first question is not to see whether or not the innovative method can be found in Scriptures, but rather to discover whether or not the innovative method is condemned as sinful within the Scriptures.

There is one such resource that can help church leaders to determine this distinction by comparing the use of innovation to that of a group of campers around a camp fire.³⁸ In this specific use of symbolism, there are two items that must be distinguished. The first item is the campfire which is a symbol of the righteousness of God. The second item is the camper, and this symbolizes the church or follower of Christ. The entire process of the book deals with the issue of the light that is emitted from the fire. The question that arises from the author's is how far the camper can move away from the light before they find themselves completely shrouded by darkness. In other words, there are many degrees of being in the light from the span of that camp fire to the realm of total darkness. It seems to be that the symbolism that is provoked from this perspective opens up to a whole new view on the use of innovation. Instead of just dealing with the black and white issues that are common among Christianity, innovation can be in the shade of gray in many instances.

Yet even though there can be shades of gray in the use of innovation, churches and church leaders must always remember that there is a clear definition of Truth within the

³⁸ Elmer Towns, *Perimeters of Light*, (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2004), 21

Scriptures. This concept must always be in the forefront of the minds of those who lead within the church. However, this may be easier to state than accomplish in the society which many churches are doing ministry. The postmodern culture which envelopes the church has slipped into a mindset where truth is relative and there are no absolutes. One apologetic summed up the current mainstream cultural value system like this:

"For these postmodernist thinkers, the very idea of truth has decayed and disintegrated. It is no longer something noble by anyone who engages in the proper forms of investigation and study. Truth is not over and above us, something they can be conveyed across cultures and over time. It is inseparable from our cultural conditioning, our psychology, our race and our gender. At the end of the day, truth is simply what we, as individuals and as communities, make it to be- and nothing more."³⁹

While this assumption from many postmodernists is entirely false, it nevertheless is the type of environment and thinking that the church is facing today for using innovation. Bearing this in mind, the church must be absolutely sure that there are some absolutes that they are not willing to cross in order to be innovative. It is these truths and their adherence that sets the followers of Christ apart from any other group, organization, or religion in the world. The following list is a compilation of each of these truths from various sources which can be a general standard for determining in whether or not something crosses the line into the realm of being unbiblical in nature.⁴⁰ Each of these standards are what many consider to be the essentials in defining the doctrines that constitute the Christian faith.⁴¹

- 1. The Authority of Scriptures.
- 2. The Trinity.
- 3. The Sin Nature of Man.

³⁹ Douglas Groothius, *Truth Decay: Defending Christianity Against the Challenges of Postmodernism*, (Downers Grove, InterVarsity Press, 2000), 20

⁴⁰ The organization of both the data and the sources can be found in the appendix.

⁴¹ Charles Colsen, *The Faith: What Christians Believe, Why The Believe It, and Why It Matters*, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2008), 238

- 4. The Incarnation of Christ.
- 5. The Substitutionary Atonement of Christ on the Cross.
- 6. The Bodily Resurrection of Christ.
- 7. The Need of Salvation for Mankind.
- 8. The Need to live God-centered Lives.
- 9. The Return of Christ.

Again, it is important to note that this is not meant to be a definitive list of unbiblical oppositions found in the Scriptures, but only a general guideline in standards for making decisions within the local church on the implementation of innovation. If the particular form of innovation that a church is considering using is not opposed by Scripture from any of these nine standards, then as a general rule it should be permissible in ministry. Remember that the right question is not whether or not the innovation can be found specifically in Scripture. By the very nature of innovation, there may be no recorded evidence that a particular form of innovation has been used. Instead, the right question to ask is whether or not the innovation is opposed by the Scriptures and its teachings.

In light of this, it is necessary that church leaders understand the basics of orthodoxy in order to properly implement innovation in whatever form it may take. There are certainly dilemmas that can arrive from church leaders that are too eager to use innovation at all costs on the grounds that the ends justify the means. Yet there are also church leaders who have made it their entire ministry to oppose innovation in any form. Parkinson describes this dilemma in the following way:

"Whenever an overly broad or simplistic view of orthodoxy has been adopted, there has been too much tolerance of serious doctrinal error to the ultimate demise of the church in question. For instance, to espouse "No creed but Christ" and really mean it may ultimately lead to Liberalism... On the other hand, an overly narrow view of orthodoxy is divisive and repressive. If a church maintains that all that it believes is necessary to genuine Christianity, then many ugly consequences can result. Churches with any differing views are automatically viewed as heretical."⁴²

From the description of this problem, it becomes glaringly obvious that one of the essential problems when it comes to the use of innovation within the local church is the church leaders understanding of what orthodoxy both is and isn't, as well as what crosses into heresy. To help church leaders better understand this concept, a better and more simplistic description of orthodoxy needs to be given. Elwell gives a concise definition along with the necessity for grasping the concept:

"The English equivalent of Greek *orthodoxia*, meaning right belief, as opposed to heresy or heterodoxy. The word expresses the idea that certain statements accurately embodied the revealed truth content of Christianity and are therefore in their own nature and normative for the universal Church. This idea is rooted in the New Testament insistence that the gospel has a specific factual and theological content, and that no fellowship exists between those who accept the apostolic standard of christological teaching and those who denv it."43

It is critical that church leaders understand this ideal, as the biblical foundations when interpreting the unbiblical content that may be intertwined when innovation is at stake. Anything that fall short of this will leave churches and church leaders with, "loose ends that a perceptive critic can pull to unravel the fabric of the whole Christian faith".⁴⁴ In essence churches can either be built up or torn down based up on the innovation that is used. God has given churches the freedom to be innovative and creative in reaching out to the culture around them, yet that responsibility to remain faithful to the essentials of the Christian faith still stand. Thiessen provides a great hope and encouragement for those pastors and church leaders who want to

⁴² Joel R. Parkinson, Orthodoxy and Heresy: Where to Draw the Line, (Shippensburg: Companion Press, 1991), 2 ⁴³ Walter A. Elwell, *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2001), 875

remain both relevant to the culture around them, as well as be grounded within the principles of Christianity that are found in the Scriptures.

"We need to have an organized system of thought so as to make a consistent defense of our faith. If we do not, we will be at the mercy of those who have such a system. The Bible gives a consistent world-view and provides answers to the great problems which have faced the philosophers for generations."⁴⁵

God is the answer that people need to fix the problem of sin in their life. It is the responsibility of the church at large to find a way to reach the world in a way in which they understand this necessity. It is through innovation that the church can find a means to accomplish this great task. The caution is that churches need not be so eager as to give up or lessen the essentials of the Christian faith in the process. By making the commitment to not be unbiblical in the pursuit of relevance to the community, church leaders will be sure to not make this dangerous mistake. It is therefore essential that church leaders understand the difference between biblical, unbiblical, and no-biblical issues.

Innovation must pursue the purposes of the church

The reason that a church pursues innovation is to both fulfill the purposes of the Church in a Kingdom sense, as well as for the local church level. It is critical for churches and church leaders to understand this, as it shows the worldview that one needs to have in regards to both what a church is and is not. The answer to this worldview is that the church is something that Christ died and was resurrected to institute in reference to the church at large. To answer the question of whether or not a church is implementing innovation for the proper purposes, some

⁴⁵ Henry C. Thiessen, *Lectures in Systematic Theology*, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1979), 4

terminology must first be determined. The first is the defining of what the universal church is. Again, Elwell gives insight into this:

"It [the universal church] is the sphere of the action of the risen and ascended Lord. All its members are in Christ and are knit together by a supernatural kinship...Then the church will appear in the age to come as the one people of God united in one congregation before the throne, as the one celestial city- the new Jerusalem."⁴⁶

The universal church transcends denominational ties and breaks both traditional and contemporary conformities as they would be defined in the present. The universal church is a combination from every denomination of people that have genuinely committed their hearts to Jesus Christ. So then one question must be asked, and that is what the purpose of the universal church at large is? There may be many answers to this question that can, and probably should, be debated there is one that can transcend out of all of the discussion and into the application of the church. The answer is the mandated call of the Great Commission by Jesus Christ himself. As stated previously, the Great Commission can be seen as one of the common goals that every church both can and should have at the forefront of their respective local mission. With this assumption clearly in mind, it can easily be stated that innovation in ministry does help fulfill churches in completing this purpose. In the perspective of the universal church, the completion of this would be the evangelism of the world from a global standpoint. Yet there is also a defining of the church at the local level. On the local level, the church is responsible for being missional within the context of where the location of the church is physically. This will be detailed clearly in the next section.

If the first determination that must be made is whether or not the innovation is pursuing the purpose of the church at large, or universal church, the second item is to understand what

⁴⁶ Elwell, *Dictionary*, 246

makes a local "church" what it is. According to Towns, there are some specific characteristics that can make this known.⁴⁷ They are that a church is:

- 1. An assembly of believers.
- 2. Indwelt by the presence of Jesus.
- 3. Under the discipline of the Word of God.
- 4. Organized to carry out the Great Commission.
- 5. Administers the ordinances.
- 6. Reflects the spiritual gifts.

The reason that it is important for pastors and church leaders to understand the defining qualities of a church is to understand the churches nature. Far too often when pastors go beyond the boundaries into the opposition of Scripture and use unbiblical innovation, they are essentially canceling out one of these church natures. The reason that this is important is because there can come a point where a local church stops being a "church". If and when this happens, the local church has defeated its entire purpose for being creative and innovative in the first place. This can be a very scary reality, and the responsibility for ensuring that this doesn't happen rest squarely on the shoulders of the leadership.

If those items listed are the defining elements of what makes the "church" a church in the local sense, then there must also be another determination that has to be made. By an action of processes, how does the local church manifest these characteristics? These characteristics manifest themselves in five unique ways.⁴⁸ Each of these tasks is required for fulfilling the conditions of both the nature of the church theologically, and the tasks that Christ has laid for His

⁴⁷ Towns, *Theology*, 649-651

⁴⁸ Gene Mims, *The Kingdom Focused Church: A Compelling Image of an Achievable Future*, (Nashville: Broadman and Holman Publishers, 2003), ix

church to accomplish in ministry practically.⁴⁹ The first manifestation, or purpose, of the church is evangelism. As stated previously, the great commission is on the forefront of the mission of the local church and the church at large. The second purpose of the church is discipleship. This allows for the follower of Christ to become grounded into teachings that Jesus Christ left for them. The third purpose of the church is fellowship. This aspect of the church is important because it allows fellow believers to gather with one another for both encouragement and fun. Fellowship also allows the church to have a deep sense of community, which at many points is crucial during the growth process of a Christian. Since fellow Christians serve the same Lord here on earth, fellowship serves as the proper means of lifting each other's spirit. The fourth purpose of the church is worship. As one of the basic reasons that the churches in existence, the worship of God by His people is of the utmost importance. This allows not only the follower of Christ to lift up their adoration to the one true God, and also provides a means for real worship take place. An emphasis of this time should be the Word of God, which is essential in the changing of people's lives for eternity.⁵⁰ The fifth purpose of the church is ministry. This is based on the concept that churches are to move beyond themselves in service to others, demonstrating God's love for them. The church can be creative in using innovation to help these purposes be done in a more productive and exciting way. Applying innovation to these also allows the church to be more missional, which is essential in reaching the community around them.

In conclusion to fulfilling the purposes of the church, the defining of the characteristics and purposes of the church have yielded an answer. Yes, innovation should be used in meeting their purposes of the church. Yet in making this determination, an understanding must be made in

⁴⁹ Warren, Purpose, 103

⁵⁰ Colson, Faith, 149

three areas which are 1) what the church is, 2) what makes the church what it is, and 3) how the church actually fulfills its function. In making this determination, church leaders can make an objectionable and rational decision in determining if innovation is truly going to help fulfill its mission within the context of its community and location. Innovation should be applied to help the local church in completing her five defined purposes of evangelism, worship, fellowship, ministry, and evangelism.

