

## ABSTRACT

### AN EVALUATION OF THE COMMITMENT LEVEL MODEL CHURCH IN A LOCAL CHURCH IN LATIN AMERICA

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The Commitment Level Model is the infrastructure of a local church strategy for developing the maturity of the believer through three or four progressive steps of commitment. This Research Project is an evaluation of the application of the Commitment Level Model strategy in a Baptist church in Asunción, Paraguay. The hypothesis is: "The Commitment Level Model is a tool for developing believers through a process of progressive involvement in the ministry that guides the believer toward spiritual maturity and a life's mission of service."

This Research Project will utilize four different instruments to measure the specific behavior and value changes in those making the three different commitments. The instruments are in the form a questionnaire for each of the three commitment levels and one interview given to all participants.

The conclusion reached as the result of this research significantly validates the application of the Commitment Level Model hypothesis for Latin American churches.

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Commitment Level Model in a Latin American Church

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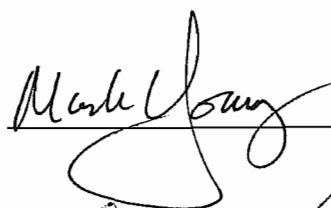
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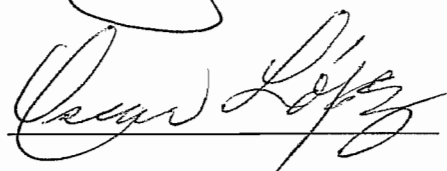
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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

How can we structure the church in order that its members can understand and accept the steps necessary to progress toward spiritual maturity and meaningful ministry objectives? Rick Warren, pastor of Saddleback Community Church (SCC), has developed a progression of commitments to answer this question. Warren's approach to local church ministry is termed the "Commitment Level Model" (CLM) by Duffy Robbins (1990) from South Africa (p.18). In this approach, every person should progress through five commitments. The most basic commitment begins with a visit to the church, which should lead to a personal commitment to Christ and His church, then the believer should be led to a commitment to follow Christ in discipleship, followed by a commitment to a specific ministry and ultimately a commitment to one's mission for life. The ordered sequence of commitments is the essential element of the CLM.

Does the CLM provide some solutions for the average church? Will it work in a Latin American church? Does the progression and sequence of definite commitments result in measurable maturity changes in lives? The CLM attempts to answer some of these questions and to give some solutions that can produce meaningful and measurable results.

For over 2 years, the New Life Baptist Church in Asuncion, Paraguay applied the CLM principles. This church became the test case for this Research Project.

#### Overview of the traditional approach to spiritual maturity

From my observation over the past thirty years of ministry in Latin American churches, the typical approach to developing spiritual maturity is often the encouragement of water baptism as an initial step of obedience. The new Christian should attend a church, involve himself in the ministry of a church in some way (usually as a committee member), abstain from certain vices (smoking, drinking, dancing, drugs, etc.) and practice Bible reading, testifying and prayer. (Of the more than 100 local churches in Latin America that the author has known, only one has developed a church structure designed to help church members practice these latter steps.) According to this typical approach, when the goals of church attendance, selected abstinence, and Bible reading and daily prayer are met, a transformed life should result; therefore, the believer becomes a functioning link in the church body and is useful to the kingdom.

In my experience, the goal of a transformed life only occasionally occurs under these circumstances. The preaching

and most programs point toward one or more of these goals with motivation coming almost entirely from the pulpit, but rarely is there an infrastructure of accountability and follow-up for public decisions.

It seems that the goal of preaching often tends to be either a salvation experience or a dedication of life in hopes that the automatic end of these experiences will be a true follower of Christ. When such dedications do not result in a permanent change, a "rededication" is required. This commonly used term implies a previous "dedication" decision that failed to be permanent and therefore "rededication" is necessary. For an effort to be effective, a gifted speaker who persuasively presents the message of repentance or service involvement usually emotionally charges this process of securing rededication decisions. The hope is that when the believer decides to take the "dedication" step, he will follow through with new habits and eventually develop himself for a mature ministry role of some kind.

