

LIBERTY BAPTIST THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

KEEP THE FIRE BURNING:  
BIBLICAL PRINCIPLES  
FOR A CHURCH  
TO SPARK REVIVAL IN THE NORTHEAST

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LIBERTY BAPTIST THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

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## **ABSTRACT**

### **KEEP THE FIRE BURNING: BIBLICAL PRINCIPLES FOR A CHURCH TO SPARK REVIVAL IN THE NORTHEAST**

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The northeastern United States, land of Dwight L. Moody and Charles Grandison Finney, was once a place of great revival. Local churches and their pastors passionately served the Lord and His purposes. Schools were built for the training of godly ministers and leaders. While some revival fires still burn, others are smoldering; some fires have died. Hosting “Keep the Fire Burning” conferences gives Northside Baptist Church, Liverpool, New York, an opportunity to be a catalyst for revival and renewal in the Northeast from the country to the cities. An annual pastors’ and leaders’ conference will be a tool and launching pad for renewal of faith, inspiration, revival and encouragement. This project will include a combination of face-to-face interviews, phone interviews and written interviews with thirty-five pastors throughout the northeast. The goal is for multiplied ministry effectiveness for the glory of God and the sake of souls.

Abstract Length: 150 words

## DEDICATION

I want to express my gratitude to my wife, children and grandchildren for their undying love and great encouragement in my life and ministry. I am deeply indebted to the many godly pastors and leaders who have invested in my life. I am very grateful to the staff and church family of Northside Baptist Church, Liverpool, New York, for their support of this journey and their many prayers on my behalf. Ultimately, I dedicate this paper for the sake of the gospel, for the glory of God, and for the sake of souls, to my Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. He alone is worthy of all glory, honor and praise. This is for Him.

## CONTENTS

Tables.....	ix
CHAPTER 1        INTRODUCTION.....	1
A Need Discovered.....	1
Statement of the Problem.....	5
Statement of Limitations.....	6
Theoretical Basis for the Project.....	6
Statement of Methodology.....	8
Review of Literature.....	9
1. Books.....	9
2. Websites.....	16
3. Scripture passages.....	17
CHAPTER 2        THE NEED FOR REVIVAL AND BIBLICAL EXAMPLES.....	25
The Current Condition of the Northeast.....	25
Revivals in the Past.....	29
1. Revivals in the Bible.....	29
a. Jacob.....	31
b. Moses.....	32
c. Elijah.....	32
d. Hezekiah.....	33
e. Jonah.....	34
f. Ezra/Nehemiah.....	35
g. Peter.....	35

h. Philip.....	36
2. Revivals in the Northeast.....	36
a. The First Great Awakening.....	37
b. The Haystack Revival.....	38
c. The Second Great Awakening.....	39
d. Fulton Street Revival.....	40
e. Dwight L. Moody and Charles G. Finney.....	41
The Promise of Revival.....	45
The Plea for Revival.....	45
The Subject of Fire.....	45
CHAPTER 3           AN EXAMINATION OF THIRTY-FIVE EVANGELICAL PASTORS	
IN THE NORTHEAST.....	47
The Survey.....	49
The Results.....	50
Faith.....	51
Family.....	56
Ministry.....	58
Keep the Fire Burning (Personal).....	61
Leadership.....	63
Pastors/Leaders/Churches.....	65
Keep the Fire Burning Conference.....	67
CHAPTER 4           FIVE KEY PRINCIPLES.....	69
Principle One: Listen to the Voice of God.....	74

Principle Two: Prepare for the Work of God.....	78
Principle Three: Do the Will of God.....	80
Principle Four: Persevere in the Assignment of God.....	82
Principle Five: Pray and Trust the Spirit of God.....	86
CHAPTER 5 CONCLUSION.....	89
Focus.....	97
Faith.....	101
Family.....	103
Friends.....	105
The Fear of the Lord.....	108
APPENDIX A: Research Instrument.....	116
APPENDIX B: General Ministry Information.....	122
APPENDIX C: PowerPoint Presentation for Thesis Defense.....	123
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	140
IRB (Exempt).....	148



## TABLES

Northeast Population and Church Attendance .....	25
Age of Respondents (to Survey) .....	51
General Information (of respondents) .....	51
Time Spent Daily in Prayer .....	52
Sharing the Gospel .....	53
Faith Chart (Easy/Difficult) .....	53
Impact of Greatest Test of Faith .....	54
Life Stage at Conversion .....	55
Size of Communities where pastors were saved .....	55
Family Considered to Be . . . ..	58
Which Element of Conference Most Important to You? .....	68
Five Biblical Principles for a Church to Spark Revival in the Northeast .....	73
Keep The Fire Burning Conference Totals .....	96
Number of Non-Northsiders	
Number of Churches	
Number of Other Organizations	
Number of States	
States Represented at Conference	

## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

#### **A Need Discovered**

There are no accidents in the economy of God. The author traces his roots to a small northern New York town. This community was largely agricultural. In the late 1950's, many family farms dotted the horizon. The population of the town, Burke, New York, was less than 1,500 people. Typically, the closest neighbor was a half-mile away.

Three churches existed in that town. There was a Catholic Church, a Presbyterian Church, and a Methodist Church. Two of the three continue to operate. The Methodist church was the church of the family of the author.

People tended to be guided by Biblical values. They sought to be honest, courteous, cooperative and grateful. Life was far from perfect, but even those without God knew principles of Scripture because they were woven into the fabric of the community.

Over the last fifty years, such an awareness of godliness and a Biblical worldview has waned. Many churches have been in decline. Pastors have become discouraged. Life is challenging and at times, overwhelming. What is the need? Revival one might say – and it would be true.

Revival is the sovereign act of a holy God who intervenes and interrupts the normal affairs of people with an overwhelming sense of His presence, His person, His power, His righteousness, His judgment, His mercy, His grace, and His love. Truth resounds, for the word of God is truth. Lives are changed, communities are transformed, and nothing is ever the same.

Whether you travel to Maine, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, Connecticut, Massachusetts, Vermont, New York, New Jersey or Pennsylvania, you will find remnants of

believers, but multitudes of lost people. In some pockets there are powerful signs of God at work. In other areas there is the simple reminder that once the gospel was preached but now former church buildings are abandoned or used for some other purpose than worship. To be sure, the church is not a building, and in some cases local congregations are being planted and meeting in new locations. However, in many cases, the witness for Christ is simply no longer there.

Among Southern Baptists, it is shocking to realize that though their presence has been around for over forty years in the northeast, yet there are still counties with no church or in some cases only one church. While often evangelistic and mission minded as a denomination, something seems to have stalled the forward movement of the work of God in the north.

This paper seeks to identify factors that have led to the decline of churches in the northeast and to determine principles to move forward in the future. To be specific, one of the components of change involves the outreach and ministry of Northside Baptist Church in Liverpool, New York. Northside is a congregation that was birthed in 1968. Today more than 1,000 people gather on a weekend for worship services. While this is encouraging, the reality is that this congregation is more than 45 years old and it is nestled in the middle of more than 90,000 people within five miles of the current location of the church facilities.

The author has served as pastor of the congregation since 1993. He enrolled in the Doctor of Ministry program at Liberty University in the Spring of 2008. In attending one of the graduate classes required for this degree, the author was sitting in class listening to the testimony of the professor. He learned that this professor, at the age of sixteen, was invited by a coworker at a hospital to attend a little Baptist Church with him. It was through the ministry of that church that this man gave his life to Christ and today has great influence for the gospel and for ministry through the largest Christian University in the world.

That moment did something in the heart of the author. Bill Hybels calls it your holy discontent:

We were all created to do good works. I was created to do good works. Just as confidently, I'm here to tell you that you were created to do good works, which explains how I know that you have a holy discontent banging around in your brain somewhere – if you're alive and kicking today, then there is a specific work that you are expected to do. There is a set of tasks with your name on it that God has given you to accomplish, and long before you actually arrived on the scene, God planted certain seeds in your soul that he remains whole-heartedly committed to watering, growing, and making into something meaningful, if you will let him.<sup>1</sup>

On the next day, the author asked the professor, “What was the name of the town where that little Baptist Church was located?” He said, “Addison, New York.” The author sought information on the town only to discover that it was a town today of less than 2000 in population located slightly more than two hours from Liverpool, where the author currently serves as pastor. In fact, as of 2010 census, the population was 1,763.<sup>2</sup>

Immediately this question came to the author's mind: “Who is going to pastor churches in places like Addison, New York today?” All across the northeast, the home of this author, are numerous small towns and villages. Many have had strong witness to the Gospel in years gone by, but today are often without a clear witness, if any at all. What happened? How did the land of Finney and Moody become so dry to the Gospel? How did the area that formerly blazed with revival fires, lose its fire? This cause became a burning fire in the heart of the author. The thing that puts out fire in hearts is fear, but “fear cannot own you when a great cause rules your heart.”<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Bill Hybels, *Holy Discontent: Fueling the Fire That Ignites Personal Vision* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2007), 51.

<sup>2</sup> "American FactFinder - Community Facts." American FactFinder - Community Facts. Accessed November 6, 2014. [http://factfinder2.census.gov/faces/nav/jsf/pages/community\\_facts.xhtml](http://factfinder2.census.gov/faces/nav/jsf/pages/community_facts.xhtml).

<sup>3</sup> Matthew Barnett with George Barna, *The Cause Within You*, (Austin, TX: Tyndale, 2011), 19.

In 2010, planning began for a conference for pastors and leaders. The pastor had been blessed to attend such conferences in the past. Recognizing that many pastors of smaller churches will never go to Jacksonville, Atlanta, Nashville, Dallas, Chicago, or California, the senior pastor of Northside was prompted by the Holy Spirit to consider hosting such a conference in the northeast. Hosting a conference in the northeast would be important for several reasons. First, pastors do not have the interest or the resources to travel to these other places. Second, they are discouraged and have given up on a brighter future for life and ministry. So, to whom much is given, much is required. A church that had grown in budget from 73,000 a year to more than 1.5 million dollars a year, must invest some of that to help pastors and churches keep the fire burning.

It was the hope of the pastor and leaders of the church to see 100 people attend from 50 churches that first year. Keep the Fire Burning was held February 27-March 1, of 2011. 194 people came from 63 churches from 7 states. The conference was a great success. Faith was renewed in many hearts, inspiration and instruction were received from general sessions and breakout sessions, and many who attended experienced great encouragement. These conferences have become an annual gathering and they continue to impact the nine northeastern states and beyond. The host church charges no conference fee, and some meals are provided. The goal was to make it as easily attended as possible and be a blessing to those in ministry.

To be sure, ministry to small, medium and large cities is every bit as important as that of ministry to small towns and villages. The birth of this project was however born out of a heart to see no town neglected from impact. Keep the Fire Burning will impact large and small communities alike throughout the northeast.

## Statement of the Problem

Ministry has its casualties. This paper will express a desire to be proactive rather than reactive in order to encourage pastors, leaders and churches to keep the fire burning. How do such servants of the Lord keep the fire burning? What causes the fire to go out? How does that happen and how can fires be rekindled? For someone living in a colder climate like the Northeast, the thought of a warm fireplace on a cold winter night is a welcome and delightful thought. Fire can also describe passion and purpose in life. People develop a passion for things that are important to them. God burns a fire in hearts over something He cares about deeply. This fire burns inside the individual becoming a strong motivation for life and purpose.

Many local churches in America are on the decline. The Barna Group reports,

While tens of millions of Americans attend church each weekend, the practice has declined in recent years. According to Barna Group's 2014 tracking data, overall church attendances has dipped from 43% in 2004 to 36% today. But beyond a dip in attendance numbers, the nature of churchgoing is changing. Regular attenders used to be people who went to church three or more weekends each month – or even several times a week. Now people who show up once every four to six weeks consider themselves regular churchgoers.<sup>4</sup>

What were meant to be strong, vibrant, witnesses of the Lord for the saving of souls and redeeming of mankind have often settled for far less than was ever intended. Enthusiasm has been replaced by mere existence. The fear of God has been replaced by the fear of man. Faith has been replaced by sight. Perseverance has been replaced by apathy. God's way has been replaced by 'my way' among memberships.

In this paper, the author is reminded of two huge concerns: 1. Pastors quit, and 2. Churches die. The author cares deeply about pastors, since that is his own calling as well. He cares deeply about churches believing that Jesus loves the church and has a plan and purpose for

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<sup>4</sup> "Americans Divided on the Importance of Church." Barna Group. Accessed October 20, 2014. <https://www.barna.org/barna-update/culture/661-americans-divided-on-the-importance-of-church#.VEU1qhxAWzt/>.

it. The local church is the visible reminder in that community of the body of Christ. It ought to be that people could see Jesus by watching a local church carry out the ministry of the Lord.

The author also deeply cares about one more factor in this equation. If preachers quit, and they do, it is tragic in the life of that individual and many more. It may not be just the quitting, but the reasons that lead to the decision to quit. If churches die, and they do, it is tragic as well. A family of faith, that many people once called home, is now disbanded and no longer in existence. However, there is one more loss, and it is huge. The community loses. The community that once had one more access to the gospel has lost that presence and lighthouse for the Lord.

### **Statement of Limitations**

This paper will not seek to describe all the reasons why churches die and pastors leave the ministry. It will rather focus on ways to keep the fire burning proactively. The term Northeast will be used to describe nine states in the Northeastern United States. Those states are New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Connecticut, Rhode Island, Massachusetts, Vermont, New Hampshire, and Maine. The term *revival* will be used as an all encompassing term to refer to a move of God that draws believers into obedience, draws unbelievers to salvation, awakens churches, and transforms communities. The term *fire* will largely refer to passion, calling and ministry fervor.

### **Theoretical Basis for this Project**

This project is extremely important in many ways. The following topics give an overview of the theoretical basis for this project.

Biblically, it is supported by the strong admonition from Paul to young Timothy found in the Pastoral Epistles. “Therefore, I remind you to keep ablaze the gift of God that is in you

through the laying on of my hands.”<sup>5</sup> Numerous passages in Scripture refer to fire and are highlighted at the end of the introduction. God desires to do a deep work in and through His people that impacts multitudes for His glory!

Ethically, this paper deals with the issue of being motivated by the right passions and purpose. It’s about doing the right things for the right reasons for God’s purpose and pleasure. Motive in ministry cannot be ignored, and will ultimately be judged by God.

Historically, we read of the history of movements of God often referred to as revival. In this paper, Biblical revivals will be noted. Also, there will be some attention given to the work of God through men like Dwight L. Moody and Charles Grandison Finney. The life, ministry and legacy of Jonathan Edwards also deeply impacted the northeast.

Philosophically, this subject condenses life into a laser like focus – Keep the Fire Burning! This applies individually, in families, in churches, and in communities. This is not just some quaint saying, but a philosophy of life. This is more than rhetoric, it is passionate ministry.

Psychologically, there is a longing and need for fulfillment in life. What greater fulfillment could there be than to know that your life has impacted other people for the glory of God and the matter of all eternity?

Educationally, this project has contributed to the growth of the writer. The church where he serves as pastor is beginning to impact more than nine states and more than one hundred churches to date. Lessons learned and still being learned, will contribute to growth in many ways within the congregation he serves, and those impacted by the Lord through it.

Sociologically, this project is the reminder that life is about people. God loves people. His children should love people. To miss out on the supreme mission of Jesus to redeem the lost

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<sup>5</sup> 2 Timothy 1:6, HCSB. Unless otherwise stated, all biblical passages references are from the Holman Christian Standard Bible.



would be horrific. This project is about lives being changed forever. It's about eternity, which includes only two options, those being heaven and hell.

Theologically, it's all about the glory of God. There is no greater privilege in life than to seek to bring God glory. A blazing ministry that impacts lives forever will do that. Inspiring people to know Jesus through the local church, throughout the surrounding region and to the ends of the earth is the goal of the project.

### **Statement of Methodology**

The project is designed to gain perspective from those currently serving the Lord with regard to their lives and ministry. What is it that motivates them, and what is it that drains them? How do they keep their fires burning? How is that impacting them, their families, churches and communities? Ultimately, it means seeing Northside Baptist Church, Liverpool, New York become a catalyst for impacting millions in the northeast by encouraging pastors and leaders through an annual conference. The fifth year of this conference is already planned and the conference is steadily growing.

Chapter 1 is the introduction and gives an overview of the entire project. This chapter discusses the need for and purpose of the project. It describes limitations and methodology. There is also a significant review of literature and key scripture verses related to the project.

Chapter 2 will further explore the spiritual conditions of the Northeast and the need for revival today. It will highlight revivals in the past and use as an illustration the subject of fire to illustrate the Lord impacting and working through His people.

Chapter 3 is a summary of the research conducted. Thirty-five pastors serving or having served in the Northeast were surveyed with regard to faith, family, ministry, what keeps their fire

burning, leadership, the subject of pastors, leaders and churches, and insights into the conference called Keep the Fire Burning.

Chapter 4 will discuss Biblical Principles, as gleaned from the research, which if implemented, could create an environment for revival to begin. Each principle will be presented, and discussed with the implications for life and ministry. This chapter will offer hope and direction for pastors, leaders and churches to keep the fire burning.

Chapter 5 is the conclusion. This will be a summary of the thesis paper with final insights and reflections. It will be a launching pad for hope and security in the Lord.

## **Review of Literature**

### Books

*Ablaze with His Glory*, by Del Fehsenfeld, Jr. is a powerful invitation to revival from the heart of an anointed servant leader of the Lord. The book is outlined in four sections; a call to revival, evaluation of how the church got off track, the question if it can happen again, and longing for God's glory to return and move in power. Fehsenfeld's heart cry is heard in this statement: "As I study Scripture and the history of the church, I can only conclude that nothing short of genuine revival will spare us from God's judgment."<sup>6</sup> To realize this was written more than twenty years ago is very sobering. It was true then, and is urgent today.

*A Man After God's Own Heart*, by Jim George illustrates the necessity of living a focused life on the things that matter most, heart issues. For an individual to keep the fire burning, attention needs to be paid to these matters. The book outlines the individual's pursuit of God, and God's priorities, including a heart that loves your wife and children. From that grows a heart that impacts the marketplace, the local church and the expansion of the kingdom through the

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<sup>6</sup> Del Fehsenfeld Jr., *Ablaze with His Glory* (Buchanan, MI: Life Action Ministries, 1993), 39.

individual's witness.<sup>7</sup> George wrote, "A man after God's own heart is a man who yearns to please God, a man who nurtures a heart that obeys."<sup>8</sup>

*Prayer: The Timeless Secret of High-Impact Leaders*, by Dave Earley is another powerful reminder of the connection between the subject of greater impact in ministry and the importance of prayer. This book deals with multiple subjects from our own personal prayer times being developed, to fasting, and to enlisting others to pray. Earley said, "Prayer is certainly not the only act of leadership, but is the indisputable common denominator of spiritual difference-makers in every generation and in any setting."<sup>9</sup>

*Holy Discontent*, by Bill Hybels is a book about leaders who know something is wrong deep down in their hearts and know God is calling them to do something about it. The subtitle reads: Fueling the Fire That Ignites Personal Vision. He described it this way: "They have a constant awareness that what is wrecking them is wrecking the heart of God. Refusing to stay fed up, though, they instead get fueled by their restless longing for the better-day realities God says are coming soon."<sup>10</sup> Referring to the life of Moses and bringing that to the present, Hybels continued, "Still today, what wrecks the heart of someone who loves God is often the very thing God wants to use to fire them up to do something that, under normal circumstances, they would never attempt to do."<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Jim George, *A Man After God's Own Heart* (Eugene, Oregon: Harvest House Publishers, 2002), 5-6.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid, 44.

<sup>9</sup> Dave Earley, *Prayer: The Timeless Secret of High-Impact Leaders* (Chattanooga, TN: Living Ink Books, 2008), xi.

<sup>10</sup> Bill Hybels, *Holy Discontent* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2007), 27.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid, 25.

He described this burning passion and it's birth in the heart of a leader with the following statement: "the irresistible attraction to a specific cause that compelled these people to invest joyfully of their time, their money, and their energies always linked back to a single spark of frustration that fueled what is now a raging fire in their souls."<sup>12</sup> The book discusses discovering this holy discontent inside the individual, developing it and keeping it alive.

*Life on Fire: Radical Disciplines for Ordinary Living*, by Ronnie Floyd is a book that challenges the reader to live a life spiritually on fire for God. Some fires blaze and others smolder. Floyd challenged the reader to live a life ablaze for God. He also discussed the fact that often, spiritual leaders spend so much time trying to fan the flames of others that they may mistakenly let their own fire die down. The book traces the use of fire in Scripture, and also the intentionality that is needed in maintaining a strong fire. He further challenges the reader concerning those who did not shrink from the fires of persecution like the church fathers, such as Polycarp.

*The Life You've Always Wanted*, by John Ortberg, is a book that forces the reader to reevaluate his life and reorder it. The book is about becoming healthier which includes pace and priorities. It is about finding joy again and guarding the heart. This book is important for this study since the pastor and leader must grow healthier in numerous areas of life and develop hearts that will endure. Topics covered are spiritual disciplines, celebration, servant-hood, suffering, reflection and freedom.

*Breakout Churches*, by Thom S. Rainer gives insight into how to breakout of a stuck position as a church and move forward for the glory of God. The research has been done and the results are in this book. A summary of that which was displayed in breakout pastors is given by

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<sup>12</sup> Hybels, *Holy Discontent*, 24.

the definition “Acts 6/7 Legacy Leadership.”<sup>13</sup> Rainer highlighted these leaders as Acts 1: The Called Leader, Acts 2: The Contributing Leader, Acts 3: The Outwardly-Focused Leader, Acts 4: The Passionate Leader, Acts 5: The Bold Leader, and Acts 6/7: The Legacy Leader.<sup>14</sup> The book deals with more than just leadership but this is at the heart at the start. The book is a helpful manual for refocusing the church, by discovering and implementing vision. The book also addresses the subjects of excellence, momentum, and erosion.

*Dangerous Church*, by John Bishop is a call to trust God for greater things in reaching people for Him and living on the edge. It’s not a matter of living recklessly but it is a matter of not just playing it safe. The book is outlined in four parts: Risk Everything, Reach Everywhere, Release Everyone, and Remember Only God.<sup>15</sup> While the desire for all hearts in the church to change is the goal, Bishop pointed out, “. . . I’m convinced that any real change that gets us back to our mission will begin in the hearts of leaders.”<sup>16</sup>

*The Autobiography of George Muller* is the powerful testimony of a life of faith, prayer, and trusting God. This book is the personal and powerful story of God’s miraculous provision in answer to prayer, particularly in the ministry to orphans. Muller said, “The hand of God will be clearly seen when He sends help.”<sup>17</sup> From the years of the mid 1800’s come these powerful reminders: “As the work grows, the Lord keeps pace with the expenses.”<sup>18</sup> The heart of George Muller that went way beyond the moment is seen in the following quote, “I confidently

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<sup>13</sup> Thom S. Rainer, *Breakout Churches* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2005), 27.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid, 27-28.

<sup>15</sup> John Bishop, *Dangerous Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2011), 7-8.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 40.

<sup>17</sup> *The Autobiography of George Muller* (New Kensington, PA: 1985), 93.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid, 230.

anticipated that my answers to prayer would lead believers to look for answers to their own prayers and encourage them to bring all their needs before God.”<sup>19</sup> This is the story of faith in action. It’s a life changing, ministry-changing read.

*Replenish*, by Lance Witt is all about developing, having, and leading from a soul that is healthy. Witt reviewed the stunning lack of health among spiritual leaders and pastors of our day. He challenged the reader with this reminder: “. . . the Great Commission will not be fulfilled by human ingenuity or innovative thinking alone. This God-sized task will only be completed by Spirit-filled, spiritually healthy churches. And these churches will not be spiritually healthy unless their leaders are spiritually healthy.”<sup>20</sup>

This quote is at the heart of the subject of this thesis. Witt further stated, “you need both a fire in the belly and a spiritual recliner to be healthy.”<sup>21</sup> This is the reminder that zeal, passion, rest and rejuvenation are all essential to the leader. They are not mutually exclusive, but absolutely essential to health and endurance in ministry. He discusses reasons pastors find themselves depleted and also the road home to a healthier soul.

*Leaders Who Last*, by Dave Kraft is extremely relevant to this thesis. Writing from more than forty years of ministry experience, Kraft divided this book into three sections around the themes, Foundations, Formation, and Fruitfulness.<sup>22</sup> Kraft expressed concern with regard to his study of leaders and states that “too many are dropping out of the race, losing heart, and letting

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<sup>19</sup> Muller, 233.

<sup>20</sup> Lance Witt, *Replenish* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2011), 20.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid, 40.

<sup>22</sup> Dave Kraft, *Leaders Who Last* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2010), 9.

go of their dreams and lofty purposes.”<sup>23</sup> Kraft discussed key factors in leadership and puts a great emphasis on being not just doing. He compellingly explained,

The greatest and most pressing need in the body of Christ today is an army of leaders who have a vision of a desired future and are called and anointed by God. These leaders possess a fire burning in their hearts that can’t be extinguished. They are motivated and led by God to intentionally, passionately, and effectively influence others.<sup>24</sup>

*Into the Future* by Elmer Towns and Warren Bird, offers insight for ministry today.

Though written in the year 2000, it is still relevant fourteen years later. As stated in the table of contents, the authors believe that churches that move into the future, will move toward church health and quality, relational communication, targeted outreach, new forms for faith transfer, a greater appreciation of worship, empowerment of lay leadership and new stewardship motives.<sup>25</sup> This book is filled with insightful observations and much practical information for application to the ministry context.