Innovation must be applicable within the local church's culture

The third and final question that churches must consider when implementing innovation is whether or not it is applicable for the culture in which the church is located. This is an essential aspect of innovation; it requires an understanding of the dynamics within a particular community. One source describes the church as a fish that does not know that it is wet.⁵¹ It has spent so much time within an environment that it oblivious to anything else. It is important that churches understand the communities in which they are located, as this allows for a greater use of innovation to fulfill the Great Commission. To address this issue in another way, the use of innovation is also a contextual issue which is uniquely designed from church to church. What works within a major city in California may not necessarily work within the cornfields of North Dakota. Before using and implementing innovation, a careful consideration of each of these issues needs to take place within the church. The challenge that churches face in answering this question is to learn about the culture of their respective community. This excerpt may better describe the situation that many churches are currently facing:

⁵¹ Albert Mohler, *Culture Shift: Engaging Current Issues with Timeless Truth*, (Colorado Springs: Multnomah Books, 2008), xi

"Maybe you are in an area of the continent that is comfortable with traditional approaches and churches. Great! Become missional in that context, not a trendy community somewhere far away. For too many, they love their preferences and their strategies more than they love the people God has called them to reach. We are sent as God's missionary. The only question is where."⁵²

This serves as a great description of what churches need to do when using innovation and understanding their mission field. The great thing about innovation is that churches can use it as a tool to reach different cultures in different ways. In essence, every church must make this decision obviously based on their environment. For too often in ministry, programs are implemented just because another church did it and it worked for them. The truth of the matter is this; just because something worked somewhere else doesn't necessarily mean that it will work everywhere.

In many instances, this is where an argument can began within the Christian community. Some church leaders may say that what another church is doing is unbiblical, because the context in which the other church is doing ministry would not work where a specific church leader is located. In many instances, this is where the traditional versus the contemporary church models find their battles being fought. Really, at the heart of many of these arguments is not that something is unbiblical, but that there is a confusion of ministry context and location strategies. Stetzer provides another thought-provoking inside into this matter by stating:

"Recognizing that this is a contextual issue removes a lot of the argument. Simply put, traditional methods are not bad- as long as they are contextually applied and biblically critiqued in a traditional community. And, for that matter, contemporary methods are not required or even preferred if a community is not contemporary. Contextual as a ship means that we present the gospel and live life together in a missionally appropriate manner. Code-breaking churches are serious about reaching the lost, through innovation or tradition."⁵³

⁵² Ed Stetzer & Steve Putnam, *Breaking the Missional Code: Your Church Can Become a Missionary in Your Community*, (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2006), 6-7

⁵³ Ibid, 186

In some instances, innovation will work and should be applied within a specific community. In other instances, some churches may be better off to follow another traditional method. One of the keys to making this decision is discernment on the local culture that the church is ministering to. This will be one of the main determining factors in whether or not a church should apply innovation if it passes the test of the previous two questions. However, if innovation is applied in the right setting, and each of the three questions are answered in a positive way, then the application could have tremendous results.

This is the exciting factor when using innovation in ministry; everything works together and has tremendous results. In remembering the illustration from Warren used at the beginning about surfing, with the surfer being the church and the wave being God's movement in a particular setting, innovation is how churches can move from wave to wave. What an exciting thing to know that the church is growing and utilizing the movement of God within their community! That is an exciting thing to know that God is using a specific church in a specific community because they are spiritually hearing His movement within their local mission field. There is no pastor or church leader who would want to be left out of that category. If churches understand and utilize each of these three questions concerning innovation, the results could be tremendous with all the credit and recognition going to God.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE SURVEY DATA

"The entire Israelite community assembled at Shiloh where it had set up the tent of meeting there; the land had been subdued by them. Seven tribes among the Israelites were left who had not divided up their inheritance. So Joshua said to the Israelites, "How long will you delay going out to take possession of the land that the Lord, the God of your fathers, gave you? Appoint for yourselves three men from each tribe, and I will send them out. They are to go and survey the land, write a description of it for the purpose of the inheritance, and return to me" (Joshua 18:1-4).

At one point in time during the leadership of Joshua, the people of Israel had not fully surveyed the land in order to understand and equally distribute fully the joys of the "promised land". It had been during the times of Abraham that God had promised him a land that would be plentiful and abundant in nature. It becomes glaringly apparent in Joshua Chapter 18 that the people of Israel had become satisfied with the portion of land that had already been divided among the tribes. According to this passage of Scripture, there were still seven tribes who had not divided up their inheritance. This is amazing due to two reasons. The first was that the land was their land. There were no people that were left to conquer in order to obtain it; perhaps some resistant Canaanites. The second reason is that it shows how abundant this land truly was. Each of these tribes could simply go ahead and begin to be productive on their own property, yet they were satisfied with living off the partial abundance that had already been distributed. In order to better understand the intricacies of the land that was to be imparted to the seven tribes that were remaining, something had to be done in order to remain consistent; a survey.⁵⁴

⁵⁴ Henry, *Commentary*, 319

For the purposes of this study on innovation, a survey was taken among several churches to determine essential factors, or "treasures", when dealing with the nature and essence of innovation in church ministry. In order to accomplish this goal effectively and accurately, a 10 question survey had to be fully answered in order to be included in the study. This was done either by completing the survey via telephone or e-mail by an individual that served on staff within the church in question. Upon completion of several of these surveys, the results that were produced were very interesting. Many of the answers that were given were similar in approach and theory of innovative ministry, or maybe had a particular variable that was only slightly different. In order to present the findings of the survey, the questions of the survey are going to be presented along with the answers that were given by the local church leadership.

Questions and Answers

As stated previously, a 10 question survey was created in order to gain a proper perspective on how innovation either was, or was not, taking place within the local church. Each question was considered with a specific purpose in mind, which will be exposed as this chapter continues. The following is a list of the 10 questions:

- 1. Would you consider the church you serve to be innovative?
- 2. Who is the driving force behind the innovation being used?
- 3. What types of innovative ministries are in place right now, and what has been used in the past?
- 4. Would you consider the ministries successful?
- 5. How do you measure success?

- 6. Why does innovation need to be applied to ministry?
- 7. At what point did you decide to implement innovation in ministry?
- 8. How was innovation implemented into the DNA of the church?
- 9. What was the attendance of the church five years ago in contrast as of right now?
- 10. What suggestions or advice would you give a pastor who hopes to introduce innovation to his church?

The first question that was asked on the survey was reflected in nature and that it allowed the leadership of the church to step "outside" of the church and look in. This question was asked to determine the self perception of the leadership and the church. Overwhelmingly, the answer to this question was "yes" with no one surveyed answering any different. This answer remained the same regardless of the variations in innovation that was being used within the church. One interesting note to be made on this is that what one church may have considered being innovative, another may not. The answer to this question was only the perspective of the individual church leadership.

The second question to be asked in the survey was intended to provide the implementation of innovation basis for data interpretation of the survey. In other words, how was innovation intended to be carried out within each local church? The main answer to this question was always the church leadership. No matter the church, the pastor was always the initiator of the innovation. From there the people were empowered by the vision casting of the leadership, who shared the vision to them. One of the staff members that were interviewed gave the example of Nehemiah, who led the people and gave them the vision of what God wanted to be accomplished by them. This question was important in determining who was leading the

charge in innovation in the local church. The answer is crucial in determining how innovation should be carried out among church leadership.

The third question was to provide an indication based on survey information on the typical ministries that were being innovated within the church. Of course, the answers to this question varied from church to church. Some of the answers that were given included; making a church website, various ministries that were taking place within the community, and creating socio-economic ministries within the church. The intention of this question was not to simply get ideas that could be used by other churches, but rather to gain a perspective about what each particular church was considering to be innovation. This is important because it gives a perspective of both the community the church resides in, as well as what the church is doing to be contextual to the surrounding environment.

Question four was asked to allow the churches to give insight on whether or not they thought the current ministries were fulfilling their intended goal. The vast majority of the churches answered "yes" to this question. There were some that answered that a particular ministry may not have been that successful at first, and either needed to be re-created or removed for something else to take its place. It seemed that the leadership for churches that gave a negative response to this question was always evaluating each ministry within the church. This help them to determine which were worthy of being funded, and which were not. There was also a response in which the pastor said this was yet to be determined, for he had only been on staff for two months within the church.

Question five was actually a follow-up to the previous question. Basically, there were two answers to this question which were in the forefront. The majority of leadership answered this question by determining how many people had been impacted by the gospel. The second answer was that this is determined via the growth of the people within the ministry. These two answers could also be boiled down into two words; evangelism and discipleship. If people are being reached by a particular innovation with the gospel of Jesus Christ, then the ministry is successful. On the other hand, if the people already involved with the ministry in the church are growing, then that ministry is successful as well. This certainly supports the notion that there must be an over arching goal determined beforehand by which innovation is measured against.

Question six was asked in order to determine from the church leadership the reason behind the church being innovative. In short, the answer was the current shape of despair that many churches are in. One church leader summed up this thought by stating, "We (churches) will die. We need to re-think the way we do church and be relevant". This theme was repetitive in the responses to this question, which is indicative of the dire situation of the church today in the United States. This is a somber answer that certainly deserves a reflective thought by many churches.

The next question (7) allows for personal insight from the person completing the survey. Perhaps there was some pivotal moment in the life of the pastor when they determined they were going to be innovative in ministry styles, always trying to be on the cutting edge. In many instances, this was true. The answers ranged anywhere from being raised in church and seeing the need for something different to be done in order to be relevant to the community, to a person being "turned off" by church only to discover when coming to Christ that it did not have to be that way. Regardless of the answer, many leaders were aware that they were intentionally being innovative and had some moment where they had made the conscious decision to be so. This may well dispel the idea that a church "just becomes" innovative and strategic to the community; rather, it takes a conscientious effort to make the dream become a reality.

Question eight is a follow-up to question two, and asks the leader to get specific on how implementation of innovative ideas takes place. Each answer began with the pastor or staff, and then trickled down into the rest of the church leadership which could include; leadership teams, deacons, boards, etc. However the chain of command went within the church, there was always a trickle-down effect, and never vice-versa. This is interesting because it supports the idea that leaders are the vision casters within the church, and therefore responsible with leading the church in the direction that it should go under the direction of God. This is the best means of providing leadership to those within the congregation, as well as providing credibility to the leaders who provide the vision.

Next, question nine deals with numerical growth of the church under innovative leadership. While this writer concedes that this is not the only factor that determines the success of a church, for leaders cannot live and die by the numbers on a week to week basis, numbers can certainly point us in the right direction in many instances. In most of the churches surveyed, there was growth under the leadership that was currently in place. In one instance the pastor was new and the growth could not be indicated as of the present. In another instance there was a decline due to the leadership change, but presently the church was recovering with credit due to innovative outreach strategies to the community. The average attendances of the church were tough to track over a five year period, as some churches were not that old yet. This gives way to the notion that some of these churches were new church plants, and therefore they were not bound by many traditions. The final question (10) was intended to give advice to those in leadership who wanted to implement innovation in their church. In retrospect, many of the answers to this question can be quite helpful to most church leaders at any stage of church development. The end result is insight for both those who may be establishing a new church, or working in an established church. For this reason, several of these responses are worth noting in this thesis. One leaders advice was to "not be afraid of losing prestige, money, or power" when implementing innovation in the local church. Some of the implications of this will be discussed in the following chapter. Another recommendation was to "build relationships and trust" between the pastor and the membership. This is another key element that needs to be undertaken, and is supported by many of the concepts in chapter 7. If there is no trust, then quite frankly there is no support in the innovation the pastor is presenting. Nothing will be able to happen without trust.

Still another piece of advice was to "paint the future as God's design" for the local church. This deals specifically with the ever important role that vision plays between the pastor and the church. This is another issue that is going to be dealt with in chapters that are to follow, but it is important to note that vision is what will motivate the people to be obedient to God's plan for the church. Notice that the ownership of the vision ultimately belongs to: God. The pastor may be the one sharing the vision; the actual concept should have come from a time where the pastor gets alone from God to receive instruction. Dr. Johnny Hunt, one of the great pastors presently in the evangelical community today and former president of the Southern Baptist convention, fully concedes to this notion when he writes:

"What they (church members) need from their leaders is the encouragement and opportunity to make tracks in the lane of ministry God has given them, going and blowing full throttle. So why don't we (pastors) lead like this? One reason, quite honestly, is that leaders don't always have a clear vision for the church and its people - perhaps not even a vision for themselves. We cannot challenge others to embrace a mission we don't personally possess and embody. People under the Lordship of Christ will always be our greatest resource for accomplishing God's kingdom priorities and activities."⁵⁵

This is an important element when dealing with innovation, as well as anything else in the church. People must be shown why they are doing a Ministry a specific way, and if this doesn't happen been a type of anxiety will set in that will be harder to overcome later in the church's life. A detailed strategy for overcoming this barrier will be shared in chapter 7.