The preaching in Paraguayan churches appears to differentiate between the terms "commitment" and "dedication". The idea of "dedication" being a one-time decision, that supposedly has long-range implications, is

often short-lived. The term "dedication" tends to be a vague and nebulous catchall decision to return to Lord and begin to serve Him in some capacity. The author has heard it said, "If you've been doing . . ." (something bad) "you need to rededicate your life." Common expressions in sermons are "dedicate your life to God" and "consecrate your life to His will." The focus tends to be a decision for that particular moment, to have a new start or perhaps a specific change in life (leaving a bad habit or starting a good habit). On the other hand, Warren uses "commitment" in a very specific manner, with a series of specific, measurable and long-term objectives (Warren, 1992).

When comparing the CLM concept of "commitment" with the "dedication" preaching in Latin American churches, several differences became apparent. The CLM concepts, which are the keys to the life transformation objective, are often lacking in the "dedication" approach. Life transformation is not automatic merely because someone made a "dedication" decision. The necessary elements of transformation according to CLM are the following (SCC Pastors Seminar, 1992):

1. The preaching should leave no surprises as to what the decision implies. A relatively clear understanding of the

cost, general behavior and attitudinal objectives should be made clear (Ro 6:13). In each of the three major commitments of the CLM, a teacher takes approximately four hours to describe the elements of each level of the sequence in order to assure understanding and a knowledgeable commitment.

2. The preaching objective is neither a mystical nor a legalistic dedication for a select few, especially young people, but a reasonable and biblical commitment for every church member. It is a call for each one to surrender control of his life, and be consistent in practicing spiritual disciplines. This must be the normal Christian life process for all church members.

3. A follow-up organizational structure is essential. Warren (1992, *Pastor's Seminar*) calls the structure a "Life Development Process" that assures a meaningful and sequential life change. According to Warren, human nature tends towards apathy. Every initiative tends to dissipate. The church leadership must provide a definite and immediate avenue of involvement according to the believer's current level of commitment and maturity (Ibid.).

4. To avoid misconceptions of the "instant maturity" myth, leaders define a progressive and clear concept of

"dedication" that clarifies steps of continually more costly commitments. These steps clarify for the member and for the leadership of the church where each member is concerning his growth toward maturity.

5. To focus the purpose and direction of the "dedication", a clarification of what God has created in the personality of each member is necessary. This is the explanation of the practical side of His "workmanship" (Eph 2:10), the unique attributes that God designed in every believer's life. This will include the recognition of his spiritual gifts, talents, passion for specific needs or burdens, personality and experience. These specific aspects in each individual reveal His molding process for effective contribution to the church.

6. Every church should provide on-going training for greater effectiveness for everyone making a "dedication" of his life according to his level of commitment and ministry involvement (Warren, 1995, p. pp. 332-342).

Unless a specific infrastructure of the church can respond to all of the above-mentioned needs for dedication and follow-up, such decisions for personal "dedication" may have little significance. The CLM attempts to design an

infrastructure and natural sequence of priority-graded commitments to assure that a life transformation occurs, which open the door for a church member to become spiritually mature and productive.

In *The Purpose Driven Church* (1995), Rick Warren identifies the five commitment levels in his church, which are the five distinct groups of people to whom the church seeks to minister (Community, Crowd, Congregation, Committed and Core). This plan coincides with the five principle commands that Jesus left for the Church to practice in Matt 28:19-20 and John 13:34-35: (1) "Go and make disciples"; (2) "baptize them"; (3) "teach them to obey"; (4) "love God"; and (5) "love one another" (p. 103-106).

Command	Function	Group
Make disciples	→ Evangelism	→ Community
Love God	→ Worship	→ Crowd
Baptize them	→ Communion	→ Congregation
Teach them to observe	→ Discipleship	→ Committed
Serve each other	→ Ministry	→ Core

Warren then organizes the church around five specific ministries to fulfill these five commands (Outreach,

Fellowship, Discipleship, Worship and Service), for ministry to five different groups of people. The transition from one group to another requires a specific commitment to fulfill Christ's purpose in one's life at each level. Thus the term "Commitment Level."