*Still Standing*, by James Merritt is a book that highlights eight stories from the Bible, that illustrate making it through even the toughest of times. Merritt reminded the reader that difficulties are inevitable, however God has solutions and lessons in every situation. In his frank and honest style Merritt wrote, “Burning out, stressing out, falling out doesn’t glorify God. Only doing the work He gives you to do daily glorifies Him.”<sup>26</sup>

*A God-Sized Vision*, by Collin Hansen and John Woodbridge, tells the stories of revivals through recent centuries. It highlights the working of God in America as well as other nations including, Wales, India, Korea, East Africa and China. With regard to revival in Finney’s time

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<sup>23</sup> Dave Kraft, *Leaders Who Last*, 20.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid, 24.

<sup>25</sup> Elmer Towns and Warren Bird, *Into the Future* (Grand Rapids, MI: Revell, 2000), 5-6.

<sup>26</sup> James Merritt, *Still Standing* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House, 2012), 31.

the authors wrote, “For too long, Finney believed, Christians have waited for God to move, when all along God has gifted the church with everything it needs to spark revival.”<sup>27</sup> This subject of revival may begin on the church level and touch people there but it will spread throughout the community. “Revivals seize the world’s attention.”<sup>28</sup> The authors summarized it this way: “For reasons known only to him, God occasionally condescends to answer his people’s faithful prayers with a special sense of his power and presence.”<sup>29</sup>

*Redefining Leadership*, by Joseph M. Stowell, is a brand new book from 2014 that highlights what is most needed today in church pastors and leaders. It gives insight into why many get off track and lose effectiveness and desire. With powerful insight, Stowell described the difference between outcome-driven leaders and character-driven leaders. He asks the sobering but absolutely necessary question, “Does anyone seem to care about the internal dynamics of leadership?”<sup>30</sup> The book could be summarized with this statement: “God is always concerned about how we do what we do. And he cares deeply about who we are as we do what we do.”<sup>31</sup> Stowell would argue that being a leader is being a follower of Jesus. The book also calls the reader back to the calling and role of Shepherd in the church as a leader.

*Fresh Wind, Fresh Fire*, by Jim Cymbala is the story of the rebirth of the Brooklyn Tabernacle. Though it is the story of the resurrection of one congregation, it is a book that has impacted multitudes in their personal lives and churches. Chapter two is entitled “Catching

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<sup>27</sup> Collin Hansen and John Woodbridge, *A God-Sized Vision* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2010), 33.

<sup>28</sup> Hansen and Woodbridge, *A God-Sized Vision*, 34.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid, 25.

<sup>30</sup> Joseph M. Stowell, *Redefining Leadership* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2014), 37.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid, 39.



Fire.”<sup>32</sup> Cymbala described the night he shared God’s answer to his crying out to Him in prayer for direction for the fledgling church. He said, “From this day on, the prayer meeting will be the barometer of our church. What happens on Tuesday night will be the gauge by which we will judge success or failure because that will be the measure by which God blesses us.”<sup>33</sup> This is the amazing story of the turnaround of a church by the power of the Holy Spirit under the leadership of a pastor who listened to God, obeyed God, and sought God in prayer.

*The Power of Desperation*, by Michael Catt, is a challenge to see God breakthrough in people’s lives for the glory of God. Whereas the world has some suggested answers, they fall short and Catt reminds the reader that what is needed is heaven’s answer. Catt would argue that God even creates times that drive us and draw us to a sense of desperation where lasting answers are found to life’s greatest struggles.

*Autopsy of a Deceased Church*, by Thom S. Rainer, describes the slow decay and death of a local church. The goal of this project is for churches to not just survive but thrive. This book offers twelve insights into how to keep the church alive. Rainer pointed out that dying churches dwell in the past, budget for themselves, neglect the great commission, are full of preferences, and have shorter pastoral tenures. Prayer is neglected and there is a lack of clarity of purpose. The book ends with responses based on the health of the church. Is it showing symptoms of sickness, very sick or dying? This book could be a key to revitalization.

### Websites

[www.thomrainer.com](http://www.thomrainer.com) is a website filled with articles that relate to life, ministry, pastoral leadership and tenure, staff issues, and more. There is a plethora of material that is practical and

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<sup>32</sup> Jim Cymbala, *Fresh Wind, Fresh Fire/Fresh Faith* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2008), 27.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, 27.

helpful. For years, Rainer has been known for his research and insights into the life and impact of the local church and its leaders.

[www.expastors.com](http://www.expastors.com) is a website devoted to the issue of those who have left the ministry. It deals with issues such as why they left, what they learned and even the road back into a healthier life and perhaps even vocational ministry. This ministry and website was founded by Bo Lane. It is filled with articles and testimonies of pain and grace. There is a video section with videos from Rick Warren, Greg Laurie, Matt Chandler, Francis Chan and more. There is a learn section, a connect section and a share section to the website.

[www.thrivingpastor.com](http://www.thrivingpastor.com) is a website connected to the ministry of Focus on the Family. This particular site has the goal of pastors and churches thriving. There are sections of ministry tools, pastoral care, topics, and a store section. You can sign up for an e-newsletter. There are articles on family issues for the pastor and his family and also for various ministry topics.

[www.barna.org](http://www.barna.org) is a website with great research and trends information. There is a compelling study done of the most and least Bible-minded cities in the nation. This data is very helpful for this thesis to show the spiritual condition of the northeast. The Barna:Cities report is the study and offers much insight into Christianity in America.

### Scripture passages

The verse that is the focus for this entire study is 2 Timothy 1:6, which reads, “Therefore, I remind you to keep ablaze the gift of God that is in you through the laying on of my hands.” The older preacher writes the younger preacher and challenges him to keep the fire burning in his life. This fire for ministry in the life of the God called leader must be given attention. The verse that immediately follows, gives a riveting contrast to the battle that will be experienced by those who desire to keep the fire burning in their hearts and souls. 2 Timothy 1:7 says, “For God has

not given us a spirit of fearfulness, but one of power, love, and sound judgment.” Those serious about pursuing the Lord will be barraged by one of Satan’s greatest tactics: fear. Fear does not come from God. He gives believers power, love and discipline in their minds and judgment. This study recognizes the contrast and challenge that these two verses clearly describe.

In the life of the prophet Elijah we see another incident where God answered by fire. This picture of revival reminds us of the power of God falling on a drenched altar. Though water was scarce, it had been poured out. Often believers are called upon to pour out that which is sacrificial as they trust in God for greater things. In the end, the power of God will be demonstrated and people will know that He is God. 1 Kings 18:38-39, says “Then Yahweh’s fire fell and consumed the burnt offering, the wood, the stones, and the dust, and it licked up the water that was in the trench. When all the people saw it, they fell facedown and said, “Yahweh, He is God! Yahweh, He is God!”

The prophet Jeremiah had become discouraged in ministry and even wanted to quit. He reached a point where he decided he was not preaching anymore. However, God had started a fire in him. Jeremiah says as recorded in Jeremiah 20:9, “If I say, ‘I won’t mention Him or speak any longer in His name,’ His message becomes a fire burning in my heart, shut up in my bones. I become tired of holding it in, and I cannot prevail.” The New Living Translation boldly states it this way: “But if I say I’ll never mention the LORD or speak in his name, his word burns in my heart like a fire. It’s like a fire in my bones! I am worn out trying to hold it in! I can’t do it!” This passage highlights the reality that God is at work keeping the fire burning.

The story of the two on the road to Emmaus is a profound story of two people who were traveling home with more questions than answers from the events surrounding the death and resurrection of Jesus. He actually appeared to them and walked home with them, though they

were kept from knowing it was Him. Upon arrival in town, they invited him to their home. As they broke bread, they recognized it was Him. Is it possible they saw the scars in his hands? Somehow their eyes were opened and they knew it was the Lord. Once they recognized Him, He was then quickly gone from their midst. Their reply about the day is found in Luke 24:32, which reads, “So they said to each other, ‘Weren’t our hearts ablaze within us while He was talking with us on the road and explaining the Scriptures to us?’” Jesus had taught them the greatest Bible class ever heard by anyone of all time. He taught through the Old Testament and showed how He was the fulfillment of all that was prophesied though they did not know it was Him. God still wants to set hearts ablaze as He speaks to His children from and through His word today!

For the fire to keep burning in the hearts and lives of pastors, believers, and churches, the power of the Holy Spirit is a must. Zechariah 4:6, records, “. . . This is the word of the LORD to Zerubbabel: ‘Not by strength or by might, but by My Spirit,’ says the LORD of Hosts.” Ephesians 5:18, says, “And don’t get drunk with wine, which leads to reckless actions, but be filled by the Spirit.” To attempt to do the work of God without the power of the Spirit of God would be a tragedy, yet is all too often the case. Out of fear of wild fire, the churches of today settle for no fire. God have mercy on the church.

The Bible is great at using images to portray profound lessons. In 1 Corinthians 9:24-27, the picture of a race being run is the subject at hand. The passage reads this way:

Don’t you know that the runners in a stadium all race, but only one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may win. Now everyone who competes exercises self-control in everything. However, they do it to receive a perishable crown, but we an imperishable one. Therefore I do not run like one who runs aimlessly, or box like one who beats the air. Instead, I discipline my body and bring it under strict control, so that after preaching to others, I myself will not be disqualified.

This passage illustrates how believers need endurance and perseverance to keep the fire burning. Of all who line up in a foot race to run, only one will win, that is true. However, all should run

“in such a way to win.” Pastors and the churches they lead must have a “run to win” mentality and spirit.

Paul in writing to the church in Thessalonica, says in 1 Thessalonians 2:8, “We cared so much for you that we were pleased to share with you not only the gospel of God but also our own lives, because you had become dear to us.” This picture of a spiritual leader who shared not only a message but his life out of great love for the people is a model for ministry that is desperately needed today. This must be revisited for fires to flame again across the Northeast and around the world. It’s one thing to give a message. It’s yet another to invest a life. People will know the difference.

Many view their fields of service as difficult or non-responsive. Jesus had a strong word for His disciples recorded in John 4:35. He said, “Don’t you say, ‘There are still four more months, then comes the harvest?’ Listen to what I’m telling you: Open your eyes and look at the fields, for they are ready for harvest.” It is amazing, frightening, and at times very frustrating to realize how many excuses God’s people can come up with for not going after the harvest. The gospel is powerful and the harvest is ready. It’s harvest time!

The Message, paraphrases John 4:34-35 this way:

Jesus said, “The food that keeps me going is that I do the will of the One who sent me, finishing the work he started. As you look around right now, wouldn’t you say that in about four months it will be time to harvest? Well, I’m telling you to open your eyes and take a good look at what’s right in front of you. These Samaritan fields are ripe. It’s harvest time!”

Matthew 9:35-38, says,

Then Jesus went to all the towns and villages, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the good news of the kingdom, and healing every disease and every sickness. When He saw the crowds, He felt compassion for them, because they were weary and worn out, like sheep without a shepherd. Then He said to His disciples, “The harvest is abundant, but the workers are few. Therefore, pray to the Lord of the harvest to send out workers into His harvest.”

Often the emphasis when studying this passage is on the fact that so many were hurting, weary and tired. They were sheep who needed a shepherd. The climax of the passage is the appeal to the greatness of the harvest, the lack of workers and the need for prayer to thrust out laborers into the harvest. However, this statement must not be ignored: “Jesus went to all the towns and villages.” Throughout the Northeast, there are cities like Buffalo, Bangor, Boston, New York, Pittsburgh, Philadelphia, Providence, Burlington, Hartford, Manchester, and Syracuse to name a few. However, there are numerous small towns throughout the Northeast, like the one the author grew up in, with less than 5,000 people. Though the surrounding township is slightly larger, these small towns typify the landscape of much of New York State and the Northeast.

There are game changers in Scripture. One of those would have to be Peter, but another is his brother, who brought him to the Lord. Upon meeting Jesus, Andrew knew his brother needed to meet Jesus. The Bible says it this way in John 1:41-42a, “The first thing Andrew did was to find his brother Simon and tell him, ‘We have found the Messiah’ (that is, the Christ). And he brought him to Jesus.” The author has made it the mission of his life to inspire people to know Jesus. The mission of the church where he serves is to bring people to Jesus. It is the heart of this story. It is a theme that must be a reality for churches, pastors, leaders, and church members to keep the fire burning!

The call of God upon an individual is often an enduring factor in ministry. Acts 20:24 says, “But I count my life of no value to myself, so that I may finish my course and the ministry I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of God’s grace.” To persevere in ministry there must be a sense of God’s purpose and calling.

Isaiah 64:1-2 says, “If only You would tear the heavens open and come down, so that mountains would quake at Your presence – as fire kindles the brushwood, and fire causes water to boil – to make Your name known to Your enemies, so that nations will tremble at Your presence!” The heart cry of the prophet Isaiah is for God to come down and work in the midst of people in an unmistakable way and that people would know it was Him!

In Hosea 6:1-3, the prophet cries out with great passion to the Lord and issues this plea to God’s people:

Come, let us return to the LORD. For He has torn us, and He will heal us; He has wounded us, and He will bind up our wounds. He will revive us after two days, and on the third day He will raise us up so we can live in His presence. Let us strive to know the LORD. His appearance is as sure as the dawn. He will come to us like the rain, like the spring showers that water the land.

Hosea understands that God is enough and returning to Him is what is needed from the people.

He can heal, restore, revive and raise them up. He will shower these things upon His people like rain.

Malachi 3:1 says,

“See I am going to send My messenger, and he will clear the way before Me. Then the Lord you seek will suddenly come to His temple, the Messenger of the covenant you desire – see, He is coming,” says the LORD of Hosts. But who can endure the day of His coming? And who will be able to stand when He appears? For He will be like a refiner’s fire and like cleansing lye.

This promise reminds God’s people that if they seek Him, He will come. He will come and do a refining work in the midst of His people. They will never be the same.

God gives pastors to His people. He connects His servants with His flocks. Jeremiah 3:15 says, “I will give you shepherds who are loyal to Me, and they will shepherd you with knowledge and skill.”

The urgency of the moment for the northeast and beyond is pictured in Joel 3:14: “Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision! For the Day of the LORD is near in the valley of decision.” The issue at hand is eternity and the souls of people. The stakes could not be higher, and the privilege could not be greater.

All of these passages and more illustrate the passion, motivation and desire for God to be glorified in a great witness among His people. He longs for souls to come to Him. What a privilege to share the news and watch Him work! For that reason, we must keep the fire burning!

In downtown Ocean City, Maryland, there is a monument to firefighters. It was put there to honor local firefighters as well as those who serve everywhere. It was dedicated on the fifth anniversary of 9/11 as a tribute to “the 343 firefighters from the Fire Department of the City of New York.”<sup>34</sup> On the memorial which the author viewed in person are written the following words:

DEDICATED TO THE FIREFIGHTERS OF THE WORLD. Your devotion to duty and dedication to service are appreciated beyond the capacity that mere words can describe. Great personal danger comes with each fire fought and lifesaving attempt made. Yet you continue to answer the calling. Every community on earth is enhanced by your existence and richer for your contribution.

Upon viewing this memorial, one is reminded of the realities of the danger of fires. The value and work of firefighters is noble for they deal with life and death. It is humbling to look at one of the flag pole base units and it is dedicated to a firefighter who died at the age of twenty-four. He gave his life so others might live.

In ministry, it's a different kind of fire. It's a fire that burns within from knowing that Jesus died, was buried and rose again to offer life to all who trust Him. Sharing that message and leading in that ministry is a great honor. Lives are in the balance. Eternity is at stake. Our

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<sup>34</sup> "Memorial - Ocean City Vol. Fire Co. - Ocean City, MD." Accessed October 20, 2014. <http://www.ocvfc.com/memorial.cfm/>.



strength is limited, but God's is not. The desire of this author is that pastors, leaders and churches are encouraged to keep that fire burning.

Further down the boardwalk at Ocean City, at the end of the parking lot facing the inlet to the ocean is another building. This building is the Ocean City Life Saving Station Museum. The original 'Life Saving Station' was established in 1878. It is reported that "this station responded to seven major shipwrecks."<sup>35</sup> Today it is a museum. The work of life saving stations is well documented in communities all up the coast. Today the Coast Guard and others continue to carry out such great responsibilities.

The church of Jesus is a soul-saving station. However, many are in danger of becoming museums of what has been. It is time for the fire of God to burn again not only in the hearts of pastors and leaders, but in the churches throughout the Northeast, and around the world! Otherwise, they will become museums and the lighthouse will be gone!

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<sup>35</sup> "Memorial - Ocean City Vol. Fire Co. - Ocean City, MD."

## CHAPTER 2

### THE NEED FOR REVIVAL AND BIBLICAL EXAMPLES

#### The Current Condition of the Northeast

The Northeast is growing in population but has one of the lowest rates of church attendance in the country. While church attendance does not necessarily determine the spirituality of an area, it is an important indicator. The following chart <sup>1, 2</sup> shows the population of the nine states defined as the Northeast in this study. It also shows current church attendance in recent years.

NORTHEASTERN STATES ~ POPULATION AND CHURCH ATTENDANCE

POPULATION	2010	2000	% CHANGE	*CHURCH ATTENDANCE (2004-2006)	CHURCH ATTENDANCE RANK (of 48 continental states)
Connecticut	3,574,097	3,405,565	+4.9	37%	33rd
Maine	1,328,361	1,274,923	+4.2	31%	43rd
Massachusetts	6,547,629	6,349,097	+3.1	31%	44th
New Hampshire	1,316,470	1,235,786	+6.5	24%	48th
New Jersey	8,791,894	8,414,350	+4.5	34%	37th
New York	19,378,102	18,976,457	+2.1	33%	39th
Pennsylvania	12,702,379	12,281,054	+3.4	43%	25th
Rhode Island	1,052,567	1,048,319	+0.4	28%	45th
Vermont	625,741	608,827	+2.8	24%	47th
Total Northeast	55,317,240	53,594,378	+3.2	32%	Ave rank = 40th
USA	308,745,538	281,421,906	+9.7	Ave = 42%	

\*weekly/almost weekly – survey done by Gallup

This chart shows the population of the states in 2010 and 2000 with the percent change in growth. It also shows church attendance over a period from 2004 to 2006 and the ranking of the attendance of the 48 continental United States. The states are listed alphabetically. The least populated state is Vermont with 625,741 people, and the greatest populated state is New York

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<sup>1</sup> "USA QuickFacts." United States Census Bureau. Accessed October 20, 2014.  
<http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/index.html/>.

<sup>2</sup> "Church Attendance Lowest in New England, Highest in South." Accessed October 20, 2014.  
<http://www.gallup.com/poll/22579/church-attendance-lowest-new-england-highest-south.aspx/>.

with 19,378,102. The total population for the area is 55,317,240. If this region were a country it would be the 24<sup>th</sup> largest in the world. This would place the Northeast between Italy at 23 with 60,340,328 and Myanmar at 50,496,000 (estimate as of 2012-2014).<sup>3</sup>

The states with the lowest church attendance are Vermont and New Hampshire (24%) and the highest is Pennsylvania (43%). The average church attendance for these nine states is 32% of the population compared to 42% for all states. To realize that 2 out of 3 people in the Northeast do not even attend church gives a sense of the spiritual need in this region.

The Barna organization has recently identified one hundred of the least and most Bible minded cities in America.<sup>4</sup> In that report, a Northeast city is not listed until #40. The Northeast cities and their rankings which begin to appear on the list are Johnstown/Altoona, PA (#40). Philadelphia, PA (#57), Pittsburgh, PA (#67), and Harrisburg/Lancaster/Lebanon/York, (#69).

The alarming results of this study are found in the bottom twenty cities. Among the bottom twenty cities, there are eleven listed that are in the Northeast. These cities include Rochester, NY (#83), Wiles-Barre/Scranton, PA (#84), Syracuse, NY (#86), New York, NY (#89), Portland/Auburn, Me (#91), and Burlington/Plattsburgh, VT (#92). It should be noted that Plattsburgh is in NY but linked with Burlington in this report. The bottom twenty continues with Hartford/New Haven CT (#94), and Buffalo, NY (#95). Perhaps most alarming is that the bottom three of the report are all in the northeast. These are Boston, MA/Manchester, NH (#98), Albany/Schenectady/Troy, NY, (#99), and Providence, RI/New Bedford, MA (#100). More than 50% of the bottom twenty Bible Minded cities in America are from the area targeted in this thesis.

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<sup>3</sup> "Population of All Countries of the World / All National Populations Largest to Smallest - Worldatlas.com." Accessed October 15, 2014. <http://www.worldatlas.com/aatlas/populations/ctypopls.htm>.

<sup>4</sup> "Baptists." The Most and Least Bible-Minded Cities in the U.S. in 2014. Accessed October 15, 2014. <http://cities.barna.org/americas-most-bible-minded-cities-2014/>.

The website reports that this study took place over a period of seven years and more than 46,000 people were interviewed.<sup>5</sup> In addition they report “respondents who report reading the Bible within the past seven days and who agree strongly in the accuracy of the Bible are classified as ‘Bible Minded’.”<sup>6</sup> This report lists Chattanooga, TN as the most Bible minded city with 51% responding in the affirmative. The numbers listed for the bottom three cities are 15, 10 and 9. That means that only 9 people out of 100 in Providence, RI/New Bedford, MA have read the Bible in the last seven days and strongly agree in the accuracy of the Bible.

This gets personal quickly as the author lives in a suburb of Syracuse, NY and is in the midst of this territory. By the above definition, this means that 20 out of 100 people in Syracuse are Bible-minded. The area referred to as Burlington/Plattsburgh is within two hours from the author’s hometown. There are only 18 out of 100 who are Bible minded. The author went to college in Rochester, NY where 21 out of 100 people are Bible minded. So is all despair? Is there any hope? Can one church make a difference? Can one person make a difference?

This may be the culture of the day, but there some things that need to be remembered. The influence of one church should never be underestimated. The Bible says, ‘Now to Him who is able to do above and beyond all that we ask or think – according to the power that works in you – to Him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen.’<sup>7</sup> Pastors become discouraged and churches are too often are in survival mode. While this is reality for many, there is a greater reality. God is at work among His people. The Lord is building His church, and He is inviting pastors and leaders to build people within those local

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<sup>5</sup> "Baptists." The Most and Least Bible-Minded Cities in the U.S. in 2014. Accessed October 15, 2014. <http://cities.barna.org/americas-most-bible-minded-cities-2014/>.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Ephesians 3:20-21, Holman Christian Standard Bible.

churches for the glory of God. The Bible says, “making the most of the time, because the days are evil.”<sup>8</sup>

God has the power to do more than His people ask, and He has the power to do more than His people think could possibly happen. So why is it that pastors quit, churches die, communities lose a lighthouse, and in the process lost people are left with one less witness for the gospel with their eternal destination at stake? This thesis will deal with these subjects in greater detail in the next two chapters.

The author of this project is a pastor who has been serving in local churches for over thirty-seven years. Thirty of those years have been in the northeast, particularly New York State. The last twenty-one have been at the same church, Northside Baptist Church, in Liverpool, New York. It has become his passion and desire to see pastors encouraged and becoming more effective in the work of the kingdom of God. It is also a desire to see churches not just survive but thrive. Communities need the vibrancy of a healthy local church. The precious souls of the multitudes are in the balance and are awaiting the reality of an eternal destination in only one of two places, heaven or hell. “Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision! For the Day of the Lord is near in the valley of decision.”<sup>9</sup>

Dr. Stanley Magill, former professor at Roberts Wesleyan College, now with the Lord, used to say repeatedly that what ministers need are cool heads and red-hot hearts. Those words burn in the mind of this author from the classroom days with Dr. Magill in the late 1970’s. They are still motivating to this day. Too often, the fire in the heart cools, and the heat in the head grows. Pastors and leaders are tempted to drift toward cool hearts and hot heads, which is not a

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<sup>8</sup> Ephesians 5:16.

<sup>9</sup> Joel 3:14.

good combination. The need is to get back to the clear unmistakable Biblical admonition from the older, wiser servant of the Lord, Paul, to the young son in the ministry, Timothy. Vance Havner said, “We have forgotten that the way forward is not head first but heart first. We have been wagging our heads and working our hands instead of warming our hearts.”<sup>10</sup>

The Northeast is becoming a spiritually desolate land. While once the place of great revival ‘fire’ under the ministries of men like Dwight L. Moody and Charles G. Finney, today the vast majority are lost and unchurched. The next section of this paper will review some examples of revival in Scripture and in the history of the Northeast. This offers hope for today, and offers insight into principles God could use to spark revival once again.

## **Revivals in the Past**

### Revivals in the Bible

There are several examples of revival in Scripture. These are seen in the lives and ministries of Jacob, Moses, Samuel, Asa, Jehoshaphat, Hezekiah, Josiah, Elijah, Ezra, Nehemiah, Jonah, Peter and Philip. There are also passages that are a heart cry for revival as well as the promise of revival. This section will begin with a review of a passage from Ezekiel, a study of a few of the revivals mentioned in scripture, followed by the promise of revival and the plea for revival.

The prophet Ezekiel was witness to a moment that would impact him greatly and explain to him what God was about to do. The story is found in Ezekiel, chapter 37, and is often referred to as the valley of dry bones. God put him in the middle of a valley full of dry bones. The Bible says there were many bones and they were very dry. God asked the prophet a compelling

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<sup>10</sup> Vance Havner, *Hearts Afire* (Old Tappan, NJ: Fleming H. Revell, 1952), 12.

question. “Then He said to me, ‘Son of man, can these bones live?’ I replied, ‘Lord GOD, only You know.’”<sup>11</sup>

God then told Ezekiel to prophesy to the bones, and then he spoke to the bones and let them know they would live. Ezekiel obeys the Lord, and soon he begins to hear a sound like bones rattling and then witnesses them come together and form a body. They are without breath, so he is to prophesy to the breath. Then it is written, “So I prophesied as He commanded me; the breath entered them, and they came to life and stood on their feet, a vast army.”<sup>12</sup>

The whole passage was a promise to Israel and how he would raise them up, they would live and dwell in the land He had for them. Verse 14 is a promise for all to hold onto who minister in a place that feels like a valley of dry bones with a big question mark over it as to whether they can live again. “I will put My Spirit in you, and you will live, and I will settle you in your own land. Then you will know that I am the LORD. I have spoken, and I will do it. This is the declaration of the LORD.”<sup>13</sup>

All across the Northeast there are places like valleys of dry bones, and soon we will hear in this paper from the hearts of 35 pastors and leaders who currently serve or who have served there. For now, consider the examples of Biblical revival.