The last suggestion to be shared is that pastors and church leaders need to "learn and listen from the past, and ask the right questions for the future." Proper goals for ministry strategies need to be set in place in order to make sure that the strategies are fulfilling the overall purpose of the church. If they are not, then some serious reflection needs to take place in the leadership of the church in order to evaluate these successes and failures. The specific goals that are set in place beforehand will determine a ministries success or failure. The basic assumption behind this suggestion is that if something in the church is not working, then it either needs to stop being funded and replaced or restructured to make it work. In both cases, adding innovation to the ministry could be the change that is needed in order to make it become more successful in reaching the community. This is another key element that will be discussed in the chapters to follow.

If the responses from these church leaders are any indication, then there is certainly a need for churches today to be revived in their relevance to the community that surrounds them for the sake of Christ. If the local church does not choose to accept this task, then as one pastor said in this survey, the results could prove to be fatal. The local church, founded upon the Lord Jesus Christ, offers the only true hope for an individual that will last for eternity. If the church is

⁵⁵ Johnny M. Hunt, *Building Your Leadership Resume: Developing The Legacy That Will Outlast You*, (Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 2009), 6

not reaching their community with this message, then the problem can only be in one of two places. The first option is with the message, to which this author contends there is absolutely no fault in the gospel of Jesus Christ. Therefore, the second option of fault lies with the church that has been entrusted to take that message to the peoples of the world. The chapters that are to follow in this section will deal heavily with strategizing how this is to take place, along with the role that church leadership must take when implementing new ideas in the local church setting. According to the survey data, each of these two areas is overwhelmingly critical to the innovative process in ministry. It is for these reasons that so much time is dedicated to both the implementation and leadership involvement process of innovation for the local church.

CHAPTER SIX

THE IMPLEMENTATION OF INNOVATION

"When the apostles returned, they reported to Jesus all that they had done. He took them along and withdrew privately to a town called Bethsaida. When the crowds found out, they followed Him. He welcomed them, spoke to them about the kingdom of God, and cured those who needed healing. Late in the day, the Twelve approached and said to Him, "Send the crowd away, so that they can go into the surrounding villages and countryside to find food and lodging, because we are in a deserted place here." "You give them something to eat," He told them" (Luke 9:10-13).

The story of the feeding of the five thousand is certainly an amazing one. There is a great word picture as the disciples and Jesus were traveling along the picturesque countryside of Jerusalem, nestled against the Sea of Galilee. The disciples were tremendously excited about what God was doing through them as ministers of Jesus Christ. As a backdrop to the verses that will provide an introduction to this chapter, the disciple had just returned from what could be described in contemporary terms as one amazing missionary trip. At the beginning of the chapter, Jesus had just sent them out to do ministry in pairs. This was their introductory class to ministry, and there were some great results as an outcome. Before they had left, Jesus equipped them with the power and authority to share the message of the good news. Since there must have been a desire for the disciples to be believed, there was a special means that the disciples had in order for the people to listen to the message; the ability to perform miracles.

Before this, the disciples had only had the opportunity to witness the Lord accomplish miracles. Throughout the gospels, this seems to have always amazed them concerning the great power that Jesus truly had in doing miracles. Now, on their first solo mission experience, they were the ones that were performing the miracles. Not only were they able to perform great things for God, but people were actually listening to their message of good news. Imagine how surreal the whole situation that these men were experiencing must have been. The wonder that they felt each time someone who had been diseased for a long period of time was instantly healed before their eyes as they prayed and laid hands on them. The crowds that would have began following them, begging them to share their message again and again. The countless lives that were being changed on a daily basis would have been incredible. If this was what ministry was all about, then count them in.

They were just returning back to where Jesus was, and their spirits were soaring. They must have almost been having a debriefing meeting with Christ, sharing stories while being instructed on their meanings and importance. Then a crowd, perhaps some of the crowds that had been made by the disciple's miracles, began following them. Next Jesus began sharing with the crowd, as well as healing the people. This probably went on for some time, and finally the disciples wanted Jesus to tell the crowd to go away. Besides, they would have had all the rights in the world to be tired. They had been on a journey, and they were tired. In their minds Jesus must have been exhausted from His day as well. They were situated on a hillside with no food or shelter around. And just maybe, at the end of their long day, they just wanted to be left alone with Jesus. In the end, the twelve disciples approached Jesus and told Him to send everyone away because there was no possible way that they could help all these people. Instead of being in agreement with all their "rational" thinking, Jesus looked them in the eyes and said, "You give them something to eat".

The disciples seemed almost shocked by the response that Jesus gave. Did He really just say that? Perhaps Phillip was almost indignant at this, for many times it was he who was

portrayed as analytical in nature.⁵⁶ The response given could be taken either honestly or sarcastically to the request that Jesus had just made by basically responding "how". Remember, they had just returned from performing miracles. They had seen God use them firsthand to heal diseases and have power over the enemy. Yet now when they were faced with this new challenge, their hearts must have shrunk. This was an impossible request, or so it seemed to them. The great thing about Jesus is that He always has the master plan, and there is always a way for Him to make the impossible quite possible. Before their very eyes the Lord not only feed the 5,000 men that was gathered around, but also their families that would have been with them with only five loaves and two fish. What an amazingly innovative God!

In much the same way, this passage can serve as an illustration of churches today. The church has experienced the great and abundant blessings of God. Church leaders and pastors have received the full gift of salvation through Christ, something to never be forgotten. Yet far too many times churches are like the group of disciples after they got back from their mission trip. They are excited about what God has done and the blessings they have received. Maybe they still talk about where God has brought them from in their past and the barriers that have been moved for them. Yet somewhere along the way a large crowd of people has been gathering in the community that has yet to hear about or experience Christ's power in their life. These people are spiritually just waiting for a church to reach out to them with this message in a way that will drive the point home. This will require a little innovation on how the message is shared. But far too many times these same churches are like Philip, unwilling to be innovative and basically wishing that these people would go away or somebody else would do something so they would not have to be the ones to do it.

⁵⁶ Elmer Towns, *The Gospel of John: Believe and Live*, (Chattanooga: AMG Publishers, 2002), 59

Churches need a game plan to implement the innovation necessary to reach the communities to whom they minister. If one isn't made, then the church will basically be "sending away" the people that they could otherwise be reaching with the message of the Good News. This wasn't an option with the Lord when pushed by the disciples, and not much has changed for the church some 2,000 years later. If the answer had changed, then God would not have shared the hypocrisy that is found in James 2:15-17 when it states:

"If a brother or sister is without clothes and lacks daily food, and one of you says to them, "Go in peace, keep warm, and eat well, "but you don't give them what the body needs, what good is it? In the same way faith, if it doesn't have works, is dead by itself."

John's account of this incident shows that Jesus wants to be the Bread of Life to any person who is willing to hear the message and accept His love and forgiveness.⁵⁷ And apparently, Jesus was willing to go to extreme measures to share the message to as many people as possible. As the church is founded on the Christ, this example would be the best possible one for the church to follow. The church must be willing to innovatively go to extreme measures in order to spread the message of Christ to everyone that will receive it.

It will be the intention of the remaining parts of this chapter to share a fourfold biblical process that churches can use in bringing innovation to the forefront of ministry. The process is fairly simple, yet each step is significantly important. There is a need to understand that each of these steps are interwoven, and taking one out of the process will only make the implementation of innovation more difficult for the pastor or church leader. It is important to note that the pastor is crucial in the innovation that a church uses, which will be discussed in a later chapter. For now the focus is simply on the process of implementing innovation in ministry. Churches and

⁵⁷ Andreas J. Kostenberger, *Encountering John*, (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 1999), 100

church leaders can use this as an outline for how to make changes occur in the current ministry environments they are in.

Step One: Prayer

The first of the four step process of implementing innovation is prayer. Prayer can be the ultimate game-changer when it comes to the direction of anything in the world. It is so important in the eyes of God that He has filled the Scriptures with example after example of people seeking Him in prayer to make a difference in their lives. Peter and Paul, the disciples used as the innovators earlier in this writing, certainly made prayer a consistent and powerful part of their life and ministries. The Lord Jesus could always be found praying, whether it is in the good times or the bad. An example of this could be at the Garden of Gethsemane, where He was in prayer leading up to this foreknown event. Even while on the cross, the last words that He spoke before the resurrection would take place was a prayer. The point being made here is that prayer is important.

It has already been determined that innovation in ministry is a risky business. There are critics that are going to demonize the strategy that church leaders are going to be using. People are going to be uncomfortable with doing a certain thing that may have been done in a certain way for a long period of time differently. Pressure is certainly on both the church and the leader that is using the innovative methods, and the last thing that is needed is for the innovation to fail. Does failure happen in ministry? Yes. Is it a pretty sight? No. Yet a sure found method for letting an innovative ministry idea, or any ministry for that matter, be doomed for failure is to

fail to pray. In one source, Earley writes that prayer can be the deciding factor in becoming mediocre or great:

"The more I study spiritual leadership and see how it works in daily life, the more I am convinced that prayer is the determining factor. The difference between mild stirrings and deep breakthroughs is prayer. The difference between a temporary inclination and a lasting change is often prayer. The difference between mediocrity and greatness is frequently prayer. The more we pray, the more God works. The more God works, the better everything will ultimately be. We fail to recognize the astounding way our omnipotent God has linked his activities to our pravers."⁵⁸

That is such an astounding way to view the means by which God has ordained as His communication tool between us and Him in Christ; prayer. To take this point to another level, it may not be a lack of reading, books, or programs, that can hamper ministry but a lack of prayer most certainly will.⁵⁹ For the thriving success of any ministry, churches must make it important to pray for them, the people involved, and the people that will be reached as an outcome from them. This is an essential part of the implementation of innovation process, as it should be within the context of ministry and Christian life in general.

A biblical example of this is found in Acts 16, beginning in verse 25. On this occasion Paul and Silas had been spreading the good news of Jesus Christ throughout the community of Philippi. While there Lydia, a prominent woman in the community, received Christ and was baptized along with her family. God was doing amazing things, which was consistently the case when related to Paul. Then right after this great experience, some of the townspeople turned on him and took him to be cast in jail by the officials after being beaten. Then God used an innovative method to bring about the salvation of the jailer and his family; He caused an earthquake to split the jail open. But just before the means of innovation was used, Paul was

⁵⁸ Dave Earley, *Prayer: The Timeless Secret of High-Impact Leaders*, (Chattanooga: Living Ink Books,

^{2008), 7} ⁵⁹ James D. Berkley, *Leadership Handbook of Management and Administration*, (Grand Rapid: Baker Books, 2007), 57

doing something; praying and singing hymns (v.25). Prayer is an essential element, both for innovation and life change.

God can do some very amazing things, and He wants to do them in the life of the church at large. God can use any local church that is willing and able to be used by Him. The question really is not whether God able to do something great, or does God want to do something great in His church. The question is whether churches are setting the right foundation so that they can be blessed by God through their genuine efforts and commitment to Him? This is the first essential element to innovation implementation. Yet even beyond innovation, this should be the beginning step to anything that the church wants to do for eternal impact.

When praying about the implementation of innovations, there are three things that need to be brought to the Lord in the prayers. The first is to be specific. Pray specifically about whatever type of innovation is being used. Ask God to bless it, as you are certain it was He that directed you to do it in the first place. There is a certainty from the Scriptures that God wants His people to come to Him in Prayer time and time again. In his book that discovers how churches can have the same impact as the church in Antioch, Hemphill asserts that quite possibly one of the reasons that churches may not be growing is prayerlessness.⁶⁰ Could it be that one of the most basic concepts is the thing that causes most churches to come to a standstill in ministry? Quite simply, the answer is "yes". Be specific when praying for the innovative strategy being used.

The second is pray for the people involved. The more large scale the innovation in ministry, the more amounts of people are going to be involved. If the innovation is going to be

⁶⁰ Ken Hemphill, *The Antioch Effect: 8 Characteristics of Highly Effective Churches*, (Nashville: Broadman and Holman Publishers, 1994), 63

church-wide, then it will certainly affect everyone in the church. Conflict can arise in making changes and innovations in ministry, as previously discussed. It has been stated that for every change church leaders make, approximately 5-7% of the people in the church will oppose it, and that figure multiplies with each change.⁶¹ Praying for those involved can help deter many conflicts that can happen within a body of believers. One source concludes that anytime change or something new is being attempted within a group of people, the natural response is anxiety.⁶² There are two ways that this anxiety about change can be dealt with by an individual, and that is to hide it or be vocal about it. It is the purpose of the church to create an atmosphere of *shalom*, or God's peace, within the church community and not discourse.⁶³ Since the source of this type of peace comes only from God, it would make sense to approach God as a church leader on behalf of those involved in the process of innovation before anything negative even happens. This will save the church leader/pastor much grief.

The third key is to pray for those that will be impacted by the innovation. This group includes those that will either be drawn to a closer relationship to Christ through the innovative method, or will come to know Christ as their personal Savior for the very first time. It is important to keep in mind that this is one of the main reasons that the strategy was implemented in the first place. The prayer is that these people's lives will be impacted by the gospel, and it is one of the responsibilities of the church to carry out the Great Commission. It is the Great Commission given by Christ that compels the church to speak the truth in love to those without Christ, and this is the responsibility of every believer.⁶⁴ Bearing this in mind, it would be wise to

⁶¹ Bryan Beyer, "Don't Despair", Life Lessons: Bible Studies for Life, Spring 2009, 27

⁶² Peg Pickering, *How to Manage Conflict: Turn All Conflicts Into Win-Win Outcomes*, (Franklin Lakes: Career Press, 2000), 76

⁶³ Hugh F. Halverstadt, Managing Church Conflict, (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1991), 5

⁶⁴ Will Metzger, *Tell the Truth: The Whole Gospel to the Whole Person by Whole People*, (Downers Grove: Intervarsity Press, 2002), 162

lay a foundation for those impacted by the gospel by bringing them before God in prayer. The end result of the innovative method is not the innovation itself, but the lives that will be changed through the use of it in ministry. Prayer is essential in all aspects of ministry, and should not be overlooked or taken too lightly.

Step Two: Plan

After prayer, the next step in the implementation of innovation in ministry is to plan. Something that is worth doing is worth doing right, and this means that careful planning should be made regarding how this is going to happen within the life of the church. This is where strategies are made on how the innovation is going to be carried out. There are specific questions that need to be answered by the leadership before actually implementing the plan, and some are:

- What is the goal of this innovation?
- How is it going to be carried out?
- Who is going to carry it out?

These may seem basic, but they are essential to making something happen that will not be half-hazard and doomed to failure from the beginning. An example of this can be found in the placing of the proper people in the proper place. If this is not done, then the entire innovative plan may suffer. In his book *Good to Great*, Collins describes planning as one of the critical factors in determining whether or not something is simply good or is going to become something

great.⁶⁵ If innovation is being used by church leaders properly, there will certainly be an order to the chaos, so to speak.

A point in case could be the change a pastor may want to make in the worship service, and have some type of impact on an artistic part of the community that is not being reached by the churches in the area. Perhaps the solution to this would be to have someone come and paint a portrait of the sermon that the pastor is going to be preaching about during the service. It would be insane to get to church and then try to ask someone to do it that morning. There has to be some type of planning that is going to be done beforehand. There would need to be painting supplies available, an artist who is capable of painting the desirable end result (which would need to be of quality if the end goal is to attract artistic people with the message of Christ), a worship team that can help involve the portrait in the worship process, etc. Besides all of this, there also need to be a promotion of what is going to happen within the artistic community, so in a sense even the promotional method is going to have to be innovative. There has to be some specific planning by leaders if the innovative method is going to be a success.

With this step in the process comes an essential question; how can church leaders make sure they have all their bases covered when making these implementations? One sure way is to have a team in place that will help strategize with the church leader(s). Church leaders should not feel that they have to carry the burden alone. One leadership guru points out that he and his research team has, "yet to find a single instance in which one talented person – leader or individual contributor – accounted for most, let alone 100 percent, of the success."⁶⁶ Church leaders do not have to do all the work themselves, nor should they when dealing with innovation.

⁶⁵ Jim Collins, Good to Great, (New York: Harper Business, 2001), 41

⁶⁶ James Kouzes & Barry Posner, *The Leadership Challenge*, (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2002), 241

There are simply too many details that have the potential to be overlooked, and quite honestly the stakes are too high. The answer is to have a team in which collaboration and discussion is taking place. This is the imperative key in the planning process, aside from prayer, for achieving high performance and extraordinary results.⁶⁷

Step Three: Promote

After the previous steps have been followed, the next practical step in the implementation process is to promote the innovation being used. It is during this phase that the pastor/church leader will be very glad they followed both steps one and two beforehand. The first reason is because the prayer has been put into the project. Because of this, there will be a clear sense of confidence in the decision being made as it is being brought publically to the church. Secondly, the planning stage will give the ability to answer all the detailed questions that will certainly arise from publicizing the innovation. When people have questions, it is important that the church leaders be prepared to answer them and be as informed as possible concerning the innovation and the reasoning behind it. This will incredibly lesson the "anxiety" factor that was mentioned previously concerning change, replacing it with confidence and peace that the leadership has thoroughly thought through the implementation process.

Atmosphere is an important part of the promotional process, and creates an opportunity for the leadership to create excitement within the church about what change is going to take place. During this process it is important to continue in the prayer aspect of implementation, as

⁶⁷ Ibid., 242

it is the Holy Spirit that will ignite the motivation within the Christian.⁶⁸ The Holy Spirit is the receptor of the vision that will be put into the minds of the congregation as it is presented by the church leadership. Thus, the Holy Spirit will direct their energies in the proper direction. With this in mind, it becomes clear that during the promotional process it is primarily the church leadership's responsibility to largely provide a motivational environment and channel the congregation's energies into the proper direction.⁶⁹ Church leaders need to be both positive and motivational when speaking about the innovation, as this will make or break the idea(s) in front of the congregation. It is also important to be very clear and honest about what is going to happen and why. People in the congregation need to make an honest and informed decision about what is going to take place, and whether or not they are going to be involved with it. This is the best policy for everyone involved in the process.

One of the best ways to promote is to provide the objective, or end result, when promoting the innovative strategy to the congregation at large. Innovation is not just done for innovations sake, but for an end purpose. If this is not done, then something will happen called "end-means inversion".⁷⁰ This is when the end result of the innovative method is confused with innovative method itself. As warned in a previous chapter, innovation is not done for its own sake. This will be confusing for many people in the congregation, as well it should be. This would make as much sense as just doing nothing, for there must be a reason behind doing anything. A prime example would be money, which is always a valuable asset. Churches need money to operate, but money is not the end result. It simply provides a means for the end result to take place. In the same way, innovative ministry methods are not an end result. They simply

⁶⁸ Bruce P. Powers, *Church Administration Handbook*, (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1997), 15

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ Charles A. Tidwell, *Church Administration: Effective Leadership for Ministry*, (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1985), 79

provide a means by which the end result can occur. The end result should be heavily promoted within the church, and the innovation promoted as the means by which the end result can occur. Tidwell asserts this by stating:

"But one thing that is known is that there is a direct correlation between the perceived worthiness of a cause and the willingness of persons to support that cause. A church has the most worthy of causes! Why don't people just fall all over themselves in support of the cause? One reason is that leaders have not helped them to clearly perceive the extreme worthiness of the cause."⁷¹

Another helpful benefit of promoting is that it will allow the church leaders to present innovation in such a way that the membership will take hold of it as their own. When this is done, the pastor/leaders have accomplished an important role that they possess as will be discussed in the next chapter. The reason that this is beneficial is because it allows leaders to pass this ministry to those will catch the vision, grasp onto it, and begin to run with it. It is the responsibility of church leadership to pass ministry ideas on to others who will "continue the race" using innovation.⁷² In the Old Testament, the book of Habakkuk 2:2-3, the prophet writes a good deal on the subject:

"The Lord answered me: Write down this vision; clearly inscribe it on the tablets so one may easily read it. For the vision is yet for the appointed time; it testifies about the end and will not lie. Though it delays, wait for it, since it will certainly come and not be late."

If pastors and leaders could cast the innovative method in this light, there would be such excitement the people could hardly contain it. Yet there is also encouragement for the leader in this passage, and that is God is faithful to follow through with the vision that He has given to the pastor/leader. Promotion is important in the implementation process. It also provides some great opportunities for the church leadership within the church. This can be a very exciting time for

⁷¹ Ibid., 80

⁷² Rowland Foreman, Jeff Jones, Bruce Miller, *The Leadership Baton*, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2004),

those in the church if it is presented in the right way and for the right reasons. Prayerfully make sure that this is done.

Step Four: Prove

This is the final part of the implementation process, and quite possibly the most encouraging. This is where the results from the implementation are beginning to be seen by everyone. This is an exciting time where the fruits of everyone efforts are beginning to be paid off and God is showing up in a big way! The culmination of all the hard work that the pastor/leader has spent organizing, praying, planning, and promoting will now seem worthwhile and fulfilling. There are two great benefits in this part of the process and they are very encouraging to all. The first is that the greatness of God is going to be displayed. Depending upon the magnitude of the innovation, this will be witnessed by large or small amounts of people that were either involved or witnessing the process. As God is due all the glory for anything good that happens, this is certainly a great thing.

The second benefit is that the leadership will gain credibility in the eyes of those involved, or witnessing, the process. This can be incredibly important in the ministry that pastor has been faithful in following through with. There are two reasons for this. The first is they were faithful to an innovative project that some may have deemed as ludicrous, but God deemed as necessary. One can take some pride and comfort in that thought. It is more important to be willing to please God than man. The second reason is that it provides a certain amount of credibility in the minds of the congregation. This is necessary because people will more readily follow someone who has proven that they are worthy enough to follow.⁷³ The comforting thought that can be gained from this is that it may be easier for the leader to promote another innovative strategy further down the road in the life of the church.

In conclusion, each of these steps plays an integral role in the implementation of the innovative strategy that is going to be used. After the entire process has been completed, it begins all over again from the beginning for the next innovation. The bad news is that it is always hardest the first time, especially in an already established church setting. The good news is that it gets easier after each consecutive time. A closing word of encouragement to pastors and church leaders is to not fear failure. This will stop a leader quicker than anything else from even attempting innovation in ministry.⁷⁴ Rather than focusing on why something shouldn't be done, perhaps the focus needs to be shifted on why it should, especially if the answer is obedience to the Lord and His direction.

⁷³ George Barna, Leaders on Leadership: Wisdom Advice and Encouragement on the Art of Leading God's *People*, (Ventura: Regal Books, 1997), 191 ⁷⁴ Ibid., 194

CHAPTER SEVEN

THE ROLE OF CHURCH LEADERSHIP IN INNOVATION

"Therefore, as a fellow elder and witness to the sufferings of the Messiah, and also a participant in the glory that is about to be revealed, I exhort the elders among you: Shepherd God's flock among you, not overseeing out of compulsion but freely, according to God's will; not for money but eagerly; not lording it over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock. And when the chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory. Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, so that He may exalt you in due time, casting all your cares upon Him, because He cares about you" (1 Peter 5:1-4, 6-7).

This passage of Scripture is very important to the guidance of leadership that the pastor has upon the church that he has been called to serve. In order to properly interpret this passage of Scripture, it is critical to understand exactly who it was that the author was writing to. Henry states that the intended audience is "the presbyters, pastors, and spiritual guides of the church, elders by office, rather than by age, ministers to those churches to whom he wrote this epistle."⁷⁵ In essence, God is speaking to the pastor and leadership within the local church. The statement given in the passage is directed to every pastor and church leader today as well. Also in this direct greeting is a list of instruction with a promise. The instructions are basically threefold, 1) to feed the flock of God, 2) take the oversight of the church, and 3) be an example to the flock.⁷⁶ According to this list of instructions the responsibility that a pastor has towards a church is a great one indeed, and it is only through the guidance of the Holy Spirit that he is able to accomplish such a large task. The focus of this chapter will primarily be how the church

⁷⁵ Matthew Henry, *Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible: Complete and Unabridged in One Volume*, (Wheaton: Hendrickson Publishers, 1991), 2432

⁷⁶ Wiersbe, *Exposition*, 428-431

leadership can use innovation in each of these three areas, in general terms, in leading the church.

However, bearing in mind the responsibilities of leadership does not mean that the pastor must lose sight of the reward. Being called as a pastor is a truly rewarding experience, and one of the most (if not the most) honoring callings that God can bestow upon a mere man. Are there going to be low spots in the minister's life along the way? Sure. Is it going to be tough in light of the adversities that pastors have to face sometimes? Of course it is. Yet there is always that delight in being involved in something that is vastly bigger than it seems. To be able to be given a place in the eternal scheme that is set in place and to be involved with people who are making decisions that will affect them for eternity. And one should not forget the "crown of glory" that Peter so excitedly mentions will be waiting for the man of God who makes himself humbly available to accomplish this task in Christ. So stop a moment, take a deep breath, and take joy in the reward that is to be had, both right now and in what will one day be!