C. E. Autrey defines revival as “a reanimating of those who already possess life. Revival in the strict sense of the word has to do with God’s people. It revives spiritual life which is in a state of declension. Revival is an instrument of evangelism.”<sup>14</sup> The work of God is essential in

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<sup>11</sup> Ezekiel 37:3.

<sup>12</sup> Ezekiel 27:10.

<sup>13</sup> Ezekiel 37:14.

<sup>14</sup> C. E. Autrey, *Revivals of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1960), 13.

this transition to a vital state. It's amazing to realize that though written over fifty years ago, the cry of this author still applies and brings a great challenge.

We need revival today to reach the lost. Nothing is as revitalizing to a Christian as to see a soul saved. Many Christians today are strangled by immorality. They are curbed by ignorance. They have no knowledge of the living God. Greed for money on the part of individuals and nations has brought distress. Only the purifying fires of revival can rid us of greed and immoral contamination and curb waves of crime which threaten to inundate us.<sup>15</sup>

## **Jacob**

The story of Jacob's encounter with the Lord at Bethel is told in Genesis 35. This is the story of personal revival. Revival often begins in the heart of an individual. This journey to Bethel was a time of spiritual cleansing and preparation for the journey. God changed Jacob's name to Israel in this encounter with the Lord. He made great promises to him about what was ahead, and Jacob set a marker there.

This personal encounter with God was life changing. For revival to come to the Northeast, it will take putting away false gods, and pursuing the one true living God! Jacob's leadership in this moment is seen in verse 3, "we must get up and go to Bethel. I will build an altar there to the God who answered me in my day of distress. He has been with me everywhere I have gone."<sup>16</sup>

Jacob's encounter with the angel of the Lord recorded in Genesis 32, was the preparation for this moment. Jacob had said, "I will not let you go unless You bless me."<sup>17</sup> In that story the name change is mentioned, and the Bible says, "'Jacob then named the place Peniel, 'For,' he

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<sup>15</sup> Autrey, *Revivals of the Old Testament*, 27-28.

<sup>16</sup> Genesis 35:3.

<sup>17</sup> Genesis 32:26b.



said, ‘I have seen God face to face, and I have been delivered.’”<sup>18</sup> Time transformed in the presence of God meant revival for Jacob, and is the hope for revival for any individual, church, or the Northeast.

## **Moses**

While Moses was on Mt. Sinai seeking the Lord, the people grew impatient and began to work on Aaron to help them create an idol they could worship. The golden calf was the end result. God told Moses what was going on and described these people as stiff-necked. He was ready to destroy them all and start over.

Moses confronted Aaron and the people. The Bible says, “Moses saw that the people were out of control, for Aaron had let them get out of control, so that they would be vulnerable to their enemies. And Moses stood at the camp’s entrance and said, ‘Whoever is for the LORD come to me.’ And all the Levites gathered around him.”<sup>19</sup> Judgment followed but there was a remnant and those who acknowledged they wanted to be on the Lord’s side. For revival to come to the Northeast, it will mean calling out, “Who is on the Lord’s side?” This is not a time for wavering. This is a time for surrender to the Lord.

## **Elijah**

In 1 Kings 18, the story is told of Elijah squaring off against the 450 prophets of Baal. In the midst of this idolatrous society, Elijah challenged the people with these words, “ . . . How long will you hesitate between two opinions? If Yahweh is God, follow Him. But if Baal,

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<sup>18</sup> Genesis 32:30.

<sup>19</sup> Exodus 32:25-26.

follow him.’ But the people didn’t answer him a word.”<sup>20</sup> He then proposed that two offerings of bulls be prepared over wood. However, no one was to light the fire. “Then you call on the name of your god, and I will call on the name of Yahweh. The God who answers with fire, He is God. All the people answered, ‘That sounds good.’”<sup>21</sup>

After the prophets of Baal pled with their false God to no avail, Elijah had water poured on the sacrifice three times. This is significant for a number of reasons. This was a time of drought and what was poured out was precious. Second, it would serve as the reminder that there could not possibly be any fire started that was not seen. Third, it may also be a picture that the drenched altar, is still the one God’s fire falls on today. He said, “Those who sow in tears will reap with shouts of joy. Though one goes along weeping, carrying the bag of seed, he will surely come back with shouts of joy, carrying his sheaves.”<sup>22</sup> For revival to come to the Northeast, there needs to be a clear call to follow God, fearless faith on the part of leaders, and brokenness for the condition of a lost world.

## **Hezekiah**

The books of Chronicles highlight the leadership of several kings, and what happened under their leadership. Hezekiah was King who led the people in revival. C. E. Autrey described it this way:

A great revival developed under the leadership of Hezekiah. It sprang up among a people whose morals had decayed and whose hopes were dim. They were overrun by their neighbors, and they were humanly incapable of throwing off the reproach. Poverty and lack of national courage so characterized them that no one dreamed that strength of

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<sup>20</sup> 1 Kings 18:21.

<sup>21</sup> 1 Kings 18:24.

<sup>22</sup> Psalm 126:5-6.

character could come to such people. The revival came as suddenly as a tornado and spread over the land with the speed of a forest fire.<sup>23</sup>

A leader with a heart for God led the nation. 2 Chronicles 31:20-21 says, “Hezekiah did this throughout all Judea. He did what was good and upright and true before the LORD his God. He was diligent in every deed that he began in the service of God’s temple, in the law and in the commandment, in order to seek his God, and he prospered.”

## **Jonah**

The prophet Jonah was told by God to “Get up! Go to the great city of Nineveh and preach against it, because their wickedness has confronted Me!”<sup>24</sup> Jonah decided to run from God rather than run for God. The story is a beautiful picture of how the Lord pursues his servants even when they run from His direction. God in mercy, spares his life, and answers his prayer. Jonah, given a second chance goes to Nineveh and preaches with powerful results: “The men of Nineveh believe in God. They proclaimed a fast and dressed in sackcloth – from the greatest of them to the least.”<sup>25</sup>

Rather than being thrilled, Jonah resented this as well, since he knew the Ninevites were wicked and had a bias that they not be spared. God dealt with that attitude as well in the final chapter of the book. For revival to come to the Northeast, it will take God called servants who obey God’s call, deliver the message He desires to the people to whom they are called, and trust Him for amazing results. Revival will show up in second chances, mercy, grace, and repentance.

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<sup>23</sup> C. E. Autrey, *Revivals of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1960), 110.

<sup>24</sup> Jonah 1:2.

<sup>25</sup> Jonah 3:5.

## **Ezra/Nehemiah**

At a critical time in Israel's history as Ezra was used of God for the rebuilding of the temple and Nehemiah for the rebuilding of the wall around Jerusalem. They both faced great challenges but persevered. Toward the end of the book of Nehemiah, Ezra read the book of the law to the people, with a powerful result. "Ezra opened the book in full view of all the people, since he was elevated above everyone. As he opened it, all the people stood up. Ezra blessed the LORD, the great God, and with their hands uplifted all the people said, 'Amen, Amen!' Then they bowed down and worshiped the LORD with their faces to the ground."<sup>26</sup> For revival to come to the Northeast, there must be the priority of staying on mission with the Lord, hearing and heeding His word.

## **Peter**

In the New Testament, Peter preached on the day of Pentecost and God moved powerfully in the person of the Holy Spirit and three thousand people were saved. After a ten day prayer meeting, Peter preached a message that was convicting, and compelling. The message was loaded with scripture, and the fire of God fell on that place and people's lives were changed forever. The Bible says, "so those who accepted his message were baptized, and that day about 3,000 people were added to them . . . and every day the Lord added to them those who were being saved."<sup>27</sup> For revival to come to the Northeast, it will take some ten day prayer meetings, the clear preaching of the word of God, and the anointing of the Spirit of God.

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<sup>26</sup> Nehemiah 8:5-6.

<sup>27</sup> Acts 2:41, 47b.

## Philip

Further in the book of Acts, the eighth chapter, Philip was ministering under the leading of the Lord with great effect.

Philip went down to a city in Samaria and preached the Messiah to them. The Crowds paid attention with one mind to what Philip said, as they heard and saw the signs he was performing. For unclean spirits, crying out with a loud voice, came out of many who were possessed, and many who were paralyzed and lame were healed. So there was great joy in that city.<sup>28</sup>

Later in the chapter the Spirit of God led Philip to another area where he was able to minister to one person who had questions about a relationship with God. That man came to faith in Christ as a result of that encounter. For revival to come to the Northeast again, it will take servants of the Lord, listening to the Spirit of God and ministering in the power of God.

## Revivals in the Northeast

W. Glyn Evans writes, “So far as I can discover, the earliest evidence of the massive moving of God’s Spirit on American soil was in the ministry of Theodore Jacob Frelinghuysen in the 1720’s in the Raritan Valley of New Jersey.”<sup>29</sup> He was a man of Dutch decent who left his homeland to come settle with others of like background “in order to induce in them a deeper sense of spirituality and godliness.”<sup>30</sup> His preaching was described as “severe, and legalistic”<sup>31</sup> which might seem troubling, but it was followed by “a spontaneous spirit of repentance and contrition which revitalized the Dutch community.”<sup>32</sup> While this might not be the preferred or even all-time recommended style, somehow it would appear God used it and stirred hearts.

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<sup>28</sup> Acts 8:5-8.

<sup>29</sup> W. Glyn Evans, *Profiles of Revival Leaders* (Nashville, TN: Broadman Press, 1976), 7.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

## The First Great Awakening

The dates of this awakening are essentially between 1735 and 1740. The key leaders were Jonathan Edwards and George Whitefield. It was around 1735 in Northampton where Edwards had been used of God with such great impact. That church experienced and influenced others toward revival: “Edwards was concerned about the ‘licentiousness’ of Northampton’s young people, and he was troubled about the spread of spiritual self-reliance.”<sup>33</sup> Edwards dealt with the first issue by visiting the youth in their homes, and the second by a series of sermons on justification by faith alone.<sup>34</sup>

Referring to 1734, “In the winter of that year and throughout the next, a great concern for godliness swept over Northampton as individuals clamored to be sure of salvation and the church was thronged.”<sup>35</sup> This movement of God through one church has great interest for the subject of this paper, for it has impacted the world to this day. Of that time the following is recorded, “‘The town,’ Edwards wrote later, ‘seemed to be full of the presence of God. It never was so full of love, nor so full of joy, and yet as full of distress, as it was then. There were remarkable tokens of God’s presence in almost every house.’”<sup>36</sup>

This was followed by a time where in 1740, following an outpouring of the Spirit of God in England, Whitfield came to America and preached throughout New England: “Whitfield’s

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<sup>33</sup> Mark Noll, Editor, *Eerdmans’ Handbook to Christianity in America*. (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmanns Publishing Company, 1983), 102.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

coming fanned the flames of revival again in New England, this time widening the work.”<sup>37</sup>

Another has written of Whitfield, “his preaching tour of New England in the fall of 1740, when Whitefield addressed crowds of up to 8,000 nearly every day for over a month, was probably the most sensational event in the whole history of American religion.”<sup>38</sup>

The issue of salvation became the prime concern to many as it is recorded that “there were hundreds for whom the sole important question had become, ‘What must I do to be saved?’”<sup>39</sup> The impact was further felt on social issues as well as communities were confronted with the gospel and all its implications on life and eternity.

### **The Haystack Revival**

The author had the opportunity in the fall of 2014 to visit the site of the haystack revival. In 1806, with an approaching thunderstorm driving them into a haystack, five college students from Williams College met for prayer and discussion on spiritual matters. That day, God got ahold of their hearts and the modern missions movement was begun. The question is asked, “Why did it happen? What caused the explosion of American interest in global evangelism and missions after 1810? Was it the students in the haystack? Not quite. It was a few people in the presence of God.”<sup>40</sup>

Samuel Mills was one of the students. His father had been the pastor of the same church in Connecticut for over sixty years. God had been at work through the ministry of Edwards to men like Samuel’s father. These pastors were not afraid to call people in their churches to far

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<sup>37</sup> W. Glyn Evans, *Profiles of Revival Leaders*, 8.

<sup>38</sup> Noll, *Eerdmans’ Handbook to Christianity in America*, 107.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

<sup>40</sup> “Haystack Prayer Meeting: How a Campus Revival Birthed American Foreign Missions.” Accessed October 27, 2014. <http://absc.org/resourcesmedia/49-haystack-prayer-meeting.html>.

more than membership, but to a personal relationship with God. “What happened to those students who completely sold out to God in the summer of 1806 was simply this: they experienced the presence of God. In the presence of God, the students at the haystack took personal responsibility for the lost souls of their generation.”<sup>41</sup> The author’s prayer is that today people will spend time in the presence of God seeking Him in prayer, and studying His word and His ways, and assume that same responsibility for those without Christ today.

### **The Second Great Awakening**

Evans indicates this awakening “began in Hampton-Sydney College (Virginia) in 1786.”<sup>42</sup> The work spread to other campuses and eventually reached Yale where “a deeply spiritual work at Yale College under the leadership of Timothy Dwight, grandson of Jonathan Edwards”<sup>43</sup> was noted. This took place at a time where people in other places had a growing desire to reach those without Christ, notably William Carey.

It further impacted men such as Adoniram Judson and Luther Rice. This revival impacted young people. At that time no measures were used to promote the meetings. Preaching was the promotion. Under the ministry of Charles Finney, that changed. God used Finney greatly. “With no more means than a praying friend, a zealous heart, and an open Bible, Finney’s revivalism swept small towns like Antwerp, Evans Mills, Rome, and others in the ‘burned over district’ of New York state.”<sup>44</sup> Moody followed Finney’s ministry, in this awakening. Of Mr. Moody it is said, “His message differed slightly from that of his predecessors – he preached the love of God

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<sup>41</sup> "Haystack Prayer Meeting: How a Campus Revival Birthed American Foreign Missions." Accessed October 27, 2014. <http://absc.org/resourcesmedia/49-haystack-prayer-meeting.html>.

<sup>42</sup> W. Glyn Evans, *Profiles of Revival Leaders* (Nashville, TN: Broadman Press, 1976), 9.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid, 10.



rather than his wrath.”<sup>45</sup> God used him greatly from around 1860 to 1899 and his impact is felt to this day.

### **Fulton Street Revival**

This famous work of God in revival began in the heart of one individual with a burden and a desire to gather others to pray. It was simple, yet profound, and its impact is still felt today.

In 1857 there were 30,000 men idle on the streets of New York. Drunkenness was rampant, and the nation was divided by slavery. God raised up a praying businessman, Jeremiah Lanphier. On September 23, 1857 he began a noontime prayer meeting on Fulton Street in the Financial District of Manhattan. Out of a city of 1 million people, six people showed up a half hour late.<sup>46</sup>

They decided to continue to meet weekly for prayer. The attendance grew to 14, 23, and then 40. Soon thousands of business leaders met daily for prayer. “God moved so powerfully that the prayer meeting spread across the nation. It is estimated that nearly 1 million people were converted out of a national population of 35 million, including 10,000 weekly conversions in New York City for a season.”<sup>47</sup>

Knowing that God moved in the home state of the author, in and from this amazing city so powerfully, brings great hope that it can happen again. This movement was not simply a wave and then forgotten. The website goes on to describe the fruit. “Between 1860 and 1920, as answers to the prayer, the Evangelical Social Movement was birthed including the Bowery Mission, the McCauley Street Mission, Salvation Army (begun in London), and the Student Volunteer movement.”<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> Evans, *Profiles of Revival Leaders*, 11.

<sup>46</sup> "150th Anniversary of the Fulton Street Noon Prayer Meeting." Fulton Street Revival. Accessed October 27, 2014. <https://sites.google.com/site/fultonstreetrevival/home>.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

These movements of God in this section show how God worked through individuals and churches to spark revivals for His glory. A slightly longer look will be given in this paper at this time to two men who had the greatest impact on the author, his life, his family and ministry.

### **Dwight L. Moody and Charles G. Finney**

What difference can one man make? That question is answered with two names with deep roots in the Northeast. In their book *The Ten Greatest Revivals Ever (From Pentecost to the Present)*, the authors, Elmer Towns and Douglas Porter mention both Dwight L. Moody and Charles Finney in the table of contents.<sup>49</sup>

Over thirty years ago, the author was given some books. They were from his great uncle's library, William Aubrey, who was a Methodist minister in Northern New York from around 1898 to 1940. These books included volumes of sermons preached at the Northfield Conferences hosted by Mr. Moody. This was the author's first awareness of Northfield.

In the fall of 2010, the author was privileged to visit the little town of Northfield, Massachusetts. He saw the birthplace of Moody, stood at his grave, walked the old seminary campus and also got to see the Mt. Hermon School. He visited the Congregational Church, which though a new building today, was the site of the Moody's funeral service on December 26, 1899. The trip was deeply moving and impacted the author greatly.

From the knoll where Mr. Moody is buried, the author witnessed the grandeur of the view and it caused him to wonder if part of Moody's great faith was spurred on by the greatness of what he saw from that vantage point every day. In plain sight from that knoll are the Green Mountains of Vermont, the White Mountains of New Hampshire and the Connecticut River. It

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<sup>49</sup> Elmer Towns and Douglas Porter, *The Ten Greatest Revivals Ever* (Ann Arbor: MI: Servant Publications, 2000).

would be impossible for a believer to stand there and doubt the greatness of God. Moody was a man of vision and great faith.

With regard to his character, C. I. Scofield said at his funeral, “The basis of Mr. Moody’s character was sincerity, genuineness. He had an inveterate aversion to all forms of sham, unreality, and pretense.”<sup>50</sup> With regard to his life and ministry it is further stated, “His message was simple. It involved ‘Three R’s’; Ruin by Sin, Redemption by Christ, and Regeneration by the Holy Ghost. Saving souls was his preeminent goal.”<sup>51</sup>

He described conversion in this way: “a person, to be converted, has to give up his will, his ways, and his thoughts.”<sup>52</sup> He further referred to this decision as “unconditional surrender.”<sup>53</sup> He lived with a longing in his heart for heaven, which may have been a key factor in keeping him on track on earth. He wrote, “the brightest home on earth is only an empty barn compared to the mansions that are in the skies.”<sup>54</sup>

The will of God was of supreme importance to Moody. The author stood at his grave and witnessed with his own eyes these words from 1 John etched into the gravestone: “he that doeth the will of God abideth forever.”<sup>55</sup> R. A. Torrey ministered with Moody and said that the reasons God used Moody were because he was “a fully surrendered man, a man of prayer, a deep and practical student of the Bible, a humble man, his entire freedom from the love of money, his

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<sup>50</sup> Henry Davenport Northrup, *Life and Labors of Dwight L. Moody, The Great Evangelist*. (Toledo, OH: S. Frautschi, 1899), 139.

<sup>51</sup> Mark Noll, Editor, *Eerdmans’ Handbook to Christianity in America*. (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmanns Publishing Company, 1983), 294.

<sup>52</sup> D. L. Moody, *You Will Live Forever* (New Kensington, PA: Whitaker House, 1997), 110.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, 113.

<sup>54</sup> D. L. Moody, *Heaven, How to Get There* (Springdale, PA: Whitaker House, 1982), 18.

<sup>55</sup> 1 John 2:17b, KJV.

consuming passion for the salvation of the lost, (and) definitely endowed with power from on high.”<sup>56</sup>

With regard to this power from on high, Moody had this to say about the subject of the Holy Spirit: “I believe firmly, that the moment our hearts are emptied of pride and selfishness and ambition and self-seeking, and everything that is contrary to God’s law, the Holy Ghost will come and fill every corner of our hearts; but if we are full of pride and conceit, and ambition and self-seeking, and pleasure and the world, there is no room for the Spirit of God.”<sup>57</sup> Without question, this strong belief in surrender to the Lord and the working of the Holy Spirit, were key factors in the impact of Moody’s life and ministry.

Moody came to Christ largely through the witness and influence of his Sunday School teacher, Edward Kimball who challenged him to give his life to Christ in a shoe store where Mr. Moody worked.<sup>58</sup> Moody would go on to live his life as a man totally surrendered to God.

Charles Finney was a different sort of person. He was a lawyer by training who eventually lived in the small town of Adams, New York in the northern part of the state. While many are aware of the powerful ministry of Jonathan Edwards, still there is Finney. It has been written,

If you carved a Mount Rushmore of American revival, Edwards would be your first choice. Next you would likely turn to Charles Finney. But the differences between the two men illustrate the difficulties of defining revival. Born in 1792, thirty-four years after Edwards died, Finney became the most prominent American revivalist in the nineteenth century. Reacting in part to the Edwardian tradition, Finney taught that only our reluctance hinders revival.<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> James S. Bell Jr., *The D. L. Moody Collection* (Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1997), 101-116.

<sup>57</sup> D. L. Moody, *Secret Power* (Chicago, IL: Fleming H. Revell, 1908), 33-34.

<sup>58</sup> Lyle W. Dorsett, *A Passion for Souls, The Life of D. L. Moody* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1997), 46-47.

<sup>59</sup> Collin Hansen and John Woodbridge, *A God-Sized Vision* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2010), 32-33.

Whereas Edwards had emphasized the sovereignty of God, Finney would remind people of the responsibility of man. “For too long, Finney believed, Christians have waited for God to move, when all along God has gifted the church with everything it needs to spark revival.”<sup>60</sup> Finney’s passion for the lost, the prayers of Daniel Nash, the willingness to try new things and seek to reach people for Christ have had an impact on the life and ministry of many including this author. It is said that

Finney never counted on his theology, messages, preaching style, logic, or methods to save souls. He looked rather to mighty prayer and the resulting, powerful work of the Holy Spirit to sweep in with great conviction on his audience, that his conversions might be thorough. This may well explain why 80 percent of those converted in his meetings stood the test of time.<sup>61</sup>

A summary of his conversion and ministry is told by V. Raymond Edman:

When Finney was converted at the age of twenty-nine, he had never been in a revival nor attended an evangelistic service. In fact, prior to his coming to Adams three years earlier, he had attended religious services only infrequently. So dynamic and transforming was his experience of faith in Christ that he immediately became a witness for the Savior, first among his neighbors and friends, then his family; and after a year or more of personal work, coupled with much prayer and Bible study, he began his public ministry.<sup>62</sup>

It is true that God used Moody, Finney, Edwards and more to reach multitudes for Christ. While this paper is not meant to be a conclusive study of those days, it is wise to remember for the sake of hope for the future and what God can do today. It is equally wise to know that the one who never changes, the Lord Himself, is fully able to blow the wind of His Spirit in revival again across communities that once blazed with the gospel.

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<sup>60</sup> Hansen and Woodbridge, *A God-Sized Vision*, 33.

<sup>61</sup> "Father Daniel Nash." Prayer Magazine. Accessed October 27, 2014.  
[http://www.prayermagazine.net/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=254:father-daniel-nash&catid=25:lifegivenovercont&Itemid=111](http://www.prayermagazine.net/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=254:father-daniel-nash&catid=25:lifegivenovercont&Itemid=111).

<sup>62</sup> V. Raymond Edman, *Finney on Revival* (Minneapolis: Bethany House, 2000), 57.

### **The Promise of Revival**

In the book of Hosea, the prophet issued a call to the people of God that offers hope and the promise of revival. “Come, let us return to the LORD. For He has torn us, and He will heal us; He has wounded us, and He will bind up our wounds. He will revive us after two days, and on the third day He will raise us up so we can live in His presence.”<sup>63</sup> For those who might doubt, the next verse offers still more hope: “Let us strive to know the LORD. His appearance is as sure as the dawn. He will come to us like the rain, like the spring showers that water the land.”<sup>64</sup> The invitation is to the Lord, and to His healing of our hearts and souls.

### **The Plea for Revival**

Psalm 85:6 says, “Will you not revive us again so that Your people may rejoice in You?” For the remnant that remains across the Northeast, revival will bring joy back into the churches and more importantly in the hearts of believers. Habakkuk’s prayer was in an hour of great need but was offered with great hope. Habakkuk 3:2 says, “LORD, I have heard the report about you; LORD, I stand in awe of Your deeds. Revive Your work in these years; make it known in these years. In Your wrath remember mercy!”

### **The Subject of Fire**

It has already been noted that Paul admonished Timothy to keep ablaze the gift of God (2 Timothy 1:6). Fire is an interesting subject. To keep the fire burning, you first have to start a fire. This takes fuel, air flow, attention and diligence. God has started a fire in the heart of every one of His children. He has started fires in the hearts of pastors, leaders, and believers in

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<sup>63</sup> Hosea 6:1-2.

<sup>64</sup> Hosea 6:3.

churches wherever they are. Adding fuel to the fire comes from the word of God. Keeping the airflow going is a reminder of the necessity of the work of the Spirit of God in the life of the believer. Fires die down for lack of attention. A degree of diligence, responsibility, and perseverance is necessary to keep the fire burning.

God is at work in the lives of His servants and His churches. We will discover this in the next chapter as we study the responses of thirty-five servants of the Lord. How they keep their fire burning will be discussed and thoughts about how to encourage others to do the same. In addition each participant was asked if they ever saw the fire of God at work in people's lives, in churches or in communities. This survey will offer great insight for ministry to encourage pastors, leaders and churches to keep the fire burning!

## CHAPTER 3

### AN EXAMINATION OF THIRTY-FIVE EVANGELICAL PASTORS IN THE NORTHEAST

The previous chapter demonstrated the dismal spiritual climate of the Northeast. The work of God in revival was illustrated through Bible passages, leaders found in Scripture, and from the history of the Northeast. This chapter will review the responses of thirty-five pastors who took a survey administered between September and November of 2011. In reviewing the research, factors will be identified that give clues to the potential and keys to yet another spiritual awakening within this territory. The author further intends to glean the Biblically based principles for a church to be a spark for revival in the Northeast from this data and the previous historical research.

For this project, a six-page questionnaire was developed to provide feedback for the subject matter. A copy of the survey is included as Appendix A. This survey would help with the furtherance of the effectiveness of the ministry of the Keep the Fire Burning conference for pastors/leaders. In addition, the results will greatly add to the impact and influence of Northside Baptist Church as it seeks to provide a spark for revival throughout the Northeast and beyond. The questions were at times easy to quantify and at other times quite subjective. While the open-ended nature of the questions is challenging, the qualitative insights they produced were profound as will be discussed below.

Four pastors were interviewed face to face with the set of questions. Each interview took about an hour to conduct. This allowed for personal dialogue and interaction. These face-to-face interviews allowed for a greater sense of insight into the moment. The reactions of the pastors along with the tone and passion of their hearts (or lack thereof) toward ministry was visible.



A businessman who now has attended Northside and was a new convert accompanied the author of this project on this trip to the capitol region of New York where these men served. He offered further perspective and feedback. On the ride home, this guest indicated it was far more than he had anticipated. The irony and joy of this moment was to realize that the fire seen in the hearts of pastors had kindled a greater fire in the heart of a new believer. He further noted that two of the four would someday be a great addition to the staff at Northside (something that was not being considered at the time; however it is interesting that one of those interviewed has since become a staff member at Northside.)

The remaining questionnaires were filled out as a result of an email appeal to a group of pastors who are contacts of the author. Many of these ministers, though not all, are Southern Baptist pastors. Some had attended the Keep the Fire Burning conference and were somewhat aware of the desire of that ministry. Others were simply within the network of the author and were serving in the Northeast at the time. They were all evangelical pastors.

The limitations of the research include the fact that these were not random, nor greatly diverse of denominations. They were however from diverse areas in location and population consistent with the goal of this ministry to increase evangelical impact in small towns and larger cities. They also were diverse in age and length of time having served in ministry. Some of these pastors are those who bear witness to a fire burning within them, while others have been burned at times in ministry. All of these pastors have hearts with a desire to serve God, walk with God and even be influenced toward revival.

The response was tremendous. Thirty-one men responded and completed the questionnaire, totaling thirty-five surveys completed. These thirty-five represented five states: New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, New Hampshire and Vermont.

With regard to their general information, the respondents were all pastors or full-time workers in a ministry field. Four of them were involved in denominational or parachurch ministries. All thirty-five participants were married and male. They averaged having been married for twenty-two years. One had only been married for six and a half months, while the longest was 47 years. Thirty-four of them had children; one did not. The ages of their children ranged from months old to forty years old. The size of the community these pastors grew up in ranged from a very rural community with 1000 people or less, to cities of a few hundred thousand to a few million. The range was quite diverse.

### **The Survey**

The survey requested basic information including church size, years served there, and total years served in ministry. It was then divided into seven sections. The respondents were asked questions concerning seven areas.

The first section was on faith and included ten questions about the individual's personal walk with the Lord. This included questions on time with the Lord in prayer and the word, sharing the gospel, walking by faith, tests of faith, salvation, and community background.

The second section was on family. These eight questions included the topics of marriage, children, time with family, ministering with family, nurturing those relationships and perspective on the home.

The third section was on ministry. This set of eleven questions provided a sense of what was going on in the lives of pastors currently. They were asked about their call to ministry, and their response to that call. They were further asked about current roles, ministry experience background, and what led them to their current post. This section dealt with any feelings toward leaving the ministry, and whether they have thought of quitting or not. They were also asked

three key things that happened in church life in the last two years, positively or negatively and how that impacted them.

The fourth section was simply called ‘Keep the Fire Burning’. The pastors were asked about what keeps their own fire burning. Matters including days off, hobbies, vacation time, exercise, health, fillers and drainers were addressed.

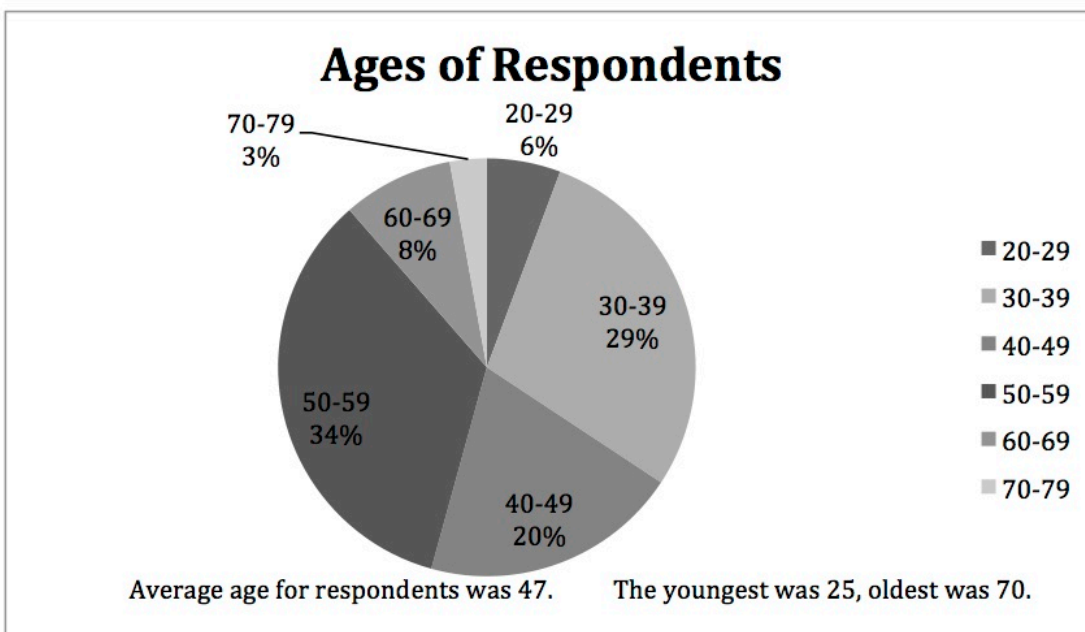
The fifth section was on leadership. Since so much rises and falls on leadership, then it was a must to ask these questions. They covered six subjects including key factors of a strong leader, how to grow as a leader, multiplying leaders, what it will take for revival to come to the Northeast, the fear of God and the fire of God.

The sixth section further pursued the subject of pastors, leaders and churches. Questions ranged from why pastors quit the ministry to why churches die. They were asked to consider what would be the greatest need in the life of a pastor today. This was followed by the topic of how could one church best help spark revival in the Northeast.

The seventh section explained the four elements of the Keep the Fire Burning conference. The word FIRE serves as an acronym to outline the purpose of the conference. The conference was established for faith to be renewed, for instruction and inspiration, for revival and renewal, and for encouragement. The pastors were asked to consider the importance of these themes as well as giving input to any missing elements.

### **The Results**

The background information that was discovered is shown in the following two charts. This includes the age of the respondents, and the averages of age of salvation, years in ministry, years in present ministry location, and church size/attendance.



#### Statistics Gathered From Respondents:

Average Age of Salvation	15
Years in Ministry	17
Years in Present Ministry Location	8
Church Size/Attendance	149

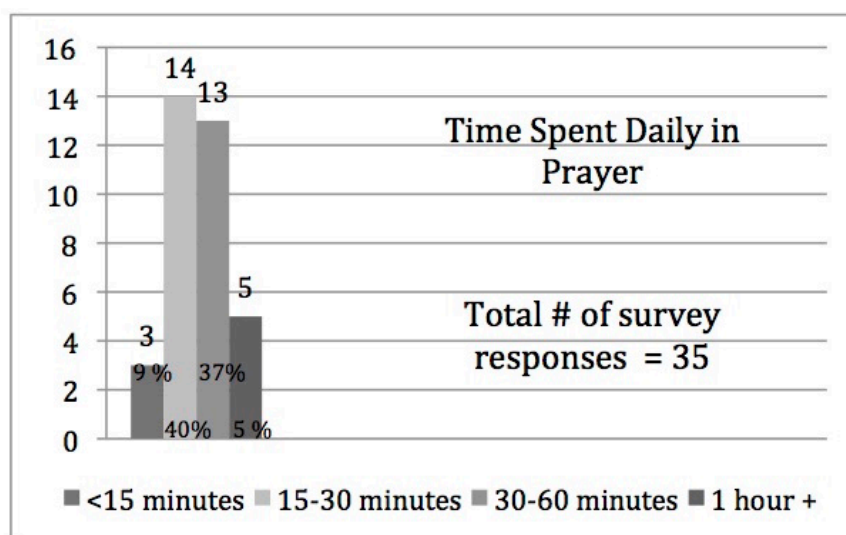
When asked to describe how they came to faith in Christ, there were a variety of answers. Some indicated it was through their parents, pastor, youth pastor, or Sunday School teacher. Others came to Christ through revival meetings, radio ministry, a work associate, the prayers of others, a crisis and a bus ministry. One was saved as a result of church visitation, one through a gospel tract and one through a gospel breakfast meeting. In essence, God worked in many ways to lead each of these men to Christ.

#### Faith

With regard to a daily time with the Lord, it was obvious that the pastors found this to be essential to their walk. Some described it with the highest of importance, while others admitted

they desired it to be even stronger. They spoke of how this time was the key to their entire day. Comments such as ‘personal’, ‘indispensable’, and ‘more essential than breakfast’ were expressed. Some approached that time traditionally while others more innovatively as they listened to the word while traveling. These pastors realized that since they are giving out so much food for other souls, it is necessary to feed their own.

The next question was concerning how much time was spent in prayer in a day with four possible answers. The chart below pictures the time indicated by the respondents on the survey. Around thirty minutes a day was the norm for these pastors.



When asked to describe the value of their time with the Lord, the answers were priceless. This time was described as sacred, the key to wisdom for serving God, and the greatest pleasure in life. These pastors seem to rely on this time to hear from the Lord and know His direction for their lives. Some have a specific reading plan, while others connect it with message preparation. Some are very methodical; some are spontaneous.

The pastors were asked about their habits of sharing the gospel. The following chart gives the results of that question.

**Have you shared the Gospel with someone outside of the pulpit in an attempt to bring them to Christ?**

	Yes ... within the last month	Yes ... within the last 3 months	No ... not in the last 6 months
Number of responses	29	5	1
Percentage of total number of responses	83%	14%	3%

You will notice that vast majority of these pastors are consistent in sharing the gospel and desiring to bring people to Christ. There is some sense of responsibility and urgency necessary for effective ministry. Ninety-seven percent stated that they have shared the gospel in the last three months with someone in an attempt to bring them to Jesus. Eighty-three percent have done so in the last month.

Some find it easy to walk by faith, while others perceive it as more difficult. These pastors responded as follows:

**Do you find it easy or difficult to exercise faith in your life or ministry?**

Responses	Total of Responses	Percentages
Easy	22	63%
Difficult	5	14%
Both Easy & Difficult	6	17%
Necessary	1	
No response	1	

It was both interesting and encouraging to find that the majority sensed that it was easy to trust God, while admitting also for some it was both. This answer surprised the author as it was apparent that they loved God, trusted Him and knew they were to walk by faith. Sixty-two

percent said it was easy to exercise faith. The author found the stated genuineness of their hearts amazing and wonderful.

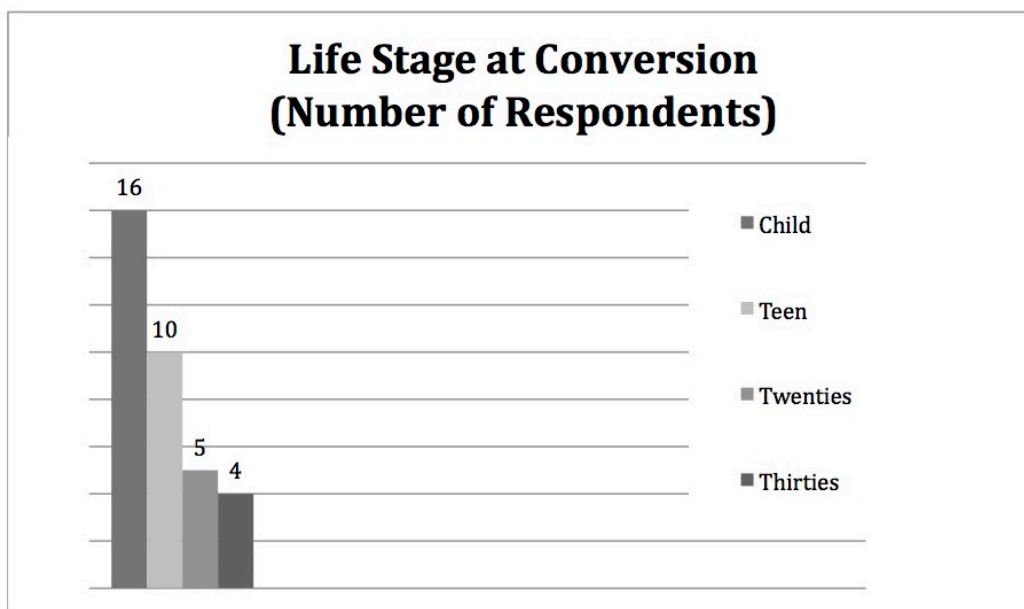
The participants were asked to describe one of the greatest tests of faith they had ever faced. Their answers were compelling. The depth of the stories was profound and even overwhelming. The greatest tests of faith included the death of family members, moving to new locations to plant churches, working through dissension in places of ministry, financial needs, mental illness in a family member, and even the considering of another ministry station. These answers showed the depth of God's work and grace in the lives of His servants. The following chart shows the questions and the corresponding rating of the test:

**Question:** What is one of the greatest tests of faith you have ever faced? What did you learn from that season? On a scale of 1 to 10 how big of an impact did that make in your life?

Scale Answers	10	9.9	9	8/9	8	7	No response
# Responses	21	1	3	1	3	2	4

The results of these tests were profound. Ministry couples cried and grew closer to each other and the Lord. They learned it was God's work not theirs, and they learned to trust Him greatly. There were honest responses like anger, frustration, brokenness, and pain. Lessons of God's provision, His sovereignty, His sufficiency and His comfort were learned.

Concerning the age of salvation, the results revealed the youngest was four, the oldest was thirty-seven, and the average was fifteen. The following chart illustrates the decision by decades the ages at which these ministers were saved.



The author was especially impacted during the D.Min. course work by one particular lecture. One of the professors indicated he had come to faith in Christ at a little Baptist Church. The author later asked the name of the town and discovered it had a population of less than 2000 people. This story has been previously addressed. The reason it is significant now resides in the fact that it would be interesting to get a perspective on what size the communities were that the respondents lived in at the time of their salvation. The following chart illustrates those findings.

**Size of Communities Where Pastors Were Saved**

People	Rural/Small Town	Small City	City	Large City	Mega City
<b>Less Than 2,000</b>	11				
<b>2,000+ -5,000</b>	2				
<b>5,000+ - 10,000</b>	2				
<b>10,000+ - 50,000</b>		11			
<b>50,000+ - 200,000</b>			2		
<b>Over 200,000</b>				6	
<b>Over 1 Million</b>					1



Somewhat surprisingly, fifteen of these ministers were saved in regions of 10,000 population or less. Forty-two percent came to Christ in small or rural towns. When taking that number to 50,000, it encompasses seventy-four percent of the respondents. So often missions and evangelism efforts primarily target large population areas. This data cries out for ministry to every size town, which is at the heart of this project, including the small forgotten, unknown places where many of these servants of the Lord came to Christ.

### Family

The question was asked do you spend regular time with your family? Thirty-one indicated they spend time regularly. The other four admitted it was difficult at times or the children were grown and out of town. Many expressed the value of that time and how they guard it and try to make it special. They spend times at dinner or during the evenings – or special evenings. Some indicated hobbies like biking, hunting or backpacking. Some indicated times of prayer and blessing. Some highlighted times spent playing together and working together.

The question was asked, ‘How do you see your family and your ministry?’ There were four possible answers. More than half answered with one answer and that was ‘we do ministry together.’ Another eleven included that as a part of the answer but had a combination answer including the other answers which were ‘I shield them from ministry,’ ‘I leave it up to them,’ and ‘We struggle in this area and are confused about this.’ Four people said solely, ‘I leave it up to them.’ No one chose as their only answer ‘I shield them from ministry,’ though six gave that as one of a combined answer. One person put as their sole answer, ‘We struggle in this area and are confused about this,’ while one other indicated this as part of an area not so much as a struggle but a frustration. Interestingly, the majority concluded they do ministry together, but more so willingly than by compulsion.

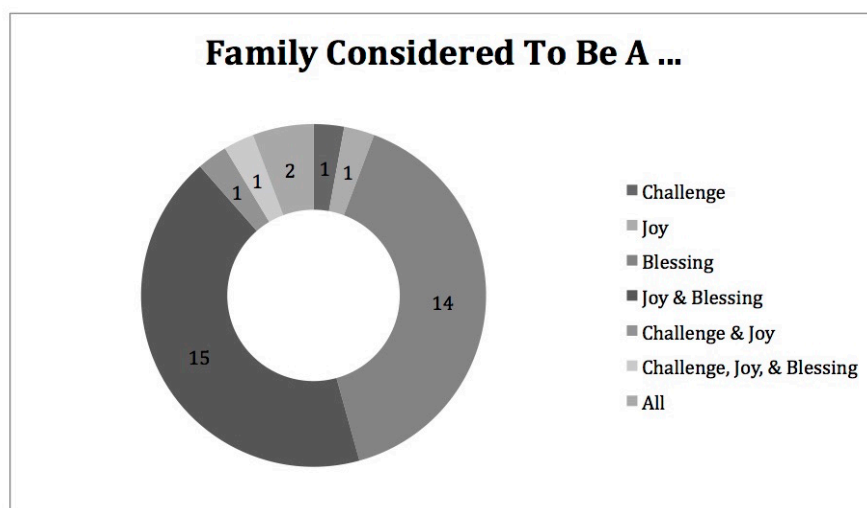
Pastors were then asked how they nurture the relationship they have with their family including wife, children, and extended family. With regard to spending time with their wives these pastors mentioned praying together, taking walks, lunch and dinner dates, and being attentive to her love languages. For some, it was a matter of spending time with the kids so the wife could have time out alone, while others indicated the same theme of seeking to serve her in some way. One indicated they are now empty nesters and his discussion of that is the reminder that there are seasons and transitions in family life. One compelling answer described the need just to listen to her. So often the wife just wants a listening ear, not a solution or a plan.

Spending time with children was obviously valued and enjoyed by these ministry leaders. They spend time praying with them, enjoying dinner together, being involved in their interests and activities, as well as sharing the word with them. For some it is time in the morning, for others time in the evening, and for others talking throughout the day. As the kids get older and move away, it seems that phone calls are a good way for connecting.

Time with extended family varies from family to family. For some they simply are close to one side of the family and not so much the other. Some of that has to do with physical proximity and for others it has to do with spiritual connection or lack of it. Many see their extended family only once or a few times a year. Social media is a way that some have stayed connected.

The compelling thought in the answers is the obvious sense that these pastors are intentional about this time, and though some feel they are not where they want to be, many are striving in the right direction. They love their families and are being intentional with them.

The final question in this section was related to the value placed on family and the perspective from the pastor's point of view. The question was 'I consider my family mostly . . . ' (see graph below for answers):



### Ministry

All thirty-five pastors indicated that they felt called to ministry. The answers were all a clear yes. The question was then asked with regard to how old the pastor was when he felt called to ministry. The average answer was twenty-four years old. The youngest was fourteen, the oldest was forty-nine when called. When asked about their current ministry roles at the time, twenty-three were serving as pastors, three as associate pastors then one each as the following: combo of student pastor/minister of education, church planter catalyst, associational missionary, pastor/missionary, co-pastor, AWANA missionary, administrative pastor, pastor/seminary professor, and pastor/church planter. (See General Ministry Information, Appendix B.)

The next question was the fifth and asked about previous ministry experience and background. Many had a wide variety of backgrounds. These included serving as professor in a Bible School in the Philippines, Chaplain and Bible Director of a Christian School in Atlanta,

associate minister, youth pastor, deacon, strategy coordinator for mission board, apologetics ministry, many lead pastor and associate pastor roles.

These pastors/ministry workers were asked the pertinent question, ‘Why are you where you are today? The predominant answers were ‘the call of God’, ‘the Lord led me here’, ‘God’s keeping me here’, ‘by the will of God’, obedience, God’s grace, the direction of the Spirit of the Lord, and knowing it’s God’s plan. Nearly every person had a clear sense that they were where they were for a reason. One person did not answer the question.

Question 7 asked about three key things that happened in the church where they served or attend in the last two years (positive or negative) and how has that impacted them and the work. The stories that flowed out of this section were often very deep. On the positive side, one pastor indicated that a he was able to write a discipleship curriculum for his church. One noted a mission’s connection as he spoke of their growing strong connection with a ministry in an African country. Other positives noted were missions giving increasing, going to two services, seeing people saved and baptized – nearly 150 saved in one church plant. Seeing a building project completed and a church move forward was a blessing for one congregation.

On the downside, recession a few years back impacted one church and created financial challenges. One went through a moral crisis in leadership in the church. Some went through the challenges of pastors moving, and calling new pastors. There was the challenge of making decisions (thought correct) that others did not agree with and continued to be a source of discouragement. For one it was a negative that turned into a positive. The community went through severe flooding, but the church was able to help with relief ministry to the community through this time and other ministries coming in to show care and mercy.

Question eight was about how much they love ministry. There were four options – a little, a lot, too much (I'm co-dependent on it) and not sure. Twenty-six of the respondents replied that they loved ministry a lot. The author finds this somewhat surprising and refreshing. Doing what they are called to do, and loving it, is a powerful combination. Two were not sure, and two said too much. One said a little, and one was a combination of a little and a lot.

Questions nine and ten cover the topics of leaving the ministry, and quitting. These questions go to the heart of this research. When asked how often they thought about leaving ministry, surprisingly thirteen said never, and twelve said a few times a year. This is the majority. Three said they considered leaving the ministry once a month, two answered 'not yet', the remainder replied daily, weekly, sure, several times over the last 20 years, and once in a while.

These pastors were then asked 'Why would you quit?' Their answers were diverse, but clear. The responses revolved around themes. Several responses indicated there were issues of emotional depletion such as overworked, overwhelmed, caring when no one cares, frustration, and discouragement. There was the desire to make a difference as expressed by questioning the impact, lack of results and unable to inspire others to evangelistic efforts. Some revolved around feelings of insecurity, such as wondering if someone else could do a better job, and unworthiness.

For others it was the pressure of disunity and opposition among staff or other leaders with unrealistic expectations. For at least one it was a matter of not quitting, but perhaps change, reflecting a desire to be in the right ministry. Others were questioning if they equipped or prepared for the growth of a ministry and leading a larger congregation. Financial burdens were

also a reason. One even answered, that he did quit, and even tried to stay out, but the call of God was too strong for him to walk away completely.

When asked ‘Why have you not quit?’ the most common response was connected to the reality of God’s call. These pastors knew God had clearly directed them. His strength and faithfulness had sustained them. One indicated he had not been able to do anything else. There was a reality that to walk away would be disobedience. There was a love for ministry and at times that was a growing love.

### Keep the Fire Burning (Personal)

In this section there were eight questions, which included subjects such as days off, hobbies, vacation, exercise, health, fillers and drainers. The opening question was ‘what keeps your fire burning?’

The answers to this particular question are key to this study. Sixteen of the pastors mentioned their time with the Lord as essential to keeping the fire burning in their hearts and lives. This was by far the most common response. Others indicated it was learning new things, faith, hope, creativity, the blessings of God, missions, and leading someone to Jesus. The eternal destination of people, reaching others, caring for others, seeing God at work, helping people, family, the example of others, and youthfulness were also listed as reasons. One mentioned the support from his wife. One kept it simple and said it was Jesus!

Concerning a consistent day off, eighteen do, fourteen do not, three replied they try. This means that slightly more than half consistently have a day off. Thirty-one out of thirty-five have a hobby that they participate in somewhat regularly, and consider it quite important. That means that 88% have some activity they enjoy and engage in regularly. When asked how important this was to them many said they consider quite important. This could be a very healthy thing.

Concerning taking vacation, the results were encouraging; thirty-three yes, one no, and one inconsistent. Nineteen responses indicated their vacations were consistent while nine indicated they were haphazard. This indicates that while they take vacation, it is still a work in progress. Some have places they have found to be special that they visit consistently, some use the time to visit family out of town, while others simply go to different places.

Exercise is temple maintenance. It is certainly a part of good health as physically able. Twenty-one respondents exercise at least three times a week. The results for how often they exercised were four daily, one daily except Sunday, sixteen at least three times a week, one twice a week, two once a week, nine very little and two not at all. With more than sixty percent exercising at least three times a week, this factor indicates the importance placed on exercise and health by these survey participants.