The church today has many responsibilities as well, along with the pastors who lead those churches. When dealing with innovation in ministry strategies, there is no exception to this rule. The leadership of the church is vastly significant when dealing with being innovative. In almost all instances, if the pastor is not supportive or leading the way then innovation will simply not work. One of those responsibilities includes the developing of lay leadership within the church. As stated previously, one of the main reasons for innovation is to fulfill the Great Commission. Yet the Great Commission is not just evangelism, but also something else; discipleship.⁷⁷ Pastors whom God has called are intended to equip, prepare, and train the lay members to do the

⁷⁷ James W. Bryant, Mac Brunson, *The New Guidebook for Pastors*, (Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 2007), 67

work of the ministry to build up the church (Eph. 4: 12). Churches depend upon lay members and in the present time, this is even more significant than it was in the past. As it was during biblical times, this training needs to be done with a heart that is deeply concerned for the well being of the one whom is receiving the discipleship. As a pastor, this is one of the responsibilities which the Bible mandates be implemented and exemplified as a lifestyle. One of the reasons that this is so important is that the local church could not continue without the instrumental help that is given through lay leadership. Bearing this information in mind, creativity and innovation can and should be threaded into the fabric of church life.

There have been many books which have been written concerning discipleship and how it can be practiced within the church. Yet this student will approach this topic with a different perspective. Not only should the church be developing leadership through training in their particular sphere of ministry, but also in their personal life. Lay leadership shouldn't just lead on Sunday morning, but in every area of their life. This methodology requires that lay leaders portray a "lifestyle" of leadership. For this to occur, then there must be a development of the whole person as a leader. This is exactly the example that was given to believers by Jesus in the model set forth by His relationship with the disciples. Jesus did not just show Peter how to be a leader in preaching and teaching. Instead, Jesus taught Peter first how to lead in his personal life, and then the leadership skills flowed from that starting point. In the same way, pastors today should not just teach lay leaders how to lead in certain ministries, such as controlling the worship service media. Instead, pastors should teach lay persons how to lead starting from their own personal development.

It should be noted that while each of these three areas should be modeled by the pastor for the lay person, it is the modeling of ministry that will usually be the most public and obvious to the church. It is for this reason that the pastor needs to model skills that are important in the life of the church when implementing innovation. For example, if the pastor wants his lay leaders to be prompt and on time for events, classes, and meeting, then the pastor needs to be prompt in arriving. The same goes for modeling skills such as preparation, study, prayer habits, etc. The lay leader should be able to imitate the pastor, as the pastor is imitating characteristics of Jesus Christ as found within the pages of Scripture. In developing lay leadership in the area of leading in ministry innovation, there is a simple three step process that can be used within churches that will now be discussed. That process is 1) training the lay leadership; 2) allow them to "own" the ministry by giving it away to them, after which 3) they truly lead the ministry by helping others.

Some reminders concerning these three steps, or principles, in terms of implementing innovation need to be made. These are general guidelines, not hard laws. It can be readily understood that there can be some allowance for change in each of these steps. Pastors and church leaders can and should implement innovation in such a way that God has gifted them in their leadership abilities. There can be some rather large scale ministry innovations that can be made within the local church. The major factor to be understood is that the full support by pastor, staff, and leadership need to constantly be shown to the church body. When speaking in terms of the pastor themselves, do not forget that there were responsibilities given in the beginnings of the chapter. These guidelines only create an atmosphere that will foster creativity and innovation within the church, beginning with the pastor and leadership.

Training

Step one in innovation oversight is: "training". This is the actual training aspect of developing lay leadership, whereby the pastor teaches the "nuts and bolts" of a particular ministry to the lay person. According to Ed Stetzer, this is a very important component for churches who truly want to make an impact upon their communities.⁷⁸ According to him. pastors should never expect that their members "just get" how a particular ministry should operate. Or, for that matter, understand the reasoning behind why something is being done without it ever being explained to them in some shape or form. Instead, the pastor and other leaders should "empower" their lay leaders with how the church wants a particular ministry or ministries to operate. For example, Jesus never expected the disciples should just figure out for themselves what God was expecting from them. Thank the Lord for this simple fact, because from the way that circumstances occur in some churches throughout the New Testament they may very well have never figured it out. Instead, Jesus trained in a real and personal way through the actions of His life. This means that pastors and staff will need to gather a core group of laity around them as they show them how to carry out the tasks of ministry. This has been hinted to in previous chapters, but very much worth re-stating again.

There is also another key factor that is vital in the role of training lay leaders within the church; communication. This is how the pastor transports the vision of the church into the minds of the lay leaders, then from the lay leaders to the rest of the congregation. As a minister is called to lead the church, he must be able to accomplish this task. According to George Barna, one of the main characteristics of a pastor who is going to lead his church in the right direction is

⁷⁸ Ed Stetzer, *Comeback Churches: How 300 Churches Turned Around and Yours Can Too*, (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2007), 142

starting with a clear sense of what the church is striving to accomplish.⁷⁹ It is for this very reason that the pastor must, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit in the Lordship of Jesus Christ, be able to develop a clear vision in the minds of the lay leadership that the church is aiming towards. This vision will be the basis for all purposes in ministry that is taking place within a church. If the pastor has been challenged by God to implement innovation in the local church ministry, it needs to be regularly brought before the people with passion. The vision will also offer guidelines which will allow the church to measure if a particular ministry is meeting the standard that has been set forth by the church to accomplish.

One thing that should be noted within the context of training laity for ministry is to make sure that the role they are filling is within their particular area of spiritual giftedness. If it is not, then that person may soon find themselves being burned out and slowly slipping out of the church. The reason for this is that they needlessly were trying to do something that God had not equipped them to do; therefore He did not want them to do it. It is common to have a shortage of workers in a particular ministry, and the common solution is to just find a body to fill in the missing piece of the puzzle. While this may seem like a quick fix, it is a short term solution which will likely end bad for the church and the individual. Again, Barna states the matter in these terms:

"Our highest calling, of course, is to be disciples, doing whatever it takes to live according to His will for His followers. But every Christian is also called by God to serve Him in a unique fashion, exploiting the gifts, talents, abilities, experiences, passions, and opportunities He has provided. When we take advantages of opportunities to serve Him within our area of calling we provide a unique, desirable, and valued addition to His kingdom. We experience a

⁷⁹ George Barna, *Growing True Disciples: New Strategies for Producing Genuine followers of Christ*, (Colorado Springs: Waterbrook Press, 2001), 10

heightened degree of satisfaction in ministry, and the recipients of such ministry also derive true benefit from the experience."⁸⁰

Rather than rush to put someone where they do not belong, instead pray and ask God to reveal the person He wants to fill a particular role. This should especially be done when finding people to lead within a particular innovation strategy. If the person is not in the church yet, ask God to send the person for the task to the local church family.

All in all, the training that a pastor gives to a lay leader will determine the success of that leader in their particular ministry. If the pastor/staff begins the process correctly by first communicating clearly exactly what is expected, as well as how the ministry is accomplished, then they are accomplishing the first step in training their laity well. According to one source, the clarity of the leader's direction is so important that it plays a key factor in determining the leader's credibility in the eyes of the membership.⁸¹ The second step of the process is to allow the lay person to see the pastor perform the task by example. This allows the person to not only hear the instruction by words, but to see the words put into action in the life of the person who is teaching them. That is basically what is taking place during this stage of the training process; discipleship. It is after both of these steps are complete that the foundation for the lay leadership has been properly established for ministry. After the training has been accomplished, the individual is then prepared to enter the second phase of the ministry leadership process.

⁸⁰ George Barna, *The Power of Team Leadership: Finding Strength in Shared Responsibility*, (Colorado Springs: WaterBrook Press, 2001), 84

⁸¹ Audrey Malphurs, Will Mancini, *Building Leaders: Blueprints for Developing Leadership at Every Level* of Your Church, (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2004), 21

Owning

Something that the student calls "owning" is the second phase in training laity for ministry within the local church in terms of innovation. If a person has been trained properly within this particular context for the ministry, then they are extremely more comfortable handling the responsibilities that go along with it. Then slowly, over time, it is no longer something that they are doing to have something to do. It is no longer just "one of those" ministries that are going on within a church. It becomes their God-given ministry, something that God has especially for them within the context of the Kingdom. This is when a person begins to take ownership of whatever particular ministry that they have been called by God to serve in. Yet the great thing in this situation is that when this point happens in someone's life, if the pastor/staff has followed the previous step in proper training, they have set the laity up for success.

This point of taking ownership in the ministry by the laity does not just happen. Lay workers do not just wake up one Sunday morning and decide to become leaders that morning, even though sometimes that would be more convenient for the pastor. Instead, it takes effort and work. It is a careful orchestration by the Holy Spirit in both the church leadership and church laity becoming available to be used by God. However, the initial responsibility clearly rests on the ministerial staff of the church to begin the process. The question for the staff then becomes critical that they must begin to give an answer for: at what point in an attendees involvement should the church begin to involve laity in the discipleship process?

Chuck Lawless states that a pastor's involvement early in a visitor or member's involvement within the local church is critical.⁸² In order to disciple the lay person, it must first be shown to

⁸² Chuck Lawless, *Membership Matters*, (Grand Rapids; Zondervan, 2005), pg. 54

them. In order to show them that pastors are interested in their lives, there must be an investment of time in them on a very personal level. Pastors don't want to give the impression that they are just a hermit that sits in the office and locks the doors all day long. In fact, pastors make phone calls and personal visits to the homes of members quite often during the week. When people speak of being personal, it means having some real one-on-one with people and their families. Leaders want to accomplish really connecting with others, such as going out to lunch, or maybe watching a movie with another family. This is something that Scazzero has described as "hanging between two worlds", giving the following example of Jesus:

"Life would have been much simpler for Jesus if he stayed in heaven with the Father. This world, for Jesus, was not safe. But by entering our world, he invited sorrow and pain into his life. He was misunderstood and not appreciated. He died a naked, lonely death on a cross, hanging literally between heaven and earth. It was, in a word, messy. You and I may not literally die on a cross as Jesus did, but we will die in other ways when we incarnate. It costs time, energy, sometimes money, and, almost always, a disruption to our risk-free world."⁸³

It is personal sacrifice of the leadership such as this that will show people that one cares and leaders should want people to understand this. At the same time this is being accomplishing, ministers will also be leading people by example and getting involved in their life as early as possible.

It is a culmination of all these events that allow the moment of ownership for ministry begin to take place in the life of the lay leader. This is a pivotal moment within the life of the lay leadership, and should also be for the person who has done the training. The reason for this is two-fold. The first is because the pastor has been sensitive enough to care about developing the spiritual gifts in members to show them where their best place of service is within the kingdom of God. Secondly, the pastor has laid the foundation properly that allowed the lay leader to feel

⁸³ Peter Scazzero, *The Emotionally Healthy Church: A Strategy for Discipleship that Actually Changes Lives*, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2003), 189

competent in their completion of the ministry challenges that lay ahead of them. There is also a third principle, which is about to be a multiplication of discipleship that is getting ready to take place, as will be explained in the next and final step for church leadership in innovation.

Leading

Step three is: Leading. While growing in one's faith in Christ will never end on this side of Heaven, this is the final phase of the leadership process. This is the culmination of leading in private, family, and now in ministry. This is the point where, after ownership in ministry has taken place in the laity's life, that they truly begin to lead. According to Dr. Warren, if we can ever get people to this point and awaken and unleash the massive talent, resources, creativity, and energy lying dormant in the typical church, Christianity will explode with growth at an unprecedented rate.⁸⁴ This is true within the context of every local church where the laity has been mobilized into leadership. There lies within the possibility of every church to bring their workers to this point within the church. There is only one thing that lies in the way of many pastors/staff in the equipping of their people; intentionality. The full circle of developing lay leadership as a whole person will not happen unless the staff are intention in developing these qualities.

So what are the outcomes in developing lay leaders? While the positives to accomplishing these tasks are very numerous, there are two that truly stand out among the rest. The first, as stated previously, deals with the area of discipleship. Since the process of discipleship has come full circle, the disciple will now become the disciple to others. This is how the leadership

⁸⁴ Warren, Purpose, 365

process has begun to be multiplied in the church, because in the same way that the pastor/staff has guided the lay person to leadership, they will in turn do the same to another in the church. Perhaps even to those that are yet to be reached through the implementation of innovation as an outreach strategy. In essence, the pastor has multiplied himself into two people in ministry through this other person. This process will continue to multiply as each person this new leader will reach can potentially become a lay leader as well. The process has the potential of becoming an unstoppable force! The ability to lead others is a characteristic of becoming a true leader, and innovation and creativity can certainly be a major factor in making that become a reality.

The second major asset when a lay leader truly begins to lead is the quality of the work in the area of ministry. All of these principles work together to insure this is the case, fulfilling the Scriptural command that was initially given to leadership in First Peter. Since the pastor or staff member has explained fully the expectations and instructions for the task, the lay leader knows what is expected of them. Since the pastor/staff has modeled the process of accomplishing the ministry for the lay leader, they are confident they know how to accomplish the task well. Since the lay leader has taken ownership of the particular ministry they are involved in, they want everything to be the best that it can. They take pride in the ministry they are involved in. In his book concerning leaders, De Pree states that those who follow leaders taking ownership in an organization is something that is not only possible, but should be an expectation.⁸⁵ The key to making the connection is to plug the people into their respective areas of interest and accountability, allowing them to blossom using their talents. Then finally, since they are at the point of being a true leader both inside and out, they have the ability to train others on how to

⁸⁵ Max De Pree, *Leadership Jazz*, (New York: Currency Doubleday, 1992), 202

become a leader. All of these combine to make sure that quality work is taking place within the ministries of the local church.

As the lay leader begins to lead, the person who trained them can be proud in the fact that God has used them to make a real difference in the life of another brother or sister in the Lord Jesus Christ. In a way, the person who trained the leader will also be responsible for all those that the lay leader will impact throughout their lifetime as well. It is an awesome thing to be a part of God's family, and be used by Him to encourage and teach those that are in the family. It is the intentionality of the leaders to ensure this happens, as stated previously. Yet there is a joy that is found in helping others develop the gifts that God has given them to use in their service of Him.

It is essential for the success of the local church innovation that the laity be developed in an atmosphere that provides for them in each of these steps. However, it is also important not to forget that these are people who still exist when they go home after services. It is for this reason the church has the responsibility to begin with leadership both personally in a relationship with God for the congregants, as well as with one's family. If either of these areas are lacking in a lay leader's life, then it will definitely show in the ministry they serve in. Since developing lay leadership is so important, churches should make sure the process is accomplished correctly.

It is also important to note that a major part of leadership for the innovation implementation process is being available to the members. In asserting this ideal, one source states, "Being useful to God and other people is a large part of what life is meant to be. And yet usefulness is nine-tenths availability."⁸⁶ If the leader makes them self available to the concerns

⁸⁶ Richard A. Swenson, *Margin: Restoring Emotional, Physical, Financial, and Time Reserves to Overloaded Lives*, (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 2004), 128

and questions that may arise, they will play a useful role in the entire process. The reason is that this will help ease anxiety levels that may be building, as noted previously. Pastors can point these integral assets in the right direction for the church by following these three practical steps. Lay leaders do so much in their service and survival of the local church, let churches and pastors/staff make sure to set them up to succeed by starting them on the right track.

After such a lengthy and somewhat strenuous discussion on the responsibility of leadership in the innovation process, it may seem appropriate to take a moment and offer a few words of encouragement for the pastor/leader. In many instances when facing the new challenges of innovation, the leader feels somewhat unequipped and unprepared to charge the way into uncharted territory. This is common, and the leader should not lose heart, especially during the initial beginning phases of implementation. One of the most common self doubts that can arise at the beginning stages is the nagging feeling of lacking in simple leadership abilities. Take heart, pastor and leader! Former Southern Baptist Convention president and local church pastor, Bobby Welch, confronts the inadequate feelings that many pastors face in general when dealing with ministry challenges. It is also worth noting that he was a former Green Beret and recipient of the prestigious Purple Heart. In short, Welch knows a thing or two about leadership. In his book, a quote is given from a military leader concerning a major myth people have with being a leader:

"The so-called "born leader" is fiction invented by "born followers"! Leadership is not a gift at birth; it is an award for growing up to full moral stature. It is the only award a person must win every day. The prize is the respect of others earned by the disciplines that generate self respect."⁸⁷

⁸⁷ Bobby Welch, *You the Warrior Leader: Applying Military Strategy for Victorious Spiritual Warfare*, (Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 2004), 3

That is definitely a refreshing thought. Leadership is not some abstract thing that somehow one inherits at birth, if at all. According to that statement, it is something totally different. Rather than being something inherited, like height or facial features, it is a trait that can be learned, molded, and developed over time. Even after someone is already a leader, their skills can be honed and sharpened to become an even better leader. To help interpret the quote as a pastor to other pastors, Welch gives the following insight:

"Although the origin of the above quote is unknown, the truth of it is well known to the military and any other organization whose success depends on strong leaders. Further, it must be remembered that leaders can always be improved. This is biblical and foundational to discipleship and equipping the saints. The Warrior Leader is determined to rise above such and is worth whatever effort it takes to develop and train him to reach his highest potential."⁸⁸

Pastors can accomplish this immense goal of implementing innovation in ministry and thereby changing the lives of others around them. Pastors can be the agents of change in the innovation process, even though it may seem difficult at first. Leading the way is not something a person is born with; rather, it is a calling that has been issued by the Creator Himself, who is the Author of creativity and innovation.

How can the leader be so sure they are equipped to see the process through? This is a fair question that deserves an answer. God Himself has given every resource needed by the leader to see the task to completion (2 Cor. 9:8). In reference to this verse, one man has said that, "God has fully provided for every situation and need a pastor will face, and has made available to him an abundance for every good work."⁸⁹ Innovation in ministry is certainly a difficult task, and there will be moments where frustration may set in. This will especially happen when being on the cutting edge of creative ministry within a local community. The remembrance that God is

⁸⁸ Ibid., 4

⁸⁹ Henry T. Blackaby, Henry Brandt, *The Power of the Call*, (Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 1997), 1

the equipper and enabler of finishing the task is sometimes the only thing that takes the leader through the low points in ministry. Never give in to the notion that someone is unqualified to do something that God has qualified them to do.

Scripture is filled with stories about men who did not feel comfortable being the agent of change for God, and the story of Moses directly supports these sentiments. To make a long story very short, Moses was raised in the house of Pharaoh. This means that he would have had one of the finest educations in the world at that time, being viewed as nothing short of a god walking among the people.⁹⁰ After Moses had fled Egypt and entered into the desert, he had his encounter with God at the burning bush (Ex. 3:1-4:28). It was at this point that God issued His call for Moses to use many innovative ways to lead His people out of the land of Egypt, a place of bondage. Knowing how difficult the task was going to be firsthand, he made five big excuses as to why he was under qualified to do something as big as this.⁹¹ Yet on every turn that Moses took, God replied with an answer that would not let the excuse give way. Pastors and leaders can be assured that the excuses that might be given for not leading a church in innovation may certainly sound good to man's ears, but they will not change God's calling once it has been given. God has an answer to any excuse that can be given, and it is worth adding that He has probably heard it before.

In conclusion, leaders, along with proper leadership, are essential in implementing innovative strategies in the ministry of the local church. It is also an important element in the determination of the success or failure of the innovation. John Maxwell, the guru of leadership by many standards, states that, "Everything rises and falls on leadership. The single greatest way to

⁹⁰ Elmer Towns, A Journey Through the Old Testament: The Story of How God Developed His People in the Old Testament, (Orlando: Harcourt Brace, 1996), 207

⁹¹ Ibid., 209

impact an organization is to focus on leadership development."⁹² By becoming the leaders of change, and equipping their people to do the same through proper implementation principle, pastors are building up other leaders who catch the vision. Then, not only do the people catch the vision, they enable others to catch the vision as well. Thus a cycle is born that will benefit both the church leadership, as well as the church. Innovation in ministry is a great concept, and will bring powerful results if implemented in the right way by the leadership team.

⁹² John C. Maxwell, *The 17 Indisputable Laws of Teamwork: Embrace Them and Empower Your Team*, (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2001), 185

PART III. A CASE STUDY OF THE BAPTIST WORSHIP CENTER

CHAPTER EIGHT

THE HISTORY, VISION, AND STRATEGY

"Therefore, everyone who hears these words of Mine and acts on them will be like a sensible man who built his house on the rock. The rain fell, the rivers rose, and the winds blew and pounded that house. Yet it didn't collapse, because its foundation was on the rock" (Matthew 7:24,25).

God is deeply interested in growing the kingdom here on earth, and the church that desires to accomplish this biblically will be blessed. It has been constantly shown that throughout the New Testament, church leaders and church members who have taken up this task and have faithfully seen it through were blessed. The same thing can be said for churches today, as God is seeking to find those that will be faithful to reach out to the ones who have yet to receive Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior. This is the fulfillment of the Great Commission which Christ has given to the church at large. The Baptist Worship Center desperately desires to be one of those churches, and seeks to be actively in all making that desire a reality through the guidance of the Holy Spirit. In seeking to make this become a reality, there were several intentional steps that were taken. It is a culmination of each of these steps that have been implemented throughout the contents of this written work.

In this chapter the focus is going to be on the history, vision, and ministry strategy which will address the practical plans and purposes that innovation plays in the Baptist Worship Center (from this point on BWC) located in Mount Sterling, Kentucky. In understanding the principles that the church was founded on, the core values that have been set in place, and the reasoning behind the ministry model that has been implemented, it is fairly simple to understand how innovation plays a central and key part in the life of the church. It seems by many standards that innovation is simply necessary when dealing with a church plant, as has been the case at the BWC. All this does not necessarily make the innovation process easier, yet it is allowed for key elements to be set in place from the beginning of the church in order to make for a smoother transition lead change in ministry does take place.

History

The BWC is a new church plant that began in May of 2007 with approximately 10 people as a core group. This group did not meet in a home, but rather at a conference room at the Ramada Inn located directly off I-64. This was definitely not an ideal location, but it did allow for a place to meet. The plant was originally the brainchild of the Director of Missions, who started the church initially for the first several months. Also involved in this process was the current associate pastor of the church, who helped in every way possible. This time proved to be very valuable in gathering certain people who would be key leaders as the church would continue to grow. However, God was about to change the original plan.

As the writer is serving as the current lead pastor of the BWC, this is where God began to intersect both the church and myself. Previously serving as a minister of youth at a church outside of Atlanta, there was absolutely no intention of leaving. Yet God began to issue a strange and powerful challenge to plant a new church. After this calling began a period of searching and seeking of God where the church plant was going to take place. While there were many locations that were investigated, none really seemed to work out as a viable spot. Then a chance conversation between the DOM in Kentucky and this now pastor took place. An invitation was given to be able to serve as lead pastor at the plant, which at first did not seem very viable either. The reason for this was that it was close to where this writer grew up as a child, which could turn out to be more of a problem than a benefit. Yet after much prayer and confirmation from God about the entire issue, the decision was made to move to Kentucky and help plant the BWC as the lead pastor.

In September of the same year, the small group had grown into a larger one of about 35 people. Quickly realizing the need for a new place to meet, a new location was found in a facility located in the heart of downtown. So in September 2007 the BWC moved from the Ramada Inn conference room into a portion of the building that was being renovated in downtown. This new facility offered a variety of new challenges, some of which have included renovations. There was a large space that was to be used as a worship area in the future. However, this section of the building was still under renovation. There was also a large fellowship area was designated for this purpose in a café style that was also under renovation. Until both of these areas were complete, there was initially a small section of the building that was being used as a temporary worship area.

There's was one large problem with this, which is that the seating capacity was limited to 70 people at first. According to Searcy, if a church has reached 70% of its maximum seating capacity, then the room should be considered effectively full.⁹³ If this type of barrier would have been left unresolved in the church, then the outcome could literally be the death of a new church. In keeping with this context, it was a goal of the BWC to focus heavily on renovations so that the move into the larger worship area would be completed as quickly as possible. In order to make this as expedient as it possible could, attendee's would meet sometimes every night of the week to make the move happen. Part of this goal was to use this time of transition to plan for an essential "re-launch" of the church using many of the principles that were introduced within this book, as this lead pastor was not present when the core group was initially created.

⁹³ Searcy, Launch, 204

To bring this historic section of the BWC to a current status, some information about the grand opening of the new worship center will be given. On March 29 of 2009, the grand opening took place and was publicized widely within the community. On this opening day, a worship attendance of 100+ people set a new record. Due to the spread of word-of-mouth, and the inviting of the core group to family and friends, there was some who drove two hours to attend the service. The day was wonderful, with all the credit going to God for making it so meaningful for everyone who had worked so hard since those early days at the Ramada Inn. It has been the intention of the church leadership to continue the momentum that has been gained, allowing the church to blossom in growth and intentional ministries.