When asked to describe their health, their answers were excellent (eleven), very good (nine), good (eleven), very good/good (one), not so good (one), deteriorating (one), and not so good, becoming good (one)! It was surprising and pleasing to the author to see that thirty-one described their health as ‘good’ or better. Twenty (three out of five) described their health as very good or excellent.

When asked to name the biggest fillers in life meaning things that bring joy, fulfillment and restoration, at least 23 mentioned family. These leaders obviously find much strength, hope and encouragement from their families. Other fillers mentioned were time with other pastors or church planters, reading, hobbies, movies, prayer, the word, being outdoors and solitude. This is the reminder that different things fill different people. There must be a balance between relational encouragement and at times, solitude. Beyond that, the surprise in this question is the reminder to get outside!

When asked to name the biggest drainers meaning things that leave them weary and exhausted, they mentioned multiple factors. One recurring theme was conflicts. Other responses were details, committee meetings, crises, gossip, poverty and financial issues, and administration. One even mentioned a particular day, Wednesday, as the longest work day and a day that drains him. Another mentioned literally ‘lots of little stuff.’ This list reminds the author that at times it is big things that drain, and at other times it is being overwhelmed by lots of little things.

### Leadership

The participants were asked what are the key factors to being a strong leader. Their responses were once again varied. The author acknowledges that the questions were wide open leading to a variety of responses. However, some themes reoccurred consistently. Vision, integrity, awareness of strengths and weaknesses, faith, character, humility, prayer, being teachable, learner, mentoring and coaching were among the key statements. Issues of the heart, strong walk with God, love for people and relational skills were mentioned.

When asked what they were doing to grow as a leader, eighteen of the thirty-five mentioned reading. Of those who did not mention reading still some spoke of listening to podcasts. For others there was continuing education. More terms that came up were delegating, attending conferences, meeting with the Lord, spending time with other leaders, seminars, Scripture memory, coaching, and accountability.

The question was then asked are you seeking to mentor and multiply leaders? The results were 32 yes, 1 always, 1 to some degree, and 1 no answer. More than 94% are committed to mentoring others and multiplying leaders. The author found this surprising and delightful.



Question four in this section is essential: ‘what it would take for revival to come to the Northeast?’ The word most repeated was prayer (twelve times). This was followed by repentance (six), the power and moving of the Holy Spirit (five), Humility (four), Evangelism and Discipleship (at least three each in some form), Biblical Preaching or teaching (three), and God’s sovereign intervention (three). There were many more including cooperation or networking (two), passion for the lost (two), obedience to the Lord (two), faith/belief that it can happen and surrender (two). Most of the rest were individual occurrences. It’s interesting that fasting was only mentioned once, and one pastor responded that he hadn’t thought about it much.

When asked about their understanding of the fear of God, the most common response was reverence. This was followed by other terms such as respect, obedience, and holiness. Many of the pastors realized that this means God has authority over their lives. They further recognized the importance of this truth.

A final question was asked in this section concerning whether or not the pastor had ever seen the fire of God in a church, in their life and then how did they know? Twenty-two answered yes in one area or the other, four said no, three said glimpses, four gave unclear answers concerning their experience simply discussing what might happen, and two didn’t respond. Some of the profound testimonies had to do with life change, a youth group that grew from ten to twelve students to fifty to sixty in 6 months. Brokenness, confession of sin, unity, family members being saved, and an awareness of God’s presence were mentioned as other subjects.

### Pastors/Leaders/Churches

This section offers great insight into the purpose of this paper. These questions are open ended so in fact they are quite subjective but bring up a wealth of responses. The replies came from the heart.

The first question in this section was what do you believe is the number one reason why pastors quit the ministry? The most common were each mentioned at least four times: the first had to do with not actually being called to ministry, the second was a strain on the family, and the third was discouragement. Frustration and burnout were both mentioned three times. Something wrong with relationship with God, unrealistic expectations, lack of finances, and hidden sin/moral failure were each mentioned twice.

Other reasons were feeling alone, busy, not impacting people, no encourager, selfishness, immature churches, can't see purpose or results, and even termination. The final list would include, no money, grew sick of it, stress, lack of perseverance, failure of faith, and needing a clear understanding of the Gospel. One person even said they thought it would be many reasons, and could not pinpoint just one.

The second question was 'what do you believe are three key factors as to why churches die?' The most common response was a lack of vision, which was mentioned twelve times. Seven respondents mentioned the failure to evangelize and disciple as well as the church being ingrown or self-centered. Six respondents said the reason was a lack of leadership and five referred to the preaching, and the word not being preached or the message not being strong. Many other subjects came up such as gossip, no goals, pastors who don't love those they lead, unregenerate members, control, pride, apostasy, laziness, unwilling to pay the price, lack of prayer, clumsy structure, lack of coaching and lack of faith.

These pastors gave clear indication that vision, leadership, evangelism/discipleship, outward focus, and the word being preached were key to churches not surviving and thriving. While there were many subjects mentioned, these five were definitely at the top of the list.

The third question was ‘what is the greatest need in the life of a pastor today?’ The most common answer, which appeared at least five times in some form, had to do with support (sometimes moral support, sometimes financial). Encouragement, time alone with God, rest/sabbatical, and faith were each mentioned three times. Prayer and staying fresh in our walk with God even daily were mentioned twice. Other subjects mentioned were mentors, vision, a fire for Jesus, purity, humility, knowing God, friendship, perseverance, and accountability. They also mentioned being a Spirit led Biblical leader. Some even simply mentioned God, knowing God, and even Christ alone.

The final question in this section was how could one church best help spark revival in the Northeast? Again the answers were multiple and varied though some themes are starting to ring throughout the questionnaire and those will be discussed in the next chapter. The answers to the question included the reminder of the need for the power and presence of the Holy Spirit at work in the life of that church. To lead the way compassionately, invest in churches and refresh pastors and leaders also were listed. To help congregations work together, to demonstrate the gospel in acts of service, to look to Jesus and keep the focus outward were mentioned. One person warned it wouldn’t happen quickly. He suggested that years of stability and service will be the forbearer of this spark. Some said it would happen one soul at a time, others referred to the necessity of developing new leaders.

### Keep the Fire Burning (Conference)

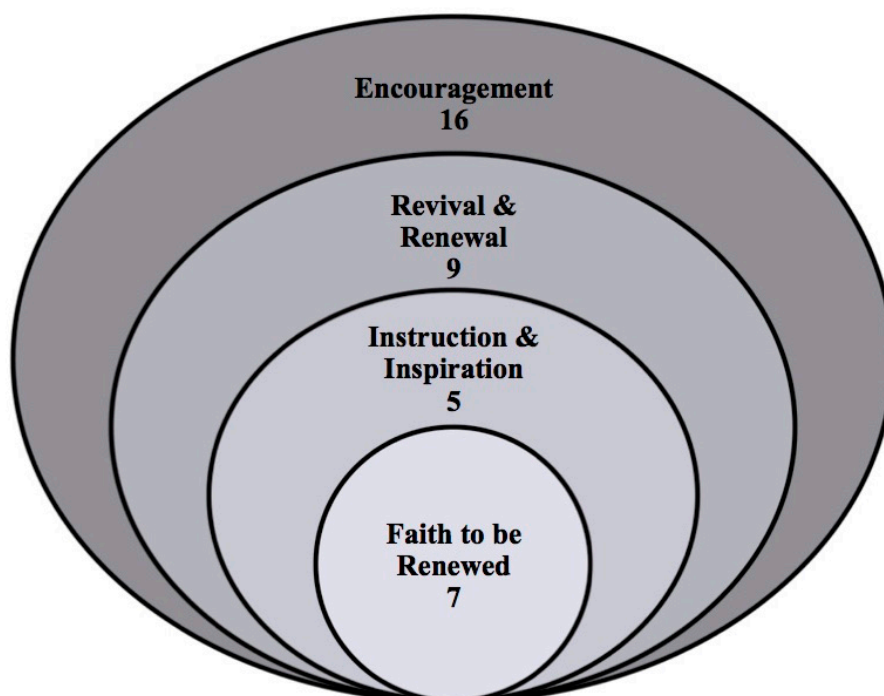
This section concludes the survey. It seeks to outline the four reasons for the Keep the Fire Burning conference. Using an acronym for the word FIRE, the purposes are for faith to be renewed, for instruction and inspiration, for revival and renewal, and for encouragement.

The pastors were asked how important these elements were. The word very important was used by nineteen of the respondents. Others said huge, essential, none more important, and crucial. The purposes seemed to strike a chord in the heart of these ministers.

Another question asked was ‘what might be missing from this list? Several seemed content and pleased with the list. Other subjects mentioned were discipling, something for wives and family, leaders fellowship, consecration, confession, the work of the Holy Spirit, and recovering from burnout/being overwhelmed. Another key was relationships and connecting with other pastors.

The following chart presents the answers to the question which of the four elements is most important for you? Some respondents gave more than one answer.

**Which Element of The Keep The Fire Burning Conference is Most Important to You?**



**Eight respondents gave multiple answers. Two additional write-in responses were noted: 'It addresses our needs.' and 'Evangelize and Disciple.'**

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While some valued each area, the highest response was on encouragement. It is obvious that many today are in need of great encouragement. Ministry in the trenches can be exhausting and there is the need for rest, refreshment and encouragement.

The following chapter will now look at the Biblical principles for a church to spark revival in the Northeast and beyond. While this is an hour of much need, stress, and even frustration, it is also an hour for great hope and anticipation of all that God can do. Let every servant of God press on with that hope.

## CHAPTER 4

### FIVE KEY PRINCIPLES

After Jesus journeyed with the two on the road to Emmaus, they reported it this way: “Did not our hearts burn within us while he talked with us by the way and while he opened to us the scriptures?”<sup>1</sup> Today, if people’s hearts are burning within them, it is usually because of indigestion. The disciples’ hearts were burning because of what the Lord had taught them from His word.

These two were on a journey, just as people are today. They were on their way home, discussing the events that had taken place and were even arguing about it. Jesus showed up and began to talk with them, though they did not know it was He. He began to deal with them by asking questions. He does the same today. Jesus may be asking some questions of the church of the 21<sup>st</sup> century right now and the big question remains: “Is anybody listening?”

He methodically and profoundly walked them through the Scripture to show them the things concerning Himself. They got the best Bible lesson anyone has ever heard. At the end of the day, it’s all about Jesus. Often today churches struggle because they believe it is all about them, when it is really about Jesus. It’s equally disturbing to think that He is near, but not noticed, recognized or understood because of the condition of our own hearts. Thankfully, God in His mercy often reaches out to people so that His love, His word and His ways are known.

The death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ is the gospel. It is not just information; it is personal, powerful and practical. Romans 1:16 says, “For I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is God’s power for salvation to everyone who believes, first to the Jew, and also to the

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<sup>1</sup> Luke 24:32, Holman Christian Standard Bible.

Greek.” Jesus Christ died so lives could be forever changed. In a land full of information, what is needed is transformation.

These two on their way home to Emmaus, had some information, but had not yet realized and put together the facts in a way to experience the transformation. Jesus came to them, walked with them, listened to them, taught them, ate dinner with them, revealed Himself to them for who He was, and then He was gone. They would never be the same. They believed His message and went to tell the disciples. Their hearts were touched deeply. It’s interesting that their hearts are referenced as the place that burned within them. In the Old Testament, it is written, ‘Guard your heart above all else, for it is the source of life.’<sup>2</sup> Just like these two men, the premise of this project is that there is a need for the fire to burn again in the hearts of pastors, leaders, every member and every church that lifts up Jesus Christ, in the Northeast and beyond.

If the fire is to burn again in the hearts of pastors, leaders and churches, it will be because of what the Lord has to say in His word. When all else fails, and plenty has, go to the manual! Whether it is checking on something for an automobile, or putting together a household piece of equipment like a grill, the instruction manual is utilized to find the answer and directions for what needs to happen next. It is shocking and alarming to realize that many seek to walk with God, lead His church, serve in the community, and evangelize the lost without spending time in life’s manual, the Word of God. Vance Havner says with regard to this subject,

To be “fervent in spirit” is to be “boiling in spirit,” and to boil we must be near the Fire. How shall we obtain the burning heart? Jeremiah said it was God’s Word that did it and it was Jesus expounding the Scriptures that did it and it was while listening to Luther’s exposition of Romans that Wesley’s heart was warmed.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Proverbs 4:23.

<sup>3</sup> Vance Havner, *Hearts Afire* (Old Tappan, New Jersey: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1952), 12.

This project is specifically about the Northeast. The author grew up in the northern part of the state of New York. It's cold in the north. Sometimes the temperatures plummet to not only freezing but far below freezing. For a person to stay warm, that person will have to start a fire in a safe place, whether in a wood stove, a fire place or a furnace. Jesus started a fire in the hearts of the two on the road to Emmaus. It's cold spiritually in the north, and those who live there are desperately in need of God starting some fires in their hearts. He is able, now God's people must be willing.

The subject for this paper also concerns revival. The fire will burn in hearts to flourish into homes, churches and communities. However, there will be a cost to revival. Del Fehsenfeld says, "the greatest cost of revival may be our pride. Are we willing to agree with God about everything He reveals to be contrary to His way?"<sup>4</sup> Other costs include time, energy, toil and prayer. He goes on to say,

As there can be no childbirth without travail and labor pains, so there can be no revival apart from the labor pains of fervent, persistent prayer. Halfhearted, casual, sporadic, feeble praying will never call down the fire of God's presence from heaven. Isaiah's lament has a tragically contemporary ring: 'There is no one who calls upon your name, who rouses himself to take hold of you' (Isa. 64:7).<sup>5</sup>

Then with the fervor of a prophet of old, he thunders these words that strike to the heart of the matter:

Lazy, undisciplined flesh would rather feast than fast, play than pray, and watch television than study God's Word. But lazy, undisciplined flesh will never know the times of refreshing found in God's presence.<sup>6</sup>

There is a cost to revival; indeed there is a price to pay. But there is also great reward. It should not be surprising considering the words of Jesus in the gospel of John. "A thief comes

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<sup>4</sup> Del Fehsenfeld Jr., *Ablaze with His Glory* (Buchanan, Michigan: Life Action Ministries, 1993, 2009), 34.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., 34-35.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 35.



only to steal and to kill and to destroy. I have come so that they may have life and have it in abundance.”<sup>7</sup> Satan knows there is joy for the journey, though he has none. He knows there is an abundant life, so he keeps believers distracted, discouraged and despondent. So what is the price and what is the reward?

The price tag is genuine humility and absolute surrender of everything we hold dear. But no sacrifice that God might require can begin to compare with the overwhelming, indescribable joy that will be ours when the fog of sin and self is cleared away and we see Him as he really is, in all His holiness, beauty, and radiant glory.<sup>8</sup>

To keep the fire burning and spark revival in the northeast, one must live and lead others to do the same, lives of worship and obedience that brings glory to God. This is not legalism, but freedom. This is not rules but relationship.

Just as the two on the road to Emmaus had their hearts burning within them after He had taught them the scriptures, may it be that hearts today burn within as these five principles are lived out in the lives of multitudes of pastors, leaders, members, and churches. The core driving it all is the multiplication of the number of Christ followers and the expansion of the kingdom of God for the glory of God. This will not only impact the pastor, but also his home, the church, the community, the northeast, and to the ends of the earth.

Of these two Vance Havner writes,

The other text brings us to the Emmaus disciples after those exciting crucifixion days in Jerusalem. They were trudging along a country road, half-believing, half-doubting, suffering a let-down both in body and spirit, when the Lord caught up with them. They were right in their facts: ‘this is the third day.’ But they were wrong in their conclusions, for, since it was the third day, they should have been expecting to see the risen Christ around any bend of the road. They were right in their chronology and in their theology, but they had no doxology. And even when the Lord did appear, their eyes were holden, He was a veiled Christ. But when He expounded the Scriptures they developed a holy

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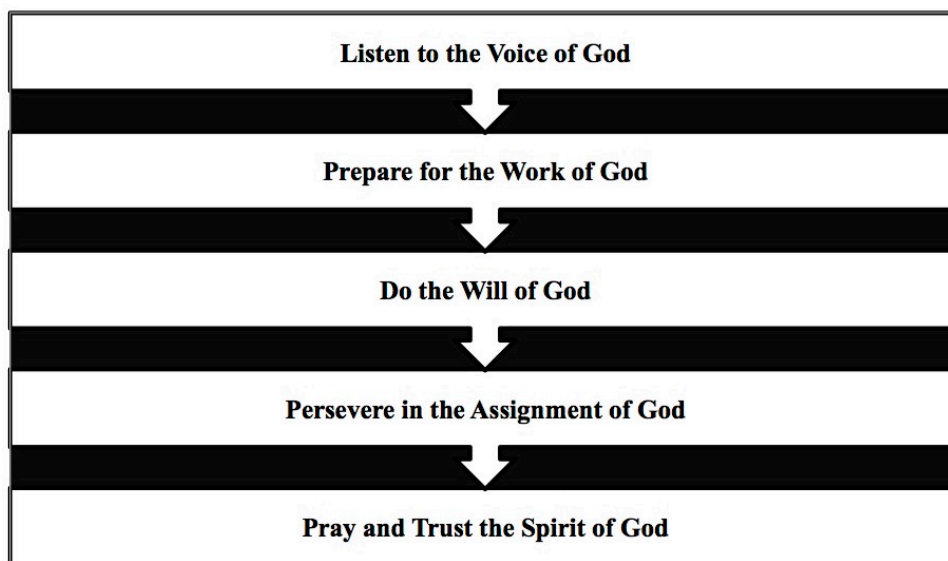
<sup>7</sup> John 10:10.

<sup>8</sup> Del Fehsenfeld Jr., *Ablaze with His Glory*, 35.

heartburn, which led to an experience that stirred their hearts and turned them into radiant witnesses.<sup>9</sup>

Principles are timeless. They apply to every generation. They are not methods. Methods change but principles are timeless, as is the message. To see God move, pastors, leaders and churches need to revisit the manual and focus on the key principles. People were made for the Lord and for His purposes. People were made to worship Him. When God's people do that in spirit and in truth they will walk in obedience and seek to bring him glory. The five principles to accomplish this task are listen to the voice of God, prepare for the work of God, do the will of God, persevere in the assignment of God, and pray and trust the Spirit of God.

#### **Five Biblical Principles For A Church To Spark Revival in the Northeast**



When pastors, leaders and churches implement these principles, the overflow fuels an overarching life of worship and a passion for multiplication. These pastors, leaders and churches

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<sup>9</sup> Vance Havner, *Hearts Afire* (Old Tappan, New Jersey: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1952), 10.

must realize they may have been made for moments, but they were made for more; they were made for movements. Addition is wonderful, but multiplication is powerful. Worship is our constant connection to the one who builds the fire. His heart is for fruit to abound. Jesus said, “My Father is glorified by this: that you produce much fruit and prove to be My disciples.”<sup>10</sup>

### **Principle One: Listen to the Voice of God**

In a world of much noise and many voices crying out for attention, there is one voice that the child of God cannot afford to miss to keep the fire burning. God says in Psalm 81:13, “If only My people would listen to Me and Israel would follow My ways.” The psalmist prayed, “I will listen to what God will say.”<sup>11</sup> When God speaks it will never contradict His word, and it will be clear and not confusing.

In Genesis 16, the story is recorded of a conversation between Sarai and Abram. Several lessons can be learned from the story. They didn’t have children though God had promised to bless their offspring. They got impatient and decided to help God out. Sarai recommended that Abram have relations with Hagar, Sarai’s maid. In the author’s opinion some of the saddest words in the text are “. . . and Abram hearkened unto the voice of Sarai.”<sup>12</sup>

In many cases a husband would be very wise to listen to his wife, and much sorrow and pain would be avoided. In this case, Abram should not have listened to her. He listened to the wrong voice, and doing so his decision led to derision, disrespect, scorn, insults, division, dissatisfaction, and dismay. The good news is that Abram would learn his lesson and listen to the

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<sup>10</sup> John 15:8.

<sup>11</sup> Psalm 85:8a.

<sup>12</sup> Genesis 16:2b, KJV.

Lord. The sad news is it was thirteen years later. Thirteen years is a long time. However what a blessing it is to witness the mercy and faithfulness of God. The Bible records it this way:

And when Abram was ninety years old, and nine, the LORD appeared to Abram, and said unto him, I am the Almighty God; walk before me, and be thou perfect. And I will make my covenant between me and thee, and will multiply thee exceedingly. And Abram fell on his face: and God talked with him . . .<sup>13</sup>

It's a long time between Genesis 16:2, and Genesis 17:3. The difference between the two passages is deeply significant. Each of the pastors surveyed bore witness to the fact that spending time with the Lord in His word, and in prayer was like a lifeline to their lives and ministries.

How does God speak today? In the work 'Experiencing God', Henry Blackaby devotes two of twelve units to the subject – God Speaks. The material defines this reality as follows: "God speaks by the Holy Spirit through the Bible, prayer, circumstances, and the church to reveal Himself, His purposes, and His ways."<sup>14</sup>

If God has something to say, and He does, why do some miss His voice? The Bible says in Job 33:14, "For God speaks time and again, but a person may not notice it." God's people need to be paying attention and stay faithful in prayer, which is the highway of conversation between the child of God and the Lord Himself. "Pray at all times in the Spirit with every prayer and request, and stay alert in this with all perseverance and intercession for all the saints."<sup>15</sup> The believers in Colosse are further reminded, "Devote yourselves to prayer; stay alert in it with thanksgiving."<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Genesis 17:1-3, KJV.

<sup>14</sup> Henry Blackaby, Richard Blackaby, and Claude King, *Experiencing God: Knowing and Doing the Will of God*, revised and expanded (Nashville, TN: LifeWay Press, 1990, revised 2007), 21.

<sup>15</sup> Ephesians 6:18.

<sup>16</sup> Colossians 4:2.

To hear the voice of God also implies being intentional. The Bible says, “Human beings cannot live on bread alone, but need every word that God speaks.”<sup>17</sup> Pastors, leaders and members must pour the word of God into their lives and fill up the well resourcing their hearts with the truth.

There is arguably nothing more important to spiritual growth than feeding the soul with the word of God. Without it, believers will starve. To be sure, Bible reading is one of many disciplines essential that all are a part of a worship lifestyle that is a life of obedience to God. Jim Cymbala says it this way: “When we neglect such things as reading, prayer, worship, and fellowship with other believers, problems of one kind or another will ensue as surely as night follows day.”<sup>18</sup> That statement is strong on its own. However, too often believers and leaders in particular forget the urgency of this issue, its’ importance and the spiritual battle that is going on as a part of the whole issue of spiritual feeding and growth. Jim goes on to say,

The part of spiritual warfare that so few of us think about is the demonic strategy of cutting us off from our food supply. Satan knows that a ‘strong-in-the-Lord’ believer is one thing and a weakened, emaciated one is quite another. Because of this, Satan uses a host of distractions, discouragements, and ‘junk-food’ substitutes to keep us from receiving the daily nutrition our spirits vitally need. He will try to get us too busy, too tired, too discouraged – too anything – if only it will keep us from fellowship with the Lord and his Word.<sup>19</sup>

Stu Weber says it this way,

Soldiers live and die by the book. The ‘employment of sound doctrinal principles’ determines success or failure on the battlefield. It’s true for the active duty infantryman, and it’s even more relevant to the spiritual warrior.<sup>20</sup>

Every pastor and leader should take a lesson from Dr. Adrian Rogers who said,

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<sup>17</sup> Matthew 4:4, Good News Translation.

<sup>18</sup> Jim Cymbala, *The Church God Blesses*. (Grand Rapids, MI, Zondervan, 2002), 48-49.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., 49-50.

<sup>20</sup> Weber, *Spirit Warriors*, 75.

I have been serving Jesus for a long time, and the thing that keeps me going is truth and conviction. This conviction is not based on my feelings but on what I now is truth. Feelings come and go, but God's Word never wavers.<sup>21</sup>

He goes on to say, "There's life and there's energy in the Bible. We read other books while this Book reads us."<sup>22</sup>

Too often God's people read the Bible for what they can simply get out of it, forgetting how important it is to get it inside of them! To hear the voice of God also includes obedience. "But the one who looks intently into the perfect law of freedom and perseveres in it, and is not a forgetful hearer but one who does good works – this person will be blessed in what he does."<sup>23</sup>

The Bible has much to say on this subject of God speaking to His children. Samuel's experience was powerful and personal. "And the LORD came and called as before, 'Samuel! Samuel!' And Samuel replied, 'Speak, your servant is listening.'"<sup>24</sup> Elijah learned that God doesn't need a megaphone; in fact, He can speak powerfully with a whisper. After a season of great victory, Elijah was very discouraged. Ultimately God met Him and spoke with him. The Bible says, ". . . and after the fire there was a voice, a soft whisper. When Elijah heard it, he wrapped his face in his mantle and went out and stood at the entrance of the cave."<sup>25</sup> David also knew that the voice of the Lord is strong. "The voice of the LORD is powerful; the voice of the LORD is majestic."<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Adrian Rogers, *What Every Christian Ought to Know* (Nashville, TN: B & H Publishing Group, 2005), 7.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid, 22.

<sup>23</sup> James 1:25.

<sup>24</sup> 1 Samuel 3:10, NLT.

<sup>25</sup> 1 Kings 19:12b-13.

<sup>26</sup> Psalm 29:4, NLT.

Isaiah knew that the voice of the Lord calls and gives direction. “Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying: ‘Who should I send? Who will go for Us?’ I said: ‘Here I am. Send me.’”<sup>27</sup> Jesus said, “My sheep hear My voice, I know them, and they follow Me.”<sup>28</sup>

The teaching of the Bible is clear, God speaks and it is imperative that His servants learn to listen to His Voice. Earlier in the same chapter, Jesus makes it clear that there are only two agendas for the life of every person. Jesus said it this way: “A thief comes to steal and to kill and to destroy. I have come that they may have life and have it in abundance.”<sup>29</sup> Every pastor understood that hearing God was essential to his own walk, the work God had called him to, for the sake of souls and the glory of God.