Vision and Values

It is the utmost importance within the context of a church plant that the establishment of both the vision of the church and the values that embody that vision be set in place. According to Ed Stetzer during his segment at the Innovate Church Conference 2008 at Thomas Road Baptist Church in Lynchburg, Virginia there is a simple principle to the strategy of creating a vision statement. In that statement Dr. Stetzer says, "Do we (churches) really need a mission/vision statement? ...God has given us the mission." That mission is found in John 20:19 -- 21, Matthew 28:18, Luke 24:46 -- 49, First Corinthians 15:1 -- 4, and empowered by Acts 1:6. In keeping with the mindset that God has already given churches the mission, the vision statement of the BWC would be a reflection of that mission in perspective to the community in which God has placed her. This is what allows a church to be missional.⁹⁴ It is within the context of each of these that the vision statement was created.

The vision statement of the BWC is as follows:

⁹⁴ Stetzer, *Planting*, 1

"To reach out to the community of Mount Sterling with the life-changing truth of Jesus Christ in creative and innovative ways that will make an impact for eternity."⁹⁵

Not only does this phrase encapsulate the motive of the church, it also weaves creativity and innovation into the very DNA of the church life. This has allowed the people to not get caught up in many of the mindsets that hold churches back from progress. Ministries are not diminished by fear of changing them, but rather it is the "normal" way that ministries are done. This has proven to be the case in the church over the time it has been in existence, and has made life admittedly easier on this pastor.

It was very important at the BWC that after creating a vision statement the church placed a system of core values that promoted the overall vision of the church. The church leadership takes seriously the belief that God has called leaders to lead with all diligence.⁹⁶ After much research, study, and prayer, the following core principles were decided upon to be promoted as a reflection of the vision statement of the BWC:

- 1. "People matter to God": We value people. (John 3:16)
- 2. "Teaching is for life-change": We value application of Scripture. (2 Timothy 3:16)
- 3. "Real Christ-followers grow": We value growth. (Mathew 3:8)
- 4. "Kids are important, too": We value children. (Mark 10:14)
- "Growing larger and smaller at the same time": We value small groups. (Acts 2:46,47)
- 6. "God is honored in excellence": We value excellence. (1 Corinthians 11:1)
- 7. "Every member is a minister": We value service. (1 Corinthians 12)
- "Changing methods -- unchanging message": We value creativity and innovation. (1 Corinthians 9:20-22)

⁹⁵ In essence, this was the reason behind planting the church.

⁹⁶ Bill & Lynne Hybels, *Rediscovering Church*, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995), 155

- 9. "Clarity on what is important": We value simplicity. (1 Corinthians 1:27)
- 10. "Focusing on the things that unite us, not the things that divide us": We value unity and diversity. (Galatians 5:15; 1 Corinthians 12:12)⁹⁷

By promoting each of these core values consistently among the church at the BWC, an atmosphere which positively promotes the vision statement will be cultivated. This is essential in casting the vision effectively before the body of Christ, as presented in Habakkuk 2. However, these are not just principles that are stated and then forgotten. Rather, these are literally posted throughout the building as a constant reminder as to what the values of the church are. This also allows the church to be transparent, as every person from the member to the visitor sees this with their own eyes when they enter the building. These core values essentially allow the people to "run" with the vision of the church and take ownership of it. It is also important to note that these core values are not talking points to be debated; they are the biblical principles that the BWC is founded upon to make an impact within the culture that God has placed her.

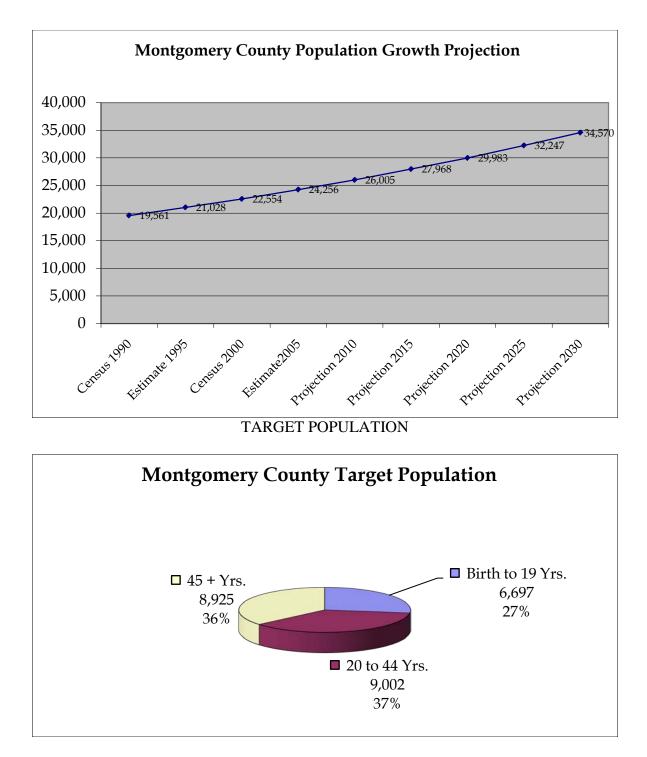
It should also be noted that the 10th core value also seems to be the most controversial, as it is misinterpreted by some. As far as doctrinal standards go, the BWC is an openly SBC church and in agreement with the Baptist Faith and Message. Far too many churches argue and split over needless, and pointless, issues. This wreaks havoc and creates troubles that leadership will waste trying to fix the problem, when time could much better be used elsewhere. The reason this point has remained "as is" is to show that if an individual wants to create an issue out of nothing (such as paint, etc.) they can go back to the core values and see where the pastor and church leadership stand.

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Ron Sylvia, Starting New Churches on Purpose, (Lake Forest; Purpose Driven, 2006), pg. 58

Ministry Strategy

One of the major factors for the BWC in determining a ministry strategy was to understand certain demographics of the community and create a target audience. In order to determine exactly who a target audience should be, a devoted look at some statistics surrounding a church should be made. This should be done individually for every local church, as numbers will certainly differ from location to location. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, population growth for Mt. Sterling and Montgomery County is projected to be 1.5% a year at a minimum. The projected population growth for years 2006-2011 would be 1,847 people. This indicates the need for new churches to reach out to this new increase in population. The BWC takes a biblical imperative to plant new churches in the community as a new plant and also the need to plant (mother) new churches in other communities, as well as this one, in the future. This body of Christ-followers will be committed to be actively involved in the plant of new churches as the possibility presents itself. The following charts represent these figures and projections:



Red=Our target group 20-44 years of age= 9,002 = 36.5% Blue=Children (birth to 19 years of age) Living with our target group=6,697=27.2% Yellow=People above our target age group but are still welcome to worship with us=8,925=36.3% With these figures in hand, the BWC leadership concluded that the major target group is age 20-44 years. It should also be noted that of this group 36.3% of the population will also have the children (birth thru age 19 or 27.2% of population) living in their household. This will give the church a potential target of 63.7% of the population in Montgomery County, or 15,699 prospects within the total population of the county. The Kentucky Baptist Convention indicates that eighty percent (80%) of the population of Montgomery County is unchurched.⁹⁸ With all of these facts in hand, the details concerning "who" our target is became even clearer.

With all of these details, the leadership created a fictional character that would resemble the type of person each of these details would describe. The name for our target audience is "Worship Wally". The following are some of the figures that were gathered through more research and data construction that tell some character traits of "Wally":

- About 30-35 years old.
- Earns about \$30-35K per year. Both he and his spouse work.
- Has young child or children.
- Listens to 104.5 fm The Kat (contemporary rock station).⁹⁹
- May have been involved in church when he was younger, but something has turned him away from church and faith.

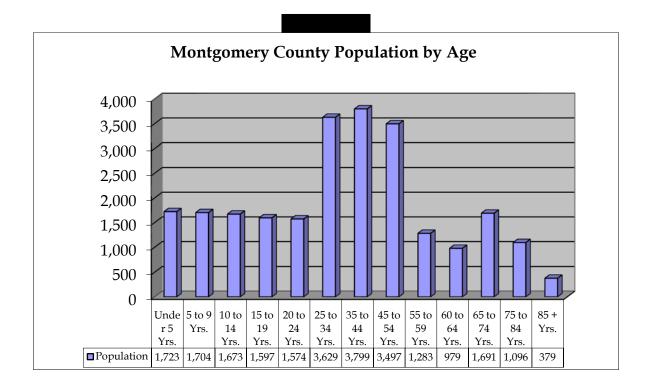
It is of the utmost importance that a church discovers the need to be able to determine who exactly their target group is. In the area of being innovative in ministry, this will allow a

⁹⁸ As shared per conversation with a church planting strategist for the Kentucky Baptist Convention and the author.

⁹⁹ According to their own claims, as made over the air and in advertising.

church to determine exactly "what" and "why" they are choosing to do something. For the BWC, discovering the specifics about who "Worship Wally" is has proven to be extremely valuable. There are many reasons for this, but there have been two that have stood out among the rest. First of all, the ability to know who you are reaching allows a church to be able to better tailor the ministry focuses of the church. For example, if a target group has children then the church would want to have a high quality children's ministry. Secondly, the pre-knowledge of "knowing" someone before actually meeting gives a church an advantage. A church can make the worship model of the church appealing to that group before they even enter the doors of the building. Understanding the culture and community a church is located in creates opportunities for the church to be intentional in using innovation as an outreach strategy.

As for the long-term growth that can be expected in this target group, at a minimum, over the next several years can be seen by more of these projected figures:



The population of Montgomery County grew 15.3% from 1990-2000 according to the U.S. Census Bureau. That rate of growth is projected to continue due to location of the county on Interstate 64 only thirty miles from Fayette County. Montgomery County is located within the I-64 and I-75 corridor which is important to new businesses as they seek locations that allows easy access to interstate highways for their transportation needs. In many ways, Mt. Sterling is becoming a bedroom community for those whose professions are in Lexington. Montgomery County has two large industrial parks and the Chamber of Commerce and has been very aggressive in recruiting new companies to locate in this community.¹⁰⁰

The growth in population for Mt. Sterling, located in Montgomery County, mandates the need for the BWC to be in existence. New church plants are one of the best means of reaching non-churched and the de-churched within the community. Also, a new church plant in Mount Sterling will give opportunity to target the most un-churched groups in the community. Planning, prayer and intentional innovations can greatly impact the target group by pre planning to address the needs or a large portion of the community.

Ministry Model

Based upon the principles set in the previous sections of this paper concerning both the vision and core values, the ministry model is very simplistic in nature with an emphasis on excellence.¹⁰¹ The following is the ministry model of the BWC, which is 3C:

1. Celebration. An emphasis is made upon the worship service. This will give an entry point into the church on most occasions. There will be a striving for excellence in this

 ¹⁰⁰ As stated in a meeting with the representative in April 2009.
¹⁰¹ This follows both core value 6 and 9. It is important that church leaders consistently intertwine their values with their ministry models.

area.

- 2. Cell.¹⁰² An emphasis will be made upon small groups. This will allow those who would not normally attend a worship service to fellowship in a non-threatening atmosphere. Some may question a focus to be on this, but the reason is quite clear; God created people with a need to be relational and communal. As stated by Dr. Early, "What better way to scratch this human itch and fill this gaping need of community than through an effective small group?"¹⁰³ This will also sustain connections for those who are attending the worship services, providing a personal contact as the church grows. Excellence will be a major key for success in this area as well.
- 3. Children.¹⁰⁴ An emphasis will be made upon a children's ministry. The main reason for this will be that the target audience of the church is going to have small children. If parents are going to attend the church, there must be a place for their children as well. Kids need an environment where they are taught about God in their own language. According to one source this is a crucial part of leading kids in their own worship experience with God, to "teach so the message will stick in their hearts."¹⁰⁵ Again, excellence is the goal for children's ministry.

The general idea for this model of ministry is to accomplish the following as a means of assimilation and discipleship:

• Create an environment for the community to come to worship services.

¹⁰² This promotes core value 5.

¹⁰³ Dave Earley, Rod Dempsey, *The Pocket Guide to Leading a Small Group: 52 Ways to Help You and Your Small Group Grow*, (Houston: Touch Publications, 2007), 10

¹⁰⁴ This supports core value 4.