The pastor, leaders and members must tune their ear to the voice of God, not their own voice, the voice of the enemy or the voice of others. God’s voice will be the key to keep the fire burning. Time in the word, time in prayer, and times of solitude will offer hope and direction for the pastor and the church he leads under God’s leadership.

Historically, as referenced in chapter 2, the students at Williams College heard God’s call to touch the world from a haystack. God has spoken, and He still speaks today. When He speaks it is to make Himself known, and for His message to be declared so that others may believe!

### **Principle Two: Prepare for the Work of God**

Sometimes God’s people already have what they need to see God do great things. Pastors, leaders and churches often look outside themselves or look at their limited resources and wonder what God could do. There is a wonderful story in Luke 5 that illustrates how simply God

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<sup>27</sup> Isaiah 6:8.

<sup>28</sup> John 10:27.

<sup>29</sup> John 10:10.

wants to prepare, teach and lead his children. If Abraham illustrated the first principle, this principle is illustrated by the life of Peter. The Bible says,

As the crowd was pressing in on Jesus to hear God's word, He was standing by Lake Gennesaret. He saw two boats at the edge of the lake; the fishermen had left them and were washing their nets. He got into one of the boats, which belonged to Simon, and asked him to put out a little from the land. Then He sat down and was teaching the crowds from the boat.<sup>30</sup>

The story goes on to tell that Peter had fished all night without catching anything. While the nets are being cleaned, Jesus teaches. In essence he shows Peter how to cast the gospel to the people. He will take a fisherman and turn him into a fisher of men. In verse four he says to them, "Put out into deep water and let down your nets for a catch."<sup>31</sup> This was a defining moment in the life of Simon Peter and others with him. His answer gives insight into the principle being addressed. "'Master,' Simon replied, 'we've worked hard all night long and caught nothing! But at Your word, I'll let down the nets.'"<sup>32</sup>

Many pastors, leaders and churches are tempted to stay in the shallow end of the lake. Why venture into the deep waters of life? Jesus knew there was a catch to be made, and Peter chose to obey His word with the nets he had in his hands. The same nets he had cleaned would soon fill with fish and begin to tear.

Having the nets ready is about being available to the Lord. It's about being prepared to be used by God. The story illustrates the need to listen to His voice and follow His directions. It's all about faith and obedience, and learning to not be discouraged when results aren't seen. It's about listening to the Master and following His commands. God's people to be that spark for

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<sup>30</sup> Luke 5:1-3.

<sup>31</sup> Luke 5:4b.

<sup>32</sup> Luke 5:5.



revival must know that God has a bigger plan than they could imagine. The last reminder in this story is to not be afraid. Fear often keeps people from doing what God has told them and even preparing for it. The Bible says, “‘Don’t be afraid,’ Jesus told Simon. ‘From now on you will be catching people!’”<sup>33</sup>

Pastors, leaders and churches should find hope in knowing that God has not forgotten, them, He has a plan, and He is doing great things. Walking with Him, and preparing the nets is sowing gospel seed, and developing yet another generation of leaders. These are all key components to this work of preparation. Many pastors surveyed indicated the need to be mentoring others and developing godly leaders. This is preparation and having your nets ready. This is essential to the propagation of the gospel, which must then be shared at every opportunity! For it is in the sharing of the gospel that a harvest will be reaped.

### **Principle Three: Do the Will of God**

1 John 2:17 says, ‘And the world with its lust is passing away, but the one who does God’s will remains forever.’ Biblically, Nehemiah is a strong example of a man who knew and did the will of God. He surveyed the city and its broken down walls. This experience impacted him deeply as he prayed and contemplated the challenge that was before him. He could have worried about resources, or later been overwhelmed by his critics. Instead, he stayed focused and did the will of God.

Leadership is such a critical issue, but not just any kind of leadership, but specifically, spiritual leadership.

One of the most striking biblical examples of inspiring and authoritative leadership is seen in the life of Nehemiah. At times his methods seemed somewhat vigorous, but he

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<sup>33</sup> Luke 5:10b.

was used by God to achieve spectacular reforms in the life of his nation in an amazingly short time.<sup>34</sup>

Nehemiah was a man of prayer and astute observation. “To him prayer was not merely an exercise for set seasons but an integral part of ordinary living and working.”<sup>35</sup> What broke God’s heart, broke his heart. He was not just a man of feeling, but a man of action. As Sanders went on to say, “He displayed courage in the face of great danger.”<sup>36</sup> Nehemiah also demonstrated the ability to look ahead wisely and be proactive. “He exhibited keen foresight.”<sup>37</sup> Leaders tend to be prepared and anticipate possible outcomes. If they are wrong, they are still prepared. One cannot afford to be lazy or lack diligence in ministry. It just is not healthy for anyone in the church including the pastor.

Sometimes when it comes to leadership, leaders are well intended but not all in on the details. Not so with Nehemiah. “In accepting responsibility, he did not evade its more onerous implications but was prepared to carry his assignment, with all its attendant difficulties, right through to a successful conclusion.”<sup>38</sup> The God given vision becomes believable to people, when the leader owns it. Bill Hybels says, “Wise leaders understand that the single greatest determination of whether followers will ever own a vision deeply is the extent to which those followers believe the leader will own it.”<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> J. Oswald Sanders, *Spiritual Leadership* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1989), 197.

<sup>35</sup> J. Oswald Sanders, *Spiritual Leadership*, 197.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 198.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, 199.

<sup>39</sup> Bill Hybels, *Axiom* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2008), 35.

The life of this leader is a great example to church leaders who desire to keep the fire burning in their lives, homes, churches and communities:

Nehemiah emerges as a man who is vigorous in administration, calm in crisis, fearless in danger, courageous in decision, thorough in organization, disinterested in leadership, persevering before opposition, resolute in the face of threats, vigilant against intrigue – a leader who won and held the full confidence of his followers.<sup>40</sup>

In the surveys for this project, the respondents all expressed clearly and confidently that God called them. They have a keen awareness that they are not on their own mission, but one God designed. Many indicated when asked why they serve where they are currently, that it is because they believe God led them there. There is a sense of strong obedience to God in the hearts of these servants.

Two other words define this obedience and they are surrender and submission. God is the ultimate authority, and His servant's yield and surrender to Him. For the fire to burn throughout the Northeast, obedience to the will of God will be a crucial factor. It is seen in microcosm in many of the respondents. The author's prayer is that it spread profusely throughout the region. As believers walk in obedience, they will then be sensitive to every opportunity to share the gospel of Jesus Christ and make Him known that others may believe!

#### **Principle Four: Persevere in the Assignment of God**

Don't quit. These two words carry strong meaning. That meaning must be remembered in the heart of a person who wants to keep the fire burning. The Biblical example is found in Paul's first letter to Corinth where it is written, "Do you not know that the runners in a stadium all race, but only one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may win."<sup>41</sup> While it is true that in a

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<sup>40</sup> J. Oswald Sanders, *Spiritual Leadership*, 199.

<sup>41</sup> 1 Corinthians 9:24.

race there is only one winner, the way you run is equally important. God says, “Run in such a way you may win.”<sup>42</sup> In the Pastoral Epistles a further admonition offers this reminder: “Also, if anyone competes as an athlete, he is not crowned unless he competes according to the rules.”<sup>43</sup>

This project cannot be complete without the reminder of the principle of perseverance. It all starts by entering the race. Salvation is the entry point. Then you train for the race. It is important for the Lord’s people and those called to serve as pastors, to be in training with regard to spiritual things. This race is to be run with focus, purpose, discipline and the runner should run to win. To finish strong, be faithful to the Lord, His will and His call, and bear fruit is winning in this race. The sharing of the gospel message will lead to bearing fruit, and the clear compelling preaching of the gospel will give more opportunity for people to believe and be saved.

Why do pastor’s quit? Some of the reasons were discussed in the previous chapter, and might be summarized in these three statements: many quit on life, quit on love and some try to quit on the Lord. That’s exactly what cannot happen. Don’t quit on life. Many a believer and leader in a church have learned that life’s greatest lessons are learned when the fires of affliction and trials are upon us. The Bible has something to say about that subject.

Consider it a great joy, my brothers, whenever you experience various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance. But endurance must do its complete work, so that you may be mature and complete, lacking nothing.<sup>44</sup>

In the midst of trials, it’s no time to quit, for God is about to strengthen the believers beyond what they have ever known. Often that moment of desire to give up is Satan’s tool to

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<sup>42</sup> I Corinthians 9:24b.

<sup>43</sup> 2 Timothy 2:5.

<sup>44</sup> James 1:3-4.

bring discouragement, depression, despair and defeat, because he knows a threat when he sees one. Don't quit on life. Don't merely exist. Trust God for better days ahead.

Next, don't quit on love. Some may say they will not quit on life but they shut down in other ways. They begin to just go through the motions. They exist and survive, but they don't persist and thrive. Love grows cold, and ministry becomes a day-to-day existence of going through the motions, sometimes in pain, silently dying on the inside while appearing to live on the outside. The key is the love of God and love of people. Take a lesson from Jesus, and don't stop loving people.

Jesus said, "This is My command: Love one another as I have loved you."<sup>45</sup> In the famous love chapter found in 1 Corinthians, it is written, "Now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love."<sup>46</sup> You can't go higher than love. When love is waning, look to the Lord to refill the tank! "Your every action must be done with love."<sup>47</sup>

Don't quit on the Lord. He is the one who never quits on His children. The theme of God called servants should be that found in the book of Acts, where it is written "But I do not account my life of any value nor as precious to myself, if only I may finish my course and the ministry that I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God."<sup>48</sup> God has provided for us Himself in the presence of the Holy Spirit for daily perseverance. "And I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper, to be with you forever."<sup>49</sup> Mark Batterson says,

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<sup>45</sup> John 14:12.

<sup>46</sup> 1 Corinthians 13:13.

<sup>47</sup> 1 Corinthians 16:14.

<sup>48</sup> Acts 20:24, ESV.

<sup>49</sup> John 14:16, ESV.

Going all out for God is not just about getting where God wants you to go. It's about who you become in the process. And it's not about how quickly you get there. It's about how far you go. Going all out is going the distance.<sup>50</sup>

Jesus is to be our focus. "Let us run with endurance the race that lies before us, keeping our eyes on Jesus."<sup>51</sup> For daily perseverance, focus on Jesus, and finish the task! Keep the Fire Burning! Also, consider the great honor and privilege of serving the Lord in this calling from Him.

The pastor has been given by the Sovereign Lord the highest calling in God's economy. It is not a vocation to be chosen among several options. It is a divine, supernatural calling from the Lord.<sup>52</sup>

Also essential to perseverance is health. Many of the pastors indicated they take a day off, exercise somewhat regularly, and try to take consistent vacations. This was not true for all but is a real need in the life of a leader. All of this takes discipline but so do most things of value in life. Persevering in life, health and character are all essential qualities of God's people. John Wooden said, "Be more concerned with your character than your reputation, because your character is what you really are, while your reputation is merely what others think you are."<sup>53</sup>

He further said, "Discipline yourself and others won't need to."<sup>54</sup> Discipline will build perseverance. Perseverance is essential to keep the fire burning.

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<sup>50</sup> Mark Batterson, *All In* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2013), 102.

<sup>51</sup> Hebrews 12:1b-2a.

<sup>52</sup> O. S. Hawkins, *The Pastor's Guide to Leading and Living* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2012), 5.

<sup>53</sup> Pat Williams, *Coach Wooden: The 7 Principles That Shaped His Life and Will Change Yours* (Grand Rapids, MI, Revell), 49.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid*, 51.

### **Principle Five: Pray and Trust the Spirit of God**

There is no greater example of prayer than Jesus. In fact, so clear was His example that the one time His Disciples asked him to teach them something, it was in regard to prayer. Luke 11:1 says, ““He was praying in a certain place, and when He finished, one of His disciples said to Him, ‘Lord, teach us to pray, just as John also taught his disciples.’” One could argue they simply wanted to be able to compare to John’s followers in this moment, but the request seems much deeper than that. They don’t ask him to teach them to preach, heal, teach or serve. They ask him to teach them to pray.

Jesus is God who became man, and showed us the essential necessity of communion with the Father. Prayer for the believer is the reminder that he or she serves the Lord. He is greater and above all. The promise of the Holy Spirit, who indwells every believer from the moment of salvation, is the further reminder that no child of God walks alone.

One key to keeping the fire burning is to keep a keen ear for the Spirit of God. “All those led by God’s Spirit are God’s sons.”<sup>55</sup> This is developed most through time with the Lord in prayer. The disciples knew this.

Chuck Swindoll discusses the power of the Holy Spirit at work in the early church. His focus turns to the transforming power of the Spirit in the life of the believer. He says,

When the Spirit of God bore His way into the lives of those awaiting His arrival in that upstairs room somewhere in Jerusalem, His transforming presence was immediately evident. As I read what transpired in the early part of the Book of Acts, I am able to identify at least four transforming changes among those who received the Spirit.<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> Romans 8:14, HCSB.

<sup>56</sup> Charles Swindoll, *Flying Closer to the Flame* (Dallas: Word Publishing, 1993), 43.

Swindoll's observation can greatly help every servant of the Lord as that leader reacquaints God's people with the power of the Spirit to transform lives. He spoke of four changes. "First, their human frailties were transformed into supernatural gifts and abilities."<sup>57</sup> So often people focus on their weakness rather than God's strength. The problem is focusing on humanity rather than who God is as He works through the believer in the person of the Holy Spirit.

"Second, their fearful reluctance was transformed into bold confidence."<sup>58</sup> For the northeast to be impacted with the gospel, there must be a bold, fearless declaration of the gospel like that of the early Spirit-filled church. Nothing else will do.

"Third, their fears and intimidation were transformed into a sense of invincibility."<sup>59</sup> Just as Paul reminded Timothy that God had not given him a spirit of fear, it is the transformation that was seen in the apostles on Pentecost and the days to follow.

"Fourth, their lonely grim feelings of abandonment were transformed into joyful perseverance."<sup>60</sup> The subject of perseverance was just addressed in principle four. Little will be accomplished without it. The Holy Spirit is the one who will give it. As God's people pray and walk in the Spirit, they will boldly proclaim the message of the gospel, and multitudes will be impacted for the glory of God.

There is a bright future for the church. God is at work. If pastors, leaders, and church members will listen to the voice of God, prepare for the work of God, do the will of God,

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<sup>57</sup> Charles Swindoll, *Flying Closer to the Flame*, 43.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid, 47.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid.



persevere in the assignment of God, and pray and trust the Spirit of God, the fires will burn and spread and many people will be transformed by God Himself.

## CHAPTER 5

### CONCLUSION

Moses met God at a burning bush. Elijah prayed and fire came down from heaven. Jeremiah was going to quit but there was fire in his bones. Two on the road to Emmaus said their hearts burned within them after Jesus spoke with them. Paul told Timothy to keep ablaze the gift of God. The need is great, and the opportunity is remarkable.

If there is to ever be a great move of God in our day, it must be accompanied by a sense of desperation. The plague of the day is a settled, apathetic, anemic faith that lacks the hunger that accompanies the fired up child of God. The Bible illustrates it over and over again. The Psalmist said, “In my desperation I prayed, and the LORD listened; he saved me from all my troubles.”<sup>1</sup> The fact is that these times are desperate. “Make the most of every chance you get. These are desperate times!”<sup>2</sup> Far too often people settle for doing nothing by simply thinking “what difference will it make?” But the Bible says, “If you do nothing in a difficult time, your strength is limited.”<sup>3</sup>

Mark 5 includes stories of lives changed and people who were in desperate need. The chapter proclaims Jesus’ power over the devil, over disease and over death. That’s powerful! So with that kind of power, why are so many churches lukewarm? There could be many reasons, but one is for sure, there is no desperate cry for God. Focusing on the last two stories, first, there is a Dad who had a daughter who was sick and died. She was twelve years old. The second story is of a woman who had been very sick for twelve long years. For the father, twelve years was far

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<sup>1</sup> Psalm 34:6, NLT.

<sup>2</sup> Ephesians 5:16, The Message.

<sup>3</sup> Proverbs 24:10, Holman Christian Standard Bible.

too short for time spent with his daughter, while for the woman, twelve years was far too long to be that sick!

This desperate Dad by the name of Jairus, came to Jesus and fell at his feet with an urgent request. He pleaded with Jesus for the healing of His daughter. While Jesus was on the way to his house, someone reached out and touched him in faith, and Jesus knew it. He called her out and healed her broken body. She knew the reality that it is not great faith in God that is necessary for a miracle, but faith in a great God!

The disciples missed the point. Perhaps, they didn't appreciate interruptions (like many believers today), and somehow they missed the grand plan by focusing on the obvious. The procession received news that Jairus' daughter had died. Many would have given up at this point. But Jesus said to Jairus, "Don't be afraid. Only believe."<sup>4</sup>

Jesus arrived offering words of hope in the midst of a house of unbelief. The Lord honored the desperate heart of a father and raised the girl to life. These stories teach some things about desperation. When one is desperate he is not worried about his dignity. When one is desperate he is focused on the solution. When one is desperate, he may be tempted to give up before he should, but he must press on! Others may laugh, but Jesus will come through. May God give a holy desperation that leads to revival throughout the Northeast and beyond. Jesus said, "Those who hunger and thirst for righteousness are blessed, for they will be filled."<sup>5</sup>

The prophets were desperate. Isaiah said,

If only You would tear the heavens and come down, so that mountains would quake at Your presence – as fire kindles the brushwood, and fire causes water to boil – to make Your name known to Your enemies, so that nations will tremble at Your presence!<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Mark 5:36b.

<sup>5</sup> Matthew 5:6.

<sup>6</sup> Isaiah 64:1-2.

Hosea was desperate. He said,

Come, let us return to the LORD. For He has torn us, and He will heal us; He has wounded us, and He will bind up our wounds. He will revive us after two days, and on the third day he will raise us up so we can live in His presence. Let us strive to know the LORD. His appearance is as sure as the dawn. He will come to us like the rain, like the spring showers that water the land.<sup>7</sup>

Malachi preached of desperation when he said,

See, I am going to send My messenger, and he will clear the way before Me. Then the Lord you seek will suddenly come to His temple, the Messenger of the covenant you desire – see, He is coming,” says the LORD of Hosts.<sup>8</sup>

The author’s desire is fourfold: that pastors don’t quit, that churches don’t die, that communities don’t lose a lighthouse and that lost people don’t go to hell, starting right here in the Northeast and to the ends of the earth. Jesus established the church and when it is operating the way He intended it, there is nothing like it on planet earth. Under the leadership of the Lord Jesus Christ, pastors serve as shepherds of the flock. Those pastors must be energized by and filled with the Holy Spirit. So much is at stake: the heart of the leader, godly vision, and the eternal destination of people’s souls. Pastors need to return to their call and even more to the God that called them. They need to keep the fire burning. H. B. London said,

Each time someone calls me pastor, I am still awestruck even after all these years. I still feel honored and amazed by the word. When I hear it, I square my shoulders and renew my purpose. I feel humbled and am grateful, for there is no higher privilege than being a pastor.<sup>9</sup>

Those used of God to impact the Northeast in the past have had a burden for the small as well as the larger areas. Similarly, this author, the senior pastor of Northside Baptist Church,

<sup>7</sup> Hosea 6:1-3.

<sup>8</sup> Malachi 3:1.

<sup>9</sup> H. B. London, Jr. & Neil Wiseman, *They Call Me Pastor* (Ventura, CA: Regal, 2000), 21.

Liverpool, New York, longs to strengthen and encourage the work of God throughout this territory for the glory of God. The leaders and members have embraced that vision. This sentiment is reflected in some words reflecting the heart of Charles Finney's ministry:

As indicated earlier, he had no intention of entering formally into the ministry as pastor of a settled church; rather, he felt called to the backwoods areas that were quite neglected. For more than three years he labored in small suburbs in west-central New York, villages whose names have disappeared or have been completely obscured in the development of the Empire State. Led by God's Spirit, he devoted long periods of time to tiny places like Evans Mills, Antwerp, Gouverneur, and Western, before being called to Rome, Utica, Auburn, and Troy.<sup>10</sup>

Finney was a fireball himself. As one website notes:

After experiencing a thorough Christian conversion he received a powerful infilling of the Holy Spirit and subsequently became an unusually gifted itinerant evangelist. It is claimed (not by himself) that over half a million people came to Christ through his ministry. He had a keen mind, always preached extemporaneously, often without any preparation, and emphasized man's responsibility in salvation.<sup>11</sup>

Finney was converted on a hillside in a small town in northern New York. Adams, New York is ironically just over fifty miles north of Northside Baptist Church. The author and his wife during the years of this Doctor of Ministry study, have visited that town, the church where he preached and viewed the hill where he gave his life to Christ. The author grew up in one of those small New York towns – Burke, New York. While there is a growing burden within the congregation from the Lord to reach the city of which is close in proximity, Syracuse, New York, there is a deep conviction that ministry is needed in every small town as well. It is in fact the pattern of the ministry of Jesus as recorded in Matthew 9:35a, "Then Jesus went to all the towns and villages . . ." There are thousands of these towns throughout the northeast. The work of God has often been profound in such places. Once more of Finney it is said,

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<sup>10</sup> Raymond V. Edman, *Finney on Revival* (Minneapolis, MN: Bethany House, 2000), 57.

<sup>11</sup> Charles Finney, "The Autobiography of Charles Finney." Revival-library.org. Accessed October 31, 2014. <http://www.revival-library.org/catalogues/1830ff/finney.html>. (Finney n.d.).

His ministry was largely conducted in local revival campaigns in New York State in the years of 1824-1832. They were in small towns by today's standards, most being less than a thousand in population. The Revival in Rochester in 1842 was the exception. In a population of 10,000 people, around 1200 were converted, mostly from the educated classes.<sup>12</sup>

It is no overstatement to say, as goes the pastor, so goes the church. The reality is that a pastor may be a wonderful shepherd and good leader, and in a very difficult situation that still is troubling. On the other hand a strong congregation may have not moved in the right direction in calling the pastor and the reality is that he needs help to become the pastor God would have him be. But this much is true, if the pastor is not healthy, the church will not be healthy. In addition, often the church takes on the personality of the pastor. If he has a passion for God and for souls it will be contagious.

It is also imperative for churches to thrive, that the importance of the preaching ministry never be diminished. "Preaching is the pastor's highest calling and most important task."<sup>13</sup> O. S. Hawkins pointed out the significance of the pulpit ministry in the life of the church by citing some research done by Dr. Thom Rainer with regard to this subject.

In interviews with 353 formerly unchurched people, Dr. Thom Rainer, president of LifeWay Christian Resources, indicated that in response to the question, "Did the pastor and his preaching play a part in your coming to the church?" 97 percent of the respondents answered in the affirmative. When asked, "What factors led you to choose this church?" 90 percent said, "the pastor and his preaching."<sup>14</sup>

If one is still not convinced, he would do well to consider one more time yet more words from this wise leader.

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<sup>12</sup> Charles Finney, "The Autobiography of Charles Finney."

<sup>13</sup> O. S. Hawkins, *The Pastor's Guide to Leading and Living*, 25.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid, 23.

While the pastor has voluminous duties and multitudinous tasks, nothing should be a higher priority than the assignment to preach the gospel and rightly divide the word of truth to the people God has assigned to him.<sup>15</sup>

The crying need of the hour is to have both pastor and people draw close to Jesus and walk with Him together. Jesus said, “I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.”<sup>16</sup> The desire is to impact the Northeast and beyond with healthy leaders and churches. That being said, the place to begin is in the heart of the pastor. Jeremiah 3:15 should be the job description of every pastor, and the cry of every search committee. “I will give you shepherds who are loyal to Me, and they will shepherd you with knowledge and skill.”<sup>17</sup>

For Northside Baptist Church to be a catalyst for revival and renewal in the Northeast, there must be a connection with pastors and churches. Northside must model and continue to live out the five principles identified in the previous chapter. It will be imperative that the pastor, staff, leaders, and church listen to the voice of God, prepare for the work of God, do the will of God, persevere in the assignment of God, and pray and trust the Spirit of God.

God has been working in a church called Northside for more than forty-five years. This church has heard His voice in the past and is confident to continue listening to that voice and the direction He provides. In the meantime, the church also will continue to prepare for whatever God has in store. They will get their nets ready! This church will have a heart to simply do the will of God as He directs and persevere in that assignment. Prayer will permeate the body of Christ called Northside in individuals, families, leaders, ministries and worship. Ultimately, the Spirit of God will empower the congregation to impact their community and beyond with the

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<sup>15</sup> Hawkins, *The Pastor's Guide to Leading and Living*, 23.

<sup>16</sup> John 10:11.