¹⁰⁵ Kathleen Chapman, *Teaching Kids Authentic Worship: How to Keep Them Close to God for Life*, (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2003), 68

- Get the guest involved in small groups.
- Guest become involved in ministries, and as personal growth allows, possibly become a small group leader.
- Member begins many small groups as a leader.
- Leader presented with an opportunity to plant a church within five years.
- BWC becomes a mother church, sending and sponsoring other church plants.

Innovation in ministry

As can be readily seen in the previous sections of this chapter, innovation in ministry plays an important role at the BWC. It is intertwined in the vision statement of the church, promoted within the core values of the church, and even applied in the ministry model that the BWC is based on. It is simply of the church life, and has been that way since the current pastor has been serving. Perhaps the best way to describe why, other than the Great Commission and to reach those not being reached can be seen by use of an illustration. Spencer Johnson states that, "Movement in a new direction helps you find new cheese."¹⁰⁶ In his book, there is a story about two sets of creatures in a mouse maze where the cheese is constantly being moved. In order to find the "new cheese" and survive, these creatures must be willing to do things differently from time to time. In the context of the BWC, the "new cheese" is those who have yet to have their lives changed through the power of Christ. The church wants to be willing to do things differently than before in order to reach them.

To help narrow down the discussion on exactly how innovation is applied to ministry at the church, the focus will be on to ministry areas. In chapter 4, a list of five ministry areas was

¹⁰⁶ Spencer Johnson, Who Moved My Cheese?, (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1998), 54

given. The two that will be discussed in this section are worship and evangelism. These are two major areas of the church where innovation is used quite regularly and consistently due to the nature of how they function.

The first area to be discussed will be worship, which may seem to be somewhat of a broad area to observe. Worship, at least within the context of this particular section, will be the time when the BWC comes together and worships corporately on Sunday morning. During this time, there are new innovations that are applied almost on a weekly basis. To begin with, the environment that has been created when a person walks into the church sets the tone for what is to be expected. When one enters from the street, the entrance opens up into the café area. This is what many churches may have dubbed their "fellowship area". The atmosphere is very casual and inviting.

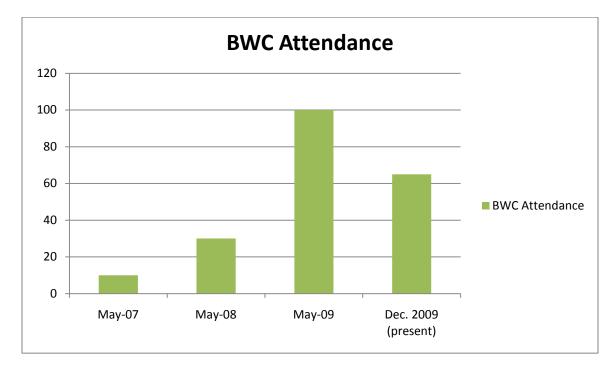
As the visitor moves into the worship center, they are met with bold colors in the artwork of the foyer. The worship center is intentionally neutral in color except for the stage, which is the focal point. The worship team is "unplugged" contemporary in the musical part of the worship experience. Yet this is changed from time to time, allowing for a variety of music to take place on any given Sunday. The atmosphere that is created by this environment is very intentional, and allows the church to reach the target audience that it was intended to reach. This is the reason these simple innovations can connect with those that fall into the unchurched/dechurched crowd that would be otherwise neglected in the Mt. Sterling area.

Another aspect of innovation that takes place during the worship is the preaching aspect of the service. While many churches have a pulpit on the stage that a pastor preaches from, the BWC does not. Instead, at the center of the stage there is a large multi-colored area rug that is centered with a table and side stool. The reason for this is atmosphere, and there is a purpose behind it. It has been dubbed at the BWC the "living room experience". The goal was to create an environment where people felt like they were walking casually into a living room to sit down with a friend and see what truth God had to speak into their lives. Also, every week there are various elements that are added to enhance the worship experience through innovation. This may be done by a video clip that really drives home the point that is going to be made during the service. Another way this can be done is through the use of props that served as a visual illustration of the topic that is being discussed. Innovation during the worship service can help create a place where people are continually excited about coming to church to see what is going to happen next. What a nice concept; people excited about coming to church. That is such an exciting atmosphere to do ministry!

The second area observed at the BWC where innovation is heavily involved and applied is in the area of evangelism, also called outreach strategies. Since the conception of the church, there have been various means that had been used to reach the community. An example of such is something that takes place during the summer that has been called "family movie night". During this event, which takes place at various times throughout the summer, the BWC shows a newly released movie to the community at the local park. The local Parks and Recreation department has been very helpful in pulling off the event at the community park. Before the movie takes place, there will be things such as face painting, cookouts, and live music that will draw a large crowd to view the movie.

Another innovation in outreach that takes place is the annual "Get the Word Out" day. At this event, everyone that attends is challenged to bring as many people as they can between two specified dates. During this time all new visitors and guests will receive received a free gift on behalf of the church just for coming. Afterwards there will be a gathering in the café where refreshments will be served and information will be available about what is happening in the church. This is just a good time for people to get to know each other and become comfortable with how things happen. It could almost be thought of as an orientation to transition a prospect from a one time visitor to regularly attending guest. There is also an award for the person who brings the most guests during that time frame. While this may seem for many as something unnecessary that a church should not waste its time doing, it has proven to be a valuable tool in our community.

The results of these innovations at the BWC have been exciting in reaching out to the community. In honesty, the journey has been interesting with its high and low points. However, the end result has always been very rewarding. The credit for growth by any church should always be given to God, and this is no exception. Yet to illustrate the impact that innovation has had on attendance at the BWC since its inception in May of 2007, the following chart will be beneficial. Keep in mind the spike in attendance in May 2009 is due to the Grand Opening of the worship center.



Any of these examples of innovation in outreach strategies, if there is no purpose behind them, would simply be innovation for the sake of being innovative. Yet at the BWC there is a sincere purpose that is very urgent and causes the church to do such things. This unifying purpose is none another than the Great Commission given by the Lord Jesus Christ. That is the basic reason behind innovation in either the worship service or evangelism strategies. Kauflin makes the following observation on this:

"Planning creatively takes wisdom. It can easily become a distraction or the main event. Remember that creativity isn't something we do; it is a way we do *something*. That something is magnifying God's glory in Christ."¹⁰⁷

The wisdom in that statement demands the response of what motivates innovation, or tradition for that matter, to take place in the local church. If the church can make some simple change that would allow the gospel to be more readily understood and received by those in the community, without crossing the line into unbiblical territory, then why not give some innovation a chance?

At the BWC, that question just seems to make sense. Yet it is not done just for innovation sake, but to fulfill the overall purposes that were intended for the local church to comply with. Innovation has certainly made the difference in reaching people that were not being reached in the community, and it has been a humbling experience to see what God can and will do through a group of believers that are willing to take a chance and be creative in sharing an unchanging message in an ever changing culture.

¹⁰⁷ Bob Kauflin, *Worship Matters: Leading Others to Encounter the Greatness of God*, (Wheaton: Crossway Books, 2008), 117

CHAPTER NINE

SUMMARY

"When all has been heard, the conclusion of the matter is: Fear God and keep His commands, because this is for all humanity. For God will bring every act into judgment, including every hidden thing, whether good or evil" (Eccl. 12:13-14).

This passage seems to be fitting for the concluding discussion of innovation for two main reasons. The first is that God will eventually judge the motives behind why every leader made the particular decision that they did on behalf of the church they serve. Innovation and creativity should not just be done to be done, just as tradition should not be done just to be done. If this is the case, from either perspective, then the leadership is missing the point entirely. The second item of importance in the passage is actually a "motivator" to have the right motives; fear God. Actually, another way to state this would be "respect God". Keeping one's integrity to the One who called them in the first place will cause obedience to happen, even in the area of using creativity and innovation as a part of ministry. There needs to be balance and boundaries of unbiblical territory decided beforehand that the pastor or church leader is determined to never cross, no matter the end result.

Innovation has been determined to be a biblical occurrence in ministry. Before Christ came in His human form, God was creative and innovative in His dealings with men. Even during Jesus' earthly ministry there was always something creative that was happening. From the birth of the Lord to the substitutionary atonement on the cross, God has been innovative. This trait was passed on to the apostles as it plays out in the book of Acts. Peter became the chief leader of innovation in the early church. Paul also comes to the same conclusion after his encounter with Christ. Aside from Jesus, Paul may very well have been one of the most innovative church leaders in the New Testament.

The next determination was that innovation in ministry needs some practical application in its use. Churches have the need to be biblical; otherwise, there can come a point where they are no longer a church. To reach a determination on this, there are some general guidelines that need to be determined concerning what a church "is" and what a church "does", including how it is "done". No innovation is worth crossing into the boundaries of becoming unbiblical. These are concepts that church leadership need to define before implementing an innovative strategy in ministry.

Along these same guidelines, church leaders need to have a plan in implementing innovation in ministry. Many things need to be taken into account, such as who the intended audience for the innovation is, as well as laying a good foundation for the strategy to be successful. There are some important areas to pay attention to, such as prayer, planning, promoting, and proving.

Even after determining these factors, there are others to take into consideration as well. The leader plays a crucial role in the implementation of innovation, so a clear list of objectives and role study needs to be understood by the pastor and church leaders. Having a clear mental image of this will help ease many tensions that will arise during this phase. The leadership role is key in being successful.

God has equipped leaders to lead in innovation, and will also equip them to see the task to completion. Excuses do not work with God, for He has heard them all before. God desires His church to be innovative in reaching out to a world that desperately needs to know Him. In many instances, the only way this will happen is through innovative and creative ministry methods being applied in the local church.

APPENDIX A

In determining the doctrines that define the Christian faith, the following sources were used:

- 1. The Faith by Chuck Colson
- 2. Innovate Church by Jonathan Falwell
- 3. Orthodoxy and Heresy by Joel Parkinson

In relationship to the 9 doctrines, each of these writings will show their contributed acknowledgement by having their assigned number (1, 2, or 3) next to the doctrine.

- 1. Authority of Scripture-1, 2, 3
- 2. Trinity-1, 3
- 3. The Sin Nature of Man-1, 3
- 4. The Incarnation of Christ-1, 2, 3
- 5. The Substitutionary Atonement of Christ on the Cross-1, 2, 3
- 6. The Bodily Resurrection of Christ-1, 2, 3
- 7. The Need of Salvation for Mankind-1, 3
- 8. The Need to Live God-centered Lives-1
- 9. The Return of Christ-1, 2

APPENDIX B

Thesis Survey 2009

Churches participating in survey: Mosaic Church, Louisville, KY Southland Christian Church, Harrodsburg, KY Quest Community Church, Lexington, KY First Christian Church, Ashland, KY Southeast Christian Church, Louisville, KY CenterPoint Church, Lexington, KY

1. Would you consider the church you serve to be innovative?

100% of those surveyed answered "yes".

2. Who is the driving force behind the innovation being used?

100% answered that the leadership of the church was the initiator within the church.

- 3. What types of innovative ministries are in place right now, and what has been used in the past?
- 17% church website, media
- 33% outreach projects to the community as a "drawing in" approach

50% - outreach to specific income groups

4. Would you consider the ministries successful?

33% - yes

67% - sometimes not, but stipulate they constantly evaluate the effectiveness of ministries in order to determine successfulness.

5. How do you measure success?

33% - Growth in church participation from attendee to active participant; discipleship 67% - Growth numerically in church attendance; evangelism

6. Why does innovation need to be applied to ministry?

100% - The decline of the church in North America

7. At what point did you decide to implement innovation in ministry?

33% - Grew up in church and saw a disconnect between the ministry model and the community.17% - Was disconnected with the church until later in life and decided to do ministry differently.50% - At some specific point when serving in ministry.

8. How was innovation implemented into the DNA of the church?

100% - Leadership. Always initiated from pastor to church leadership body, then down to congregation.

9. What was the attendance of the church 5 years ago in contrast as of right now?

	<u>5 years ago</u>	present
Mosaic Church N	ew Pastor, five years ago cannot be tracked.	540
Southland Christian	7,000	10,000
Quest Community	1,000	3,400
First Christian Church	h 300	145
Southeast Christian	14,500	18,000
CenterPoint	n/a, church plant	500

10. What suggestions or advice would you give a pastor who hopes to introduce innovation

to his church?

"Do not be afraid of losing prestige, money, or power."

"Paint the future as God's design."

"Be specific and constant before the people with the direction of the church."

"Build relationships and trust."

"Communicate why you are doing what you are doing."

"Make sure that God is leading you as you lead God's people."

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