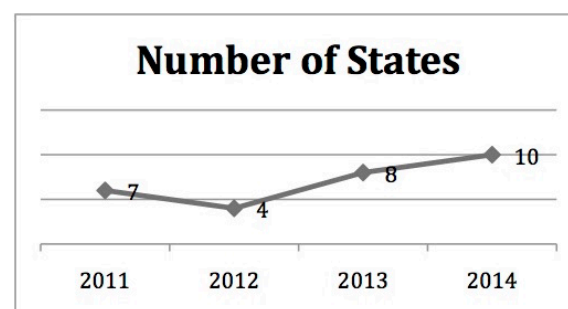
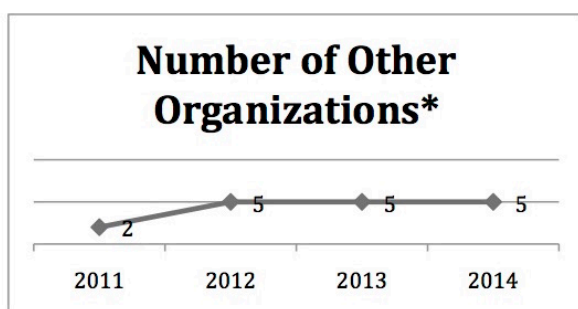
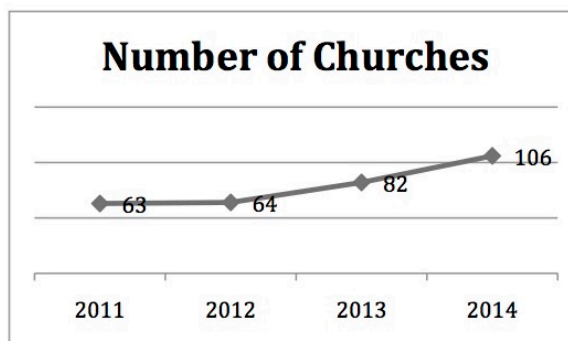
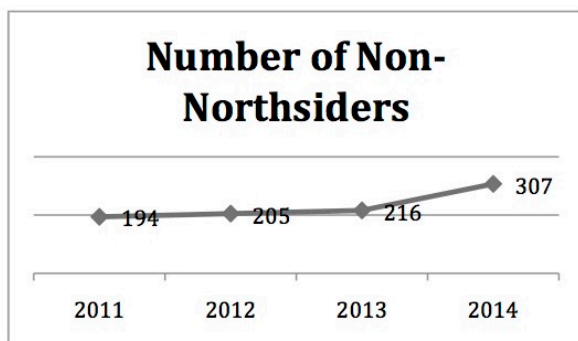
<sup>17</sup> Jeremiah 3:15.

gospel. The author has been their pastor for more than twenty-one years. He is surrendered to the Lord for this tremendous opportunity.

Encouraging pastors and churches throughout the Northeast has begun through the annual Keep the Fire Burning, pastors and leaders conference hosted at Northside. It is designed to be a time for church leaders and their pastors to have their faith renewed, receive instruction and inspiration, move toward revival and renewal in the church, and be encouraged. The following chart shows the impact of the first four years of the conference. The chart indicates that the number of guests outside the Northside family has grown from 194 to 307. The number of churches represented in attendance has grown from 63 to 106. The number of other organizations represented by attendees has grown from 2 to 5. The number of states represented has grown from seven to ten. In four years, registered attendees have come from thirteen states.



## Keep The Fire Burning Conference Totals



\*Other Organizations: Colleges, Seminaries, Campus Ministries, Denominational Offices, Chaplaincies, etc

### STATES REPRESENTED AT THE KEEP THE FIRE BURNING CONFERENCE

	CT	DE	FL	GA	MA	MD	ME	MI	NH	NJ	NY	PA	VT
2011	X	X							X	X	X	X	X
2012		X								X	X	X	
2013		X		X		X		X	X	X	X	X	
2014		X	X		X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X

In addition, the church will seek to maintain a connection with these pastors, leaders and churches, not as a specific formal network of churches but as an informal support system as God directs. While to date, the conference has been the primary way to spark revival in the Northeast, the church has also been able to respond to requests from other churches to assist them their outreach and ministry. The family pastor has done a marriage weekend at a smaller church, which sends leaders to the conference. The executive pastor has met with two churches and

assisted them with budget and strategy. A team of women from Northside led women's retreats at two small churches that have been represented at the conference. In all of the above situations, the work of the local churches was strengthened firsthand. The author as pastor has visited one of the churches, led a leadership workshop and preached in the church as they press on into the future. These are just four examples of connections that have been made.

For the pastor and the church to not only survive but far better – to thrive – there are a number of things needed. That pastor and church will need focus, faith, family, and friends. It sounds simple, but it is simply profound.

### **Focus**

There are many things that can be done when it comes to ministry, but success is not in doing more. Success may require pastors to do less and do it better. What would the Lord have the church to do? In the early church, they knew the secret. In the midst of God growing the church, there was dissension between two groups of widows as to how they were being treated. The pastors could have stepped in and took care of business, but the Lord had another plan. To do so would take them away from two highly important parts of their walk with God and the key to their leadership in the church: time with God in prayer, and time with God in His word, and ultimately teaching and preaching His word.

Then the Twelve summoned the whole company of the disciples and said, "It would not be right for us to give up preaching about God to wait on tables. Therefore, brothers, select from among you seven men of good reputation, full of the Spirit and wisdom, whom we can appoint to this duty. But we will devote ourselves to prayer and to the preaching ministry." The proposal pleased the whole company.<sup>18</sup>

Far too many pastors have busied themselves with important things that are appreciated but they and the churches they lead are paying a price for their decision. Godly people could do

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<sup>18</sup> Acts 6:2-5a.

what they are doing, and free them up to what they need most be doing. Every pastor's priority must be on prayer and the ministry of the word. Whatever crowds that out must be dealt with immediately. Jim Cymbala, the pastor of the Brooklyn Tabernacle in New York says,

Let us pray for pastors everywhere, that a fresh, fiery anointing will come upon us as we speak from our pulpits. Let us ask God for preaching in our churches that brings the things of heaven down to earth with such power that our towns, cities, country, and world will be forever changed.<sup>19</sup>

For the pastor to hear from God, and the people to be led by God, the leader needs to stay close to God. Far too many pastors are distracted by many things and missing the main thing. It is true that all believers need to spend time with Jesus in prayer and in the word. This lesson was powerfully illustrated, and plainly taught in the home of Mary and Martha. The Bible says of the one sister, Mary, that she “sat at the Lord’s feet and was listening to what he said.”<sup>20</sup>

Her sister Martha was busy serving, which isn’t a bad thing, unless the individual hasn’t sat first. It is written, “But Martha was distracted by her many tasks . . .”<sup>21</sup> Jesus used this teachable moment to impact not only these two sisters but people to this very day. “The Lord answered her, ‘Martha, Martha, you are worried and upset about many things, but one thing is necessary. Mary has made the right choice, and it will not be taken away from her.’”<sup>22</sup>

Many things today are distracting pastors and leaders, and in the process keeping them from the one thing they cannot live without. Sometimes it is a pride issue, and the desire to be loved for all that is done. Sometimes it is an unhealthy codependency on ministry that is the need to be needed which could lead to burnout.

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<sup>19</sup> Jim Cymbala, *Fresh Power* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2001), 75.

<sup>20</sup> Luke 10:39b.

<sup>21</sup> Luke 10:40a.

<sup>22</sup> Luke 10:41-42.

So for pastors to minister well, they must learn again to keep things simple. The bottom line is that it is all about spending time with Jesus in prayer and in the word. That's the key to staying healthy. It may also include some very practical things like exercise (as doctor's permit) and healthier eating. This includes a better sleep pattern and taking better care of oneself. The author in the third course of his doctor of ministry studies was compelled by the thought of three hours people cannot live without. This would be a cry to pastors and leaders in particular. The three hours are exercise, Bible and prayer. One can exist without them, but not really live.

As pastors lead the churches where they serve, they must rely on time with the Lord, the leading of the Holy Spirit and godly counsel of godly people to give them wisdom, direction, vision and focus. When the vision is clear, the daily tasks are much more easily identifiable. In turn, that reduces the stress of the uncertain, and provides moorings for ministry.

This issue of vision is addressed by Dave Anderson in his book, *Up Your Business! 7 Steps to Fix, Build, or Stretch Your Organization*. He said, "Vision gives meaning to the workplace, offers purpose, and enrolls people in more of a campaign or cause than a mere job does. People will quit a job; they'll die for a cause."<sup>23</sup>

Vision is a sticky topic for some, but it is extremely important. The reason it is so important is not so a plaque can be put on a wall, but so a burden can be etched in the heart. Vision gives a laser-like focus to an organization. Anderson said, "Effective yearly visions are measurable, bold, and clear."<sup>24</sup> Some would argue that in a church this is too business like. The author would say that such an argument is inappropriate and may be a copout for accountability and responsibility. While being sensitive to the reality that the church is far more than a business,

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<sup>23</sup> Dave Anderson, *Up Your Business* (Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 2007), 135.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

having goals that have been inspired by God will move a church forward with passion and motivation. There is no substitute for getting the vision from the Lord, but having done that, one cannot hold back from what God desires. It's time to move forward!

Steve Farrar said, "So what are we to do? Simply stay faithful at our assigned posts. We're to keep showing up, working hard, and trusting in the promises and timing of a God who loves us."<sup>25</sup> It is not brilliance that is needed, but rather diligence.

Brilliant men are often strikingly ineffectual; they fail to realize that the brilliant insight is not by itself achievement. They never have learned that insights become effectiveness only through hard systematic work.<sup>26</sup>

For farmers, soldiers, athletes, or pastors, there is no substitute for diligence and hard work. Staying faithful means staying focused. God's servants must realize that not everyone will applaud their service to the Lord. Tony Morgan in his book *Killing Cockroaches* spoke on the problematic subject of mediocrity.

There are certainly some people who don't like the way we do ministry. Some are more vocal than others. It would be dishonest to say those comments don't hurt or at times cause anger. They do. But we learned long ago that to try to make everyone happy, you have to be comfortable with mediocrity.<sup>27</sup>

Mediocrity is the enemy of excellence. It is the conviction of this author, and for Northside, that what is done for the Lord should be done well. In fact, all things should be done well and for the glory of God. However, far too often, mediocrity is not only allowed, it is accepted, modeled and applauded. This is mediocrity: "It's a place where there are few critics.

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<sup>25</sup> Steve Farrar, *Battle Ready* (Colorado Springs, CO: David C. Cook, 2009), 25.

<sup>26</sup> Peter F. Drucker, *The Effective Executive* (New York, NY: Harper Collins Publishers, 2006), 1.

<sup>27</sup> Tony Morgan, *Killing Cockroaches* (Nashville, TN: B & H Publishing Group, 2009), 11.

It's also a place where few people become really passionate about ministry and their relationships with Christ."<sup>28</sup>

### **Faith**

The word faith brings to mind two streams of thought. The first is a reference to 'the faith' or the body of doctrine and belief. The second is more operative. It is the life of faith based on the beliefs that lay the foundation for such a life. One thing is clear; God is big on faith. The great 'hall of faith' chapter, Hebrews 11, begins with these words, "Now faith is the reality of what is hoped for, the proof of what is not seen."<sup>29</sup> It is further described in this way: "Now without faith it is impossible to please God, for the one who draws near to him must believe that He exists and rewards those who seek Him."<sup>30</sup> The beloved disciple John, recorded similar words when he said, 'This is the victory that has conquered the world: our faith.'<sup>31</sup>

Every servant of the Lord must know with confidence and assurance, what they believe. They also must know why they believe it. Sometimes it is very costly such as in the life of Stephen. He had preached a summary of the history of God's work among His people. He had lifted up Jesus and boldly declared the gospel. Then the Bible says, "When they heard these things, they were enraged in their hearts and gnashed their teeth at him."<sup>32</sup> As he continued to boldly proclaim the reality of his faith and the presence of Jesus, the religious leaders of the day grew all the more furious. Grace was within their grasp, but pride pushed it away.

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<sup>28</sup> Tony Morgan, *Killing Cockroaches*, 11.

<sup>29</sup> Hebrews 11:1.

<sup>30</sup> Hebrews 11:6.

<sup>31</sup> 1 John 5:4.

<sup>32</sup> Acts 7:54.

The Bible goes on to say ‘But devout men buried Stephen and mourned over him.’<sup>33</sup>

When leaders die who have been faithful to the Lord, godly people mourn the loss, and feel pain as strength dissipates and hope wanes. True believers know that hope is steadfast, but moments have a way of revealing the heart and whether a person may stumble or stand tall.

At the same time, “Saul, however, was ravaging the church, and he would enter house after house, drag off men and women, and put them in prison.”<sup>34</sup> One leader died and left a legacy of godliness and the Spirit-filled life. Another leader lived, and created havoc among believers. But God took hold of him too!

Every pastor, leader and church that seeks to keep the fire burning and move forward for the Lord and the gospel will encounter moments where faith will be tested, and faith will be necessary. It shouldn’t be any other way, and it is certainly not. It is important to know that at every level of breakthrough, outreach, and growth, faith will be required.

The temptation to unbelief is great. David Wilkerson says, “Unbelief in even its slightest form is hateful to God. It hinders God’s work in us and it is the sin that lies behind all departure from Him.”<sup>35</sup> It is also true that as God’s people walk in faith with the Lord, the enemy will hurl his fiery darts with great force. “Satan questions our faith, accuses our faith and lies about our faith.”<sup>36</sup> Pastors, leaders and churches must not let the Devil’s intimidation keep them from the battle.

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<sup>33</sup> Acts 8:2.

<sup>34</sup> Acts 8:3.

<sup>35</sup> David Wilkerson, *Hungry for More of Jesus* (Grand Rapids, MI: Chosen Books, a division of Baker Book House, 1992), 205.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid*, 209.

Believers must guard their hearts and especially be aware of the danger of an unbelieving heart. “Watch out, brothers, so that there won’t be in any of you an evil, unbelieving heart that departs from the living God.”<sup>37</sup> Christ followers must also understand the value of operative faith. ‘This is the victory that has conquered the world: our faith.’<sup>38</sup>

### **Family**

The pastor must know that family is not more important than Jesus, but family is more important than ministry. Family is the first flock. A man remembers falling in love with his wife, and it is a must to continue to fan the flames of that relationship. It must never be taken for granted. Andrew Murray says, “Above all, let us remember that it is the love of God that is the secret of a loving home on earth.”<sup>39</sup>

God has been at work in families for a long time. He’s been at work behind the scenes in many ways. Stu Weber offers this important reminder:

You didn’t come from just anywhere. If you believe your Bible, you also believe that in the divine sovereignty of the Creator of the universe, it was no accident that your mother married your father. Or that you were born to them. Or that their genes are your raw material. Further, it’s no accident that your four grandparents were precisely who they were.<sup>40</sup>

A husband should study his wife, and meet her needs first. The Bible says, “Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave Himself for her.”<sup>41</sup> The author would challenge pastors to put Jesus first, and their spouse second, both before their ministry, without

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<sup>37</sup> Hebrews 3:12.

<sup>38</sup> 1 John 5:4b.

<sup>39</sup> Andrew Murray, *How To Raise Your Children For Christ* (Minneapolis, MN: Bethany House, 1975), 23.

<sup>40</sup> Stu Weber, *Infinite Impact* (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 2007), 109.

<sup>41</sup> Ephesians 5:25.



apology. In addition take time for and treasure your spouse. Remember the little things, and those things that require much time and effort. Don't feel guilty for providing for her needs, protecting her heart, and being a priest who intercedes to God for her.

“Sons are indeed a heritage from the LORD, children, a reward.”<sup>42</sup> At the end of the day, and the end of life, the greatest blessing for the pastor is to have his family believing in and standing beside him. No size church should ever mean more than that. That being the case, no pastor who loves the Lord and is called of God to serve and lead a church should ever be satisfied to stop reaching out with the love of Christ. Serving the Lord together as a family in life and in ministry is a tremendous privilege and honor. Seasons come and go, but during the seasons when you have opportunity, it will be a joy to serve together. Elmer Towns offers this prayer, reminding all of the importance of praying for a legacy of faith. “Lord, keep me from sin, also keep my children and grandchildren true to You.”<sup>43</sup>

Concerning the legacy factor, decisions parents make affect them, their children and their grandchildren. Many children learn parenting from their parents and various values, beliefs and idiosyncrasies are passed on for generations. The impact of enduring values and belief brings both solemnity and hope.

Parents, it is God's will that His salvation should be from generation to generation in your family too, that your children should hear from you and pass on to their children the praise of the Lord.<sup>44</sup>

Max Lucado gave this powerful reminder:

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<sup>42</sup> Psalm 127:3.

<sup>43</sup> Elmer L. Towns, *Praying with the Conquerors: Praying Joshua, Judges, and Ruth* (Shippensburg, PA: Destiny Image Publishers, 2009), 12.

<sup>44</sup> Murray, *How to Raise Your Children for Christ*, 141.

Children spell love with four letters: T-I-M-E. Not just quality time, but hang time, downtime, anytime, all the time. Your children are not your hobby; they are your calling.<sup>45</sup>

Often families will be concerned about the pace and health of the pastor. To ignore such a concern would be unwise. The author can identify with his mentor's discussion of the subject:

My stress level concerns my wife. She's convinced it has taken years off my life. She constantly says, 'I look forward to the day when you no longer face this problem.' The 'problem' is stress. The only comfort I find in the stress of my life is that I expect consternation as a pastor. It comes with the job.<sup>46</sup>

James Merritt and his wife both make valid points. Too much stress is unhealthy, and wounded the lives of many. However, to think of ministry being stress free is unrealistic.

### **Friends**

Friends may be overrated by some, and underrated by others. The truth is, you won't keep the fire burning without friends. Timothy needed Paul's reminder to keep ablaze God's gift in him. He was a precious friend to Timothy. It is ultimately to be remembered that one can have too many 'friends'. Remember who the best friend is. The Bible says it this way: "A man with many friends may be harmed, but there is a friend who stays closer than a brother."<sup>47</sup> Sometimes friends can wound; Jesus knew that. We read in Zechariah, "And if one asks him, 'What are these wounds on your back?' he will say, 'The wounds I received in the house of my friends.'"<sup>48</sup> This verse had Messianic implications, but also speaks to everyone as well. If friends mistreated Jesus, then why would that not be true of believers today?

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<sup>45</sup> Max Lucado, *Facing Your Giants* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2006), 156-157.

<sup>46</sup> James Merritt, *Still Standing* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House, 2012), 23.

<sup>47</sup> Proverbs 18:24.

<sup>48</sup> Zechariah 13:6, ESV.

Because of this, some in ministry decide to avoid people and only spend time with the Lord. They may even see no need for friends. The Bible paints a different picture. To not have friends creates a void. Jesus had much to say about friends.

No one has greater love than this, that someone would lay down his life for his friends. You are My friends if you do what I command you. I do not call you slaves anymore, because a slave doesn't know what his master is doing. I have called you friends, because I have made known to you everything I have heard from My Father.<sup>49</sup>

The word friend is also used in the epistles frequently and illustrates the necessity of relationship in kingdom work. Some are forms of exhortation, and others of encouragement. “So then my brothers, you are dearly loved and longed for – my joy and crown. In this manner stand firm in the Lord, dear friends.”<sup>50</sup>

It is true that friends can hurt, criticize, and turn on people (ask Job!). But it is equally true that to have friends is to have great gifts from God. Several verses in Proverbs illustrate this profound need and blessing. “A friend loves at all times, and a brother is born for a difficult time.”<sup>51</sup> Still another verse offers this reminder, “Faithful are the wounds of a friend, but deceitful are the kisses of an enemy.”<sup>52</sup> A true friend can speak with correction and balance it with compassion. This is essential in the life of a pastor, leaders, and members of churches.

Some people may be tempted to just rely on themselves. But the Bible reminds says, “Oil and incense bring joy to the heart, and the sweetness of a friend is better than self-counsel.”<sup>53</sup> Friends may offer challenges in life, but they are blessings from the Lord as well.

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<sup>49</sup> John 15:13-15.

<sup>50</sup> Philippians 4:1.

<sup>51</sup> Proverbs 17:17.

<sup>52</sup> Proverbs 27:6.

<sup>53</sup> Proverbs 27:9.

If a pastor and his people will learn the value of focus, faith, family and friends, the potential for healthy churches experiencing the burning fire of God is much more likely to appear. There is one final piece that must not be taken lightly.

It's possible in this category to include mentors. The author has been blessed to have mentors in his life. One is a godly layperson who has been at the church since the author's arrival in 1993. From this man has been gleaned practical daily wisdom for ministry and working with people. Another is a strong, faith-filled businessman who has given amazing insight into leadership and management. One is a pastor from Georgia, whose church size and life experiences were greater than the author's. He was therefore able to offer amazing wisdom and insight into decisions as well as spiritual and leadership growth.

Jentezen Franklin offered this great reminder concerning mentors:

One of the secrets of success for some of the great Bible heroes was their mentors. If you don't have a godly mentor in your life, you need to ask Him to put one there. When He does, don't hang back and wait for the person to approach you; you might need to ask him or her to mentor you. Joshua was always there, hanging out around Moses. Elisha's success was found in his relationship with Elijah. He spent hours and hours learning from the wise old prophet.<sup>54</sup>

Paul served as a mentor to Timothy. Mentoring is a two way street. The two will actually learn from each other. In addition mentoring should look both ways. There should be a mentor and a mentee. Good mentors are honest, available, and full of godly wisdom. The author has found the benefit of a day spent with a mentor. However, mentoring can be as simple as a short phone call. Often a good mentor can give you great insight in a five-minute conversation that would take some a few weeks to figure out on his or her own.

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<sup>54</sup> Jentezen Franklin, *Right People, Right Place, Right Plan* (New Kensington, PA: Whitaker House, 2007), 57.

### The Fear of the Lord

“The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge; fools despise wisdom and instruction.”<sup>55</sup> Also, “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding.”<sup>56</sup> For revival to come to the pastor, the local church, the community, and the Northeast, there must be a return to the fear of the Lord. This is not a fear that torments, but rather one of reverence, awe, respect and obedience. The Bible says, “There is no fear in love; instead perfect love drives out fear.”<sup>57</sup>

Del Fehsenfeld, Jr., writing on the subject of revival said,

Western Christianity is in serious trouble. We’re playing church and losing the battle against evil. In fact the condition of our society is really no more than a magnified reflection of the condition of the church. It’s no wonder that all of our impressive programs aren’t holding back the flood of moral degeneracy in our society and that we’re lagging behind in our efforts to interest a lost world in the gospel of Christ. Judgment must begin at the house of God!<sup>58</sup>

Fehsenfeld directed Life Action Ministries for many years before dying of cancer at the age of forty-two. He was convinced that the need of the hour was revival and a return to God. He said,

Such a revival will restore the Word of God and the God of the Word to their rightful, sovereign place in our nation. Such a revival will expose and cleanse the hypocrisy, shallowness, impurity, materialism, and conflict in our churches and homes, transforming them into holy tabernacles filled with the power and presence of God.<sup>59</sup>

A fitting conclusion to this project is from the word of God where it is written in the book of Acts: “So the church throughout all Judea, Galilee, and Samaria had peace, being built up and

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<sup>55</sup> Proverbs 1:7, HCSB.

<sup>56</sup> Proverbs 9:10, HCSB.

<sup>57</sup> 1 John 4:18.

<sup>58</sup> Del Fehsenfeld Jr., *Ablaze with His Glory* (Buchanan, MI: Life Action Ministries, 1993, 2009), 29.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid.

walking in the fear of the Lord and in the encouragement of the Holy Spirit, and it increased in numbers.”<sup>60</sup>

As in the days of Moody and Finney, may the Lord be pleased to do it again. What a day it will be when the hearts of many are turned to righteousness. People’s hearts will burn for the Lord and for lost souls. The lost will be found and rescued from their perishing by the glorious grace of God. Communities will be transformed. Local churches will be pulsating with life and passion for the Savior. Pastors and leaders will be at the helm serving the captain of their souls with life, love, enthusiasm, passion, vision and integrity. Finney himself said, “Everyone has the great responsibility devolved upon him or her to win as many souls as possible to Christ. This is the great privilege and the great duty of all the disciples of Christ.”<sup>61</sup>

On that day, the land that once was flooded with revival fire, will once again be ablaze with the gospel of Jesus Christ. May the Lord find this author and Northside Baptist Church faithful to steward the opportunity He has set before this body of believers. The author knew from one class day that having been given much, much would be required. May there be much fruit for His glory. It’s time to bring people to Jesus!

To do this it will take pastors who are in the fight. They are servants of the Lord who lead by example in multiplying disciples under the anointing of God. They must be people of personal discipline and hard workers. They must be servant leaders. They lead strong, but with amazing humility and confidence in the Lord. They must be individuals who live the gospel, share their faith, but also share their lives which demonstrate godly works, and within their mouths articulate godly principles. They are vulnerable, authentic, strong, tested, and grounded in the

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<sup>60</sup> Acts 9:31.

<sup>61</sup> Charles Finney, *Power from on High* (Fort Washington, PA: Christian Literature Crusade), 27.

word, which spills out at every opportunity into the lives of those with whom they come in contact. They must learn to persevere daily. They will be sorely tempted to quit, but must not. It's not theirs to quit what they didn't start in the first place. It is God who began the work in them and they must continue with Him, trusting Him, under Him and for Him!

Geoff Surratt offers a sobering reminder of the need to develop leaders, and be careful to resist the temptation to do it all. His godly wisdom is needed at this point.

When pastors are exhausted, their nerves are shot, and they want to quit every Monday, it's usually because they are doing their work and everyone else's as well. God has a huge vision for your church, but if you are trying to accomplish that vision alone, you will eventually damage your church, your health, and your family. One of the main reasons pastors burn out and leave the ministry is because they feel the need to lead almost everything. If it all depends on you, then we are all in trouble.<sup>62</sup>

If the first desire of the author was that preachers not quit, it is the second desire that churches not just survive but thrive. While churches seem to have a life cycle, Tom Blackaby offers a word of hope: "I believe Christ is expecting the church to look even better with age!"<sup>63</sup> Far too many churches have drifted and are on the brink of death. They have lost values and vision. They are stuck in ruts of the past and must change their culture and embrace the future. Ken Hemphill wrote on the subject of Bonsai churches. They are churches that are pruned to be intentionally small. The truth is that God can use small churches or large, but there are reasons why the church should grow in number. The key reason is reaching people with the gospel of Jesus Christ so they can be saved, have eternal life, and live a life that is meaningful right now for the glory of God! Hemphill makes this point:

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<sup>62</sup> Geoff Surratt, *10 Stupid Things That Keep Churches from Growing* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2009), 25.

<sup>63</sup> Tom Blackaby, *Experiencing God's Love in the Church* (Birmingham, AL: New Hope Publishers, 2010), 56.

Churches often avoid the matter of numerical growth by arguing that they emphasize other forms of growth. Church growth is not either/or but both/and. Avoiding the topic of numerical growth is often a defense mechanism for laziness, lack of commitment, or desire to remain comfortably small. It is one of the leading causes of bonsai churches.<sup>64</sup>

Spiritualizing a lack of growth is a travesty of eternal proportion. Growth that compromises the gospel would be an equal travesty. What is needed today is passionate God called leaders, filled with the Holy Spirit, with a clear vision from heaven for the flock they lead in the communities where they serve. When that happens accompanied by prayer, fasting, evangelism and the word of God, fires will fall from heaven.

Any church apart from the hand of God will die. This must be a sobering thought to every local congregation that ministers the gospel of Jesus Christ. While vision, focus and values are all extremely important in the course and effectiveness of the church, there is one simple factor that must not be lost. Jesus had some strong words for what many would have considered a great church.

I know your works, your labor, and your endurance, and that you cannot tolerate evil. You have tested those who call themselves apostles and are not, and you have found them to be liars. You also possess endurance and have tolerated many things because of My name and have not grown weary.<sup>65</sup>

Such a church is to be commended for their hard work, diligence, hatred of sin, perseverance, and faithfulness. All that is good, however, one thing was missing. That might not seem too bad on the grander scale, but Jesus honesty and appeal to them has gripped the hearts of believers and churches for years and must be heard again loud and clear for the fire to burn brightly. “But I have this against you: You have abandoned the love you had at first.”<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>64</sup> Ken Hemphill, *The Bonsai Theory of Church Growth* (Nashville, TN: Broadman Press, 1991), 110-111.

<sup>65</sup> Revelation 2:2-3.

<sup>66</sup> Revelation 2:4.



The solution was clear, simple, and mandated from heaven. The solution is to remember and repent. “Remember then how far you have fallen; repent and do the works you did at first. Otherwise, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place – unless you repent.”<sup>67</sup> The stakes are high, and the need is real. Returning to the Lord, and the things that believers did at the first are simple things. In fact, they are as simple as our Lord’s commands to love God and love people. When asked by an expert of the day what was the greatest commandment, Jesus replied with clarity and simplicity.

He said to him, ‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the greatest and most important command. The second is like it: Love your neighbor as yourself. All the Law and the Prophets depend on these two commands.’<sup>68</sup>

The only way to love like that is to fall in love with Jesus all over again. Learn to spend time with Him, not out of necessity but out of love. His love must permeate heart and soul. “If I speak human or angelic languages but do not have love, I am a sounding gong or a clanging cymbal.”<sup>69</sup> It may just be that there is a lot of ‘noise’ in churches that needs to be replaced by simple love. The source of that love is Jesus. “We love because He first loved us.”<sup>70</sup> Tom Blackaby has written on the subject in his recent book *Experiencing God’s Love in the Church* subtitled, *The Missing Ingredient in Today’s Church and How to Bring It Back*. He said, “First and foremost, Christ expects that those who address Him as Lord will love Him in response to the sacrificial love He demonstrated for them by dying on the Cross in their place.”<sup>71</sup> Blackaby

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<sup>67</sup> Revelation 2:5.

<sup>68</sup> Matthew 22:37-39.

<sup>69</sup> 1 Corinthians 13:1.

<sup>70</sup> 1 John 4:19.

<sup>71</sup> Tom Blackaby, *Experiencing God’s Love in the Church*, 58.

summarized the words of Scripture and reminded believers to love God, love one another, love their neighbors, and love their enemies.

The Bible is clear on the importance and supremacy of love. “Now these three remain: faith, hope, and love. But the greatest of these is love.” These three qualities are a must for the believer and churches to thrive and move forward with the Lord. They are all a result of the infilling of the Holy Spirit. What’s so important about faith? “Faith gives people direction in their life.”<sup>72</sup> What’s so important about hope? “Hope is what keeps people going through the difficult times.”<sup>73</sup> Still the greatest is love. “Love consists in this: not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins.”<sup>74</sup> Before considering anything else, the pastor and the church must settle the love question: have they left their first love? Is Jesus first in the heart of the believer and first in the heart and goal of the church? Is He loved supremely and are others loved deeply? Settling that question, then specific pursuits will and must follow.

The God-called pastor must lead the charge in assisting this flock to know and obey their God-given mission and specific vision for the congregation. There must be a laser focus and strong core values guiding the ministry. It is equally imperative that pastors remember that they are not alone in the work. First of all, the Lord is always with them. Secondly, they have a responsibility to equip God’s people to serve Him well. Francis Chan said,

Paul saw the church as a community of redeemed people in which each person is actively involved in doing the work of ministry. The pastor is not the minister – at least not in the

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<sup>72</sup> Tom Blackaby, *Experiencing God’s Love in the Church*, 74.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, 75.

<sup>74</sup> 1 John 4:10.

way we typically think of a minister. The pastor is the equipper, and every member of the church is a minister.<sup>75</sup>

The third desire of the author of this project is for churches to impact their communities and be agents of change for the good, and for God's glory! They will do this as they implement the principles in chapter four and accept the challenge of chapter five. Sometimes it is helpful just to remember to keep things simple. Mark Batterson offered this insight on the subject:

Obedience is a willingness to do whatever, whenever, wherever God calls us. And that looks very different for each of us. It doesn't always necessitate going halfway around the world. Often the most courageous actions only require us going across the room or across the street.<sup>76</sup>

In a compelling book entitled *Dangerous Church*, John Bishop served up this powerful reminder:

Lost people matter to God . . . Until we recapture this essential priority in our hearts and in our churches, we won't experience the power that accompanies God's mission to rescue the lost – the power that saves and transforms lives for eternity.<sup>77</sup>

With eternity as the perspective, ministry must be compelling and current. The gospel is the greatest product. The message must never be compromised. However, the design of its communication can be enhanced in this amazing day in which we live.

The gospel is powerful and attractive: any effective presentation of the Word of God has the potential to result in a life-changing experience for those who receive it. For the media age, the challenge of ministers of any capacity is to speak with the same lucidity using our cultural language of media that the Levite priests did when they translated the Law for the people. If done well, the result will be changed lives and a renewed church.<sup>78</sup>

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<sup>75</sup> Francis Chan with Mark Beuving, *Multiply: Disciples Making Disciples* (Colorado Springs, CO: David C. Cook, 2012), 34.

<sup>76</sup> Mark Batterson, *In a Pit with a Lion on a Snowy Day* (Nashville, TN: Multnomah Books, 2006), 109.

<sup>77</sup> John Bishop, *Dangerous Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2011), 43.

<sup>78</sup> Len Wilson with Jason Moore, *The Wired Church 2.0* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 2008), 17.

The fourth desire, and ultimately the greatest, is that every lost person will have the opportunity to hear the gospel and put their trust in Christ from sincere, Holy Spirit filled believers who serve in God honoring churches and are making a difference in the community for the glory of God. Ultimately, it is about the lost being found, and sinners being saved! This will bring great glory to the Lord and is the very heart of God. To this end, pastors, leaders and every believer must proclaim the gospel boldly. Proclaim it one on one, in small groups, in churches, and throughout communities, cities and states until the message saturates the northeast and beyond and multitudes have heard and been given the opportunity to trust in Christ. As people hear, their hearts will be stirred, and the author believes that many will respond and trust in Christ.

One of the great writers of this day is Mark Batterson. His recent book *All In* sets the tone on the issue where he said “This isn’t a book to read. It is a decision to be made.”<sup>79</sup> It seems that far too often, pastors and churches anticipate the worst and plan for failure. Faith becomes a forgotten word, and worry rules the day. Hope is dying, and hell is raging. In that moment, a decision must be made.

There comes a moment when you throw caution to the wind. There comes a moment when you need to go all in. There comes a moment when you need to burn the ships. This is that moment. This is your moment. It’s all or nothing. It’s now or never.<sup>80</sup>

For the author, this is that moment – for Liverpool, Syracuse, New York State, for the fifty-five million people who live in the Northeast, and to the ends of the earth. Lord, send a revival throughout the Northeast again. Let it burn brightly and set a blaze in the hearts of multitudes for your glory! Keep the fire burning!

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<sup>79</sup> Mark Batterson, *All In* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2013), 32.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid.

## APPENDIX A

### RESEARCH INSTRUMENT

#### Pastor's Questionnaire Keep the Fire Burning

The following is a list of questions that I have put together as a survey to assist me in two purposes. Our church has begun an annual pastors/leaders conference to encourage leaders and churches in the work of the Lord. We call it 'Keep the Fire Burning'. In an effort to more effectively serve pastors in the Northeast and beyond, we would greatly appreciate your feedback. I am also personally finishing up a Doctor of Ministry degree at Liberty University. I am writing my thesis on the subject: 'Keep the Fire Burning: Key Biblical Principles on How One Church Can be a Catalyst for Revival and Renewal in the Northeast.' This survey might take an hour to fill out – but I would be profoundly grateful for your participation as soon as possible. Please include the following information:

Name:

Address:

Telephone Number:

Church where you serve:

Church Size and Attendance:

Total years served in ministry:

Years at current ministry station:

Your age:

(No names, only the data will be used in the thesis; If you prefer to leave off personal information, that is fine.)

#### **Faith**

1. How would you describe your daily time with the Lord?
2. How much do you pray in a day?
  - a. Less than 15 minutes.
  - b. 15-30 minutes.
  - c. 30 minutes to an hour.
  - d. More than an hour.
3. Describe the value of your prayer time and time in the word of God.
4. Do you have a Bible Reading plan you follow?

- a. If so what?
  - b. If not, where are you currently reading and why?
- 5. Have you shared the gospel with someone outside the pulpit in an attempt to bring them to Christ
  - a. In the last month? Yes/no
  - b. In the last three months? Yes/no
  - c. In the last six months? Yes/no
- 6. Do you find it easy or difficult to exercise faith in your life and ministry?
  - a. Easy/difficult
  - b. Why?
- 7. What is one of the greatest tests of faith you have ever faced?
  - a. What did you learn from that season?
  - b. On a scale of 1 to 10 how big of an impact did that make on your life?
- 8. How old were you when you were saved?
- 9. Describe briefly how you came to faith in Christ.
- 10. What was the size of the community where you lived and or went to church when you gave your life to Christ?

### **Family**

- 1. Are you married?
- 2. If so how many years?
- 3. Do you have children?
- 4. If so what are their ages?
- 5. Do you spend regular time with your family?
  - a. How?
  - b. When?
  - c. Where?
  - d. Why?
- 6. How do you see your family and your ministry?
  - a. 'I shield them from ministry'.
  - b. 'I leave it up to them'.
  - c. 'We do ministry together'.

- d. 'We struggle in this area and are confused about this.'
7. How are you nurturing the relationship you have with your family?
    - a. Wife?
    - b. Children?
    - c. Extended family?
  8. I consider my family mostly:
    - a. A challenge.
    - b. A burden.
    - c. A demand.
    - d. A joy.
    - e. A blessing.

### **Ministry**

1. Do you feel called to ministry? Yes/no
2. If you would answer that yes – then how old were you when you sensed that call and responded to that call?
3. If you would answer no – then describe how you wound up in ministry and why you do the things you do.
4. What is your current role in ministry? Pastor, Associate, Staff, other (describe)
5. What is your ministry experience background (churches/ministries where you have served; what capacity, and how long).
6. Why are you where you are today?
7. What are three key things that have happened in the church where you serve or attend in the last two years? (negative or positive) – and how has that impacted you and the work there?
8. Do you love the ministry?
  - a. A little.
  - b. A lot.
  - c. Too much – I'm co-dependent on it.
  - d. Not sure.

9. Do you ever think about leaving the ministry?
  - a. Daily.
  - b. Weekly.
  - c. At least once a month.
  - d. A few times a year.
  - e. Never.
10. If so, why would you quit? What's the main reason?
11. Why have you not quit?

### **Keep the Fire Burning**

1. What keeps your fires burning?
2. Do you take a consistent day off?
  - a. What day?
  - b. Why that day?
  - c. What is that day typically like – what do you do?
3. Do you have a hobby you enjoy?
  - a. How often do you engage in this hobby?
  - b. How important is that to you?
    - i. Not important enough.
    - ii. Quite important.
    - iii. Too important – it's a distraction.
    - iv. Not important at all.
4. Do you take vacation time?
  - a. What are your best vacation memories?
  - b. Is vacation consistent or haphazard?
  - c. Is this primarily to visit friends, family and relatives?
  - d. Do you have a place you (and or you and your family if married) go to that has become special to you annually or frequently?
    - i. Why that place?
    - ii. What does it mean to you?



5. Do you exercise?
  - a. Daily.
  - b. At least three times a week.
  - c. Once a week.
  - d. Very little.
  - e. Not at all.
6. How is your health? (And explain)
  - a. Excellent.
  - b. Very good.
  - c. Good.
  - d. Not so good.
  - e. Deteriorating.
7. What are the biggest ‘fillers’ in your life (things that bring you joy, fulfillment, restoration).
8. What are the biggest ‘drainers’ in your life (things that leave you weary and exhausted).

### **Leadership**

1. What are the key factors to being a strong leader?
2. What are you doing to grow as a leader?
3. Are you seeking to mentor and multiply leaders?
4. What will it take for revival to come to the Northeast?
5. What is your understanding of the fear of God and how important is that in your life?
6. Have you ever seen the fire of God in a church? In your life? How do you know?

### **Pastors/Leaders/Churches**

1. What do you believe is the number one reason why pastors quit the ministry?
2. What do you believe are three key factors as to why churches die?
3. What is the greatest need in the life of a pastor today?
4. How could one church best help spark revival in the Northeast?

Keep the Fire Burning was established for your

1. Faith to be renewed.
2. Instruction and Inspiration.
3. Revival and Renewal.
4. Encouragement.

How important are these elements?

What might be missing from this list?

What is most important on this list for you?

Please return this survey by email to [baubrey@northsideonline.org](mailto:baubrey@northsideonline.org).

Thanks

## APPENDIX B

### GENERAL MINISTRY INFORMATION

Current Ministry Role	Age	Age of Salvation	Age at Call/Age of Response if different	Years in Ministry	Do You Like the Ministry?	Ever Think of Quitting?		Current Ministry Role	Age	Age of Salvation	Age at Call/Age of Response if different	Years in Ministry	Do You Like the Ministry?	Ever Think of Quitting?
A Pastor	49	11	17	27	A lot	Few times a year		S Pastor	51	29	33	18	A lot	Never
B Pastor	32	5	18	11	A lot	Never		T AWANA Missionary	49	13	19/32	13	A lot	Never
C Pastor	36	8	29	8	A lot	Never		U Pastor	51	18	27	24	A lot	Several times over last 20 yrs
D Student Pastor	28	14	19	8	A lot	Few times a year		V Pastor/Planter	45	22	28	5	A lot	Few times a year
E Pastor	32	8	23	7	Not sure	Once a month		W Pastor	38	9	17	15	A lot	Few times a year
F Pastor	69	28	30	37	x	Sure		X Pastor	55	16	30	17	A little/ A lot	Few times a year
G Associate Pastor	33	12	20	11	A lot	Never		Y Pastor	50	10	21	24	Between little & lot	Few times a year
H Pastor	49	9	16/38	4	A lot	Not yet		Z Admin Pastor	53	15	15	36	A lot	Daily
I Pastor	49	19	20	24	Not sure	Never		AA Pastor	35	12	18	13	x	Never
J Pastor	53	10	33	14	Too much	Few times a year		BB Pastor	51	32	20/32	14	A lot	Not yet
K Ch Planter Catalyst	54	13	25	26	A lot	Few times a year		CC Pastor/Seminary Professor	57	4	16	35	A lot	Never
L Pastor	60	18	18	38	A lot	Never		DD Pastor	31	20	24	7	Too much	Never
M D.O.M.	42	13	21	20	A lot	Never		EE Associate Pastor	25	7	17	6	A lot	Few times a year
N Pastor	70	37	14/43	15	A lot	Once a month		FF Pastor	37	8	17	18	A lot	Never (used to be everyday)
O Pastor	35	15	16	16	A lot	Few times a year		GG Pastor	58	30	43	13	A lot	Weekly
P Pastor/Missionary	54	6	27/28	24	A little	Once in a while		HH Pastor	33	5	19	6	A lot	Never
Q Associate Pastor	49	10	38	10	A lot	Never		II Pastor	54	26	49	4	A lot	Few times a year
R Co-Pastor	65	30	30	25	A lot	Few times a year								

## APPENDIX C

## THESIS DEFENSE POWERPOINT PRESENTATION



## The Need

- A town called Burke, New York
- A town called Addison, New York
- Small towns, medium-sized cities, large cities.

## The Opportunity

- Northside Baptist Church
  - Author serves as pastor from 1993 to present.
  - From 80 in weekend attendance to over 1000.
  - From 73,000 annual budget to more than 1.5 million

*"... much will be required of everyone who has been given much. And even more will be expected of the one who has been entrusted with more." Luke 12:48b, HCSB*

## A conference is born



- Held annually since 2011
  - **Keep the Fire Burning, 2011**
    - 194 people, 63 churches, 7 states
  - **Keep the Fire Burning 2014**
    - 307 people, 106 churches, 10 states

## Goal of the project

- That pastors are encouraged and don't quit.
- That churches don't die, or simply survive. They thrive.
- That communities don't lose a witness.
- That lost people can be found, and go to heaven instead of hell.

## Review of the literature

- *A Man After God's Own Heart*, Jim George
- *Holy Discontent*, Bill Hybels
- *Ablaze with His Glory*, Del Fehsenfeld, Jr.
- *Replenish*, Lance Witt
- *Leaders Who Last*, Dave Kraft
- *Fresh Wind, Fresh Fire*, Jim Cymbala

## Key Scripture Passages

- "If I say, 'I won't mention Him or speak any longer in His name, ' His message becomes a fire burning in my heart, shut up in my bones. I become tired of holding it in, and I cannot prevail.'" Jeremiah 20:9
- "So they said to each other, 'Weren't our hearts ablaze within us while He was talking with us on the road and explaining the Scriptures to us?'" Luke 24:32

## Key Scripture Passages continued

- *"If only You would tear the heavens open and come down, so that mountains would quake at Your presence – as fire kindles the brushwood, and fire causes water to boil – to make Your name known to Your enemies, so that nations will tremble at Your presence!" Isaiah 64:1-2*
- *"Then Jesus went to all the towns and villages . . ." Matthew 9:35a*

## The Northeast (from Gallup, and Census)

NORTHEASTERN STATES ~ POPULATION AND CHURCH ATTENDANCE

POPULATION	2010	2000	% CHANGE	*CHURCH ATTENDANCE (2004-2006)	CHURCH ATTENDANCE RANK (of 48 continental states)
Connecticut	3,574,097	3,405,565	+4.9	37%	33rd
Maine	1,328,361	1,274,923	+4.2	31%	43 <sup>rd</sup>
Massachusetts	6,547,629	6,349,097	+3.1	31%	44 <sup>th</sup>
New Hampshire	1,316,470	1,235,786	+6.5	24%	48th
New Jersey	8,791,894	8,414,350	+4.5	34%	37 <sup>th</sup>
New York	19,378,102	18,976,457	+2.1	33%	39 <sup>th</sup>
Pennsylvania	12,702,379	12,281,054	+3.4	43%	25 <sup>th</sup>
Rhode Island	1,052,567	1,048,319	+0.4	28%	45 <sup>th</sup>
Vermont	625,741	608,827	+2.8	24%	47 <sup>th</sup>
Total Northeast	55,317,240	53,594,378	+3.2	32%	Ave rank = 40th
USA	308,745,538	281,421,906	+9.7	Ave = 42%	

\*weekly/almost weekly – survey done by Gallup



- The Northeast has a population of more than 55 million people.
- If it were a nation it would be the 24<sup>th</sup> largest in the world.
- Less than 1 out of 3 people attend church weekly.
- Out of the 48 continental states, six northeastern states are among the ten lowest in church attendance.
- Vermont and New Hampshire rank the lowest in the nation.

## **The Most/Least Bible Minded Cities in America**

**(Barna Group, 2014)**

- Of 100 cities listed, there is not one in nine northeastern states until #40.
- Among the bottom twenty cities, eleven are in the northeast.
- The city of the author, Syracuse, is #86. The capitol of his home state is #99.

## **Revivals of the Bible**

- Jacob
- Moses
- Elijah
- Hezekiah
- Jonah
- Ezra/Nehemiah
- Peter
- Philip

## **Revivals of the Northeast**

- The First Great Awakening
- The Haystack Revival
- The Second Great Awakening
- Fulton Street Revival
- Moody and Finney

## The Promise of Revival

*“Let us strive to know the LORD. His appearance is as sure as the dawn. He will come to us like the rain, like the spring showers that water the land.”*

*- Hosea 6:3*

## The Plea for Revival

*“Will you not revive us again so that your people may rejoice in You?”*

*- Psalm 85:6*

## **The Research**

35 ministry leaders interviewed.

Seven areas of interest:

1. Faith
2. Family.
3. Ministry.
4. Keep the Fire Burning (personal)
5. Leadership.
6. Pastors/Leaders/Churches.
7. Keep the Fire Burning (conference)

## **The Respondents**

- Age range from 20's to 70's
- Average age of salvation was 15.
- Average years in Ministry was 17.
- Years in present ministry location: 8.
- Church Size/Attendance: 149.

## Size of communities where pastors were saved

**Size of Communities Where Pastors Were Saved**

People	Rural/Small Town	Small City	City	Large City	Mega City
<b>Less Than 2,000</b>	11				
<b>2,000+ -5,000</b>	2				
<b>5,000+ - 10,000</b>	2				
<b>10,000+ - 50,000</b>		11			
<b>50,000+ - 200,000</b>			2		
<b>Over 200,000</b>				6	
<b>Over 1 Million</b>					1

## When asked how often they think about leaving ministry

- 13 said never
- 12 said a few times a year
- The rest ranged from once in a while to daily

## When asked why they would quit

The answers revolved around themes:

- Depletion
- Questioning the impact
- Insecurity and unworthiness

## Key Principle #1

### Listen to the Voice of God

- *“And Abram fell on his face: and God talked with him . . . ”*  
- Genesis 17:3a, KJV
- *“My sheep hear My voice, I know them, and they follow Me.”*  
- John 10:27

## Key Principle #2

### Prepare for the Work of God

*“‘Master,’ Simon replied, ‘we’ve worked hard all night long and caught nothing! But at Your word, I’ll let down the nets.’”*

- Luke 5:5

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## Key Principle #3

### Do the Will of God

*“And the world with its lust is passing away, but the one who does God’s will remains forever.”*

- 1 John 2:17

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## Key Principle #4

### Persevere in the Assignment of God

*"Do you not know that the runners in a stadium all race, but only one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may win."*

- 1 Corinthians 9:24

## Key Principle #5

### Pray and Trust the Spirit of God

- *"He was praying in a certain place, and when He finished, one of His disciples said to Him, 'Lord, teach us to pray, just as John also taught his disciples.'"*

- Luke 11:1

- *"All those led by God's Spirit are God's sons."*

- Romans 8:14



# Conclusion

## Desperation

- *"In my desperation I prayed, and the LORD listened; he saved me from all my troubles."*

- Psalm 34:6, NLT

- *"Make the most of every chance you get. These are desperate times!"*

- Ephesians 5:16, The Message



- The Conference – annual – 2011 to 2014
  - No charge
- Growth of Conference
  - From 194 people to 307 people
  - From 63 to 106 churches
  - From 7 to 10 states
    - 13 states have been impacted

## Goal of the Conference: Fire

- Faith to be renewed.
- Instruction and Inspiration
- Revival and Renewal
- Encouragement

## Focus

- Success is not always doing more.
  - It may be time to do less and do it better.

*"The Lord answered her, 'Martha, Martha, you are worried and upset about many things, but one thing is necessary. Mary has made the right choice, and it will not be taken away from her.'"*

- Luke 10:41-42

## Faith

- *“Now without faith it is impossible to please God, for the one who draws near to him must believe that He exists and rewards those who seek Him.”*

- Hebrews 11:6

- *“Watch out, brothers, so that there won’t be in any of you an evil, unbelieving heart that departs from the living God.”*

- Hebrews 3:12

## Family

Priorities in order:

- Jesus
- Family
- Ministry

## Friends

- *“So then my brothers, you are dearly loved and longed for – my joy and crown. In this manner stand firm in the Lord, dear friends.”*

- Philippians 4:1

- *“A friend loves at all times, and a brother is born for a difficult time.”*

- Proverbs 17:17

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## The Fear of the Lord

- *“The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge; fools despise wisdom and instruction.”*

- Proverbs 1:7

- *“So the church throughout all Judea, Galilee, and Samaria had peace, being built up and walking in the fear of the Lord and in the encouragement of the Holy Spirit, and it increased in numbers.”*

- Acts 9:31

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**Sent:** Wednesday, October 15, 2014 10:20:28 AM

**To:** Aubrey, Bruce D

**Subject:** RE: IRB/DMIN

Bruce,

Okay, that's fine. Given your 2008 student status, the project did not need IRB review. This email may count as documentation of this decision. Blessings to you as you complete your thesis.

Dr. Garzon

**Fernando Garzon, Psy.D.**

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