The definition and structure of progressive commitment levels guide believers gradually into a life-long growing commitment to Christ and to the people of His Church. It is the purpose of this Research to determine if the Commitment Level concept as a preaching emphasis and church structure will be measurably effective in producing specific spiritual disciplines and long-term changes in a Latin American church. The concepts and structures incorporated in the New Life Baptist Church (NLBC) were similar to those of SCC while maintaining distinct standards and identity.

#### Definition of Terms

In the course of this Research Project certain terms are used that require definition. Some of the terms are a series of practices or strategies, which are taken as a whole.

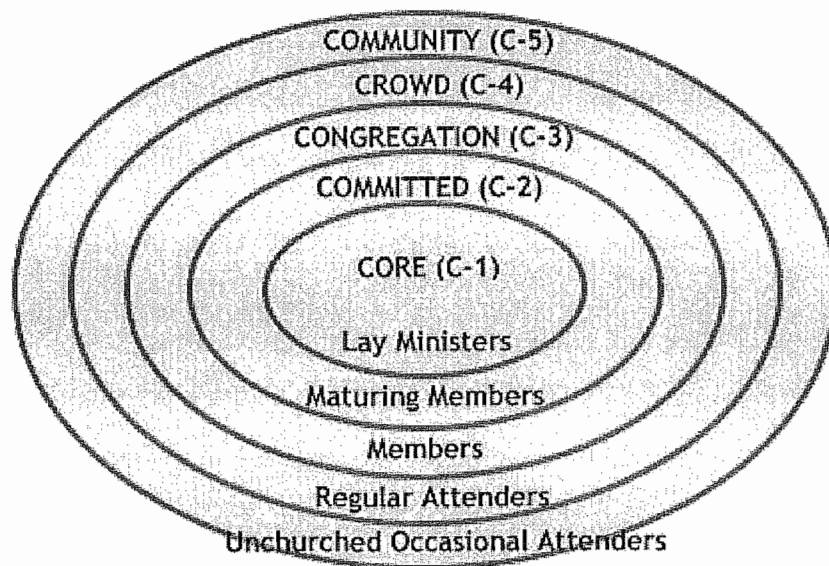
#### Circle of Commitments

The five different groups of people at SCC are Community, the Crowd, the Congregation, the Committed and the



Core. Everyone associated with the church is assumed to be in one of these groups. A series of concentric circles graphically represent each group. This graphic is used to show progression from the outside of the circle, "community", toward the inner circle, "core", moving from the outer circle or basic level of commitment to the next one in sequence. The inner circle represents a high level of commitment to a specific ministry.

Illustration 1



The outer Circle, C-5, or the Community, includes the unchurched and occasional attendees. Warren describes the two elements of the target audience: "First, the community comprises uncommitted people and non-attendees whom we want

to reach for Jesus Christ. We target our ministry toward the 'Saddleback Sams' and 'Samanthas.' More specifically, we consider the community as anyone who attends at least four times a year, i.e. Easter, Christmas, Mother's Day and one other occasion" (Warren, *Pastor's Seminar*, 1996)

The fourth Circle, C-4, or the Crowd is composed of the people who commit themselves to show up on Sunday morning for the worship service. They are the "regular attendees" (Ibid.). The Crowd varies according to circumstances. The strategy is to move casual attendees toward a commitment to membership. Many in the crowd are not yet believers.

The third Circle, C-3, or the Congregation, represents the official adult members of the church. They have gone through the 4-hour membership class and have signed the membership covenant.

The second Circle, C-2, represents members who are committed to maturity, or being a disciple for life. Warren calls those in the second circle, "good people who are committed to becoming godly" (Ibid.). To reach this level, a person must develop three basic habits and sign a covenant that involves their time, money, and relationships. They commit themselves to 1) a daily quiet time with God, 2) a

weekly tithe to God and 3) to be a part of a small group. These are the essential habits for staying "spiritually fit" (Ibid.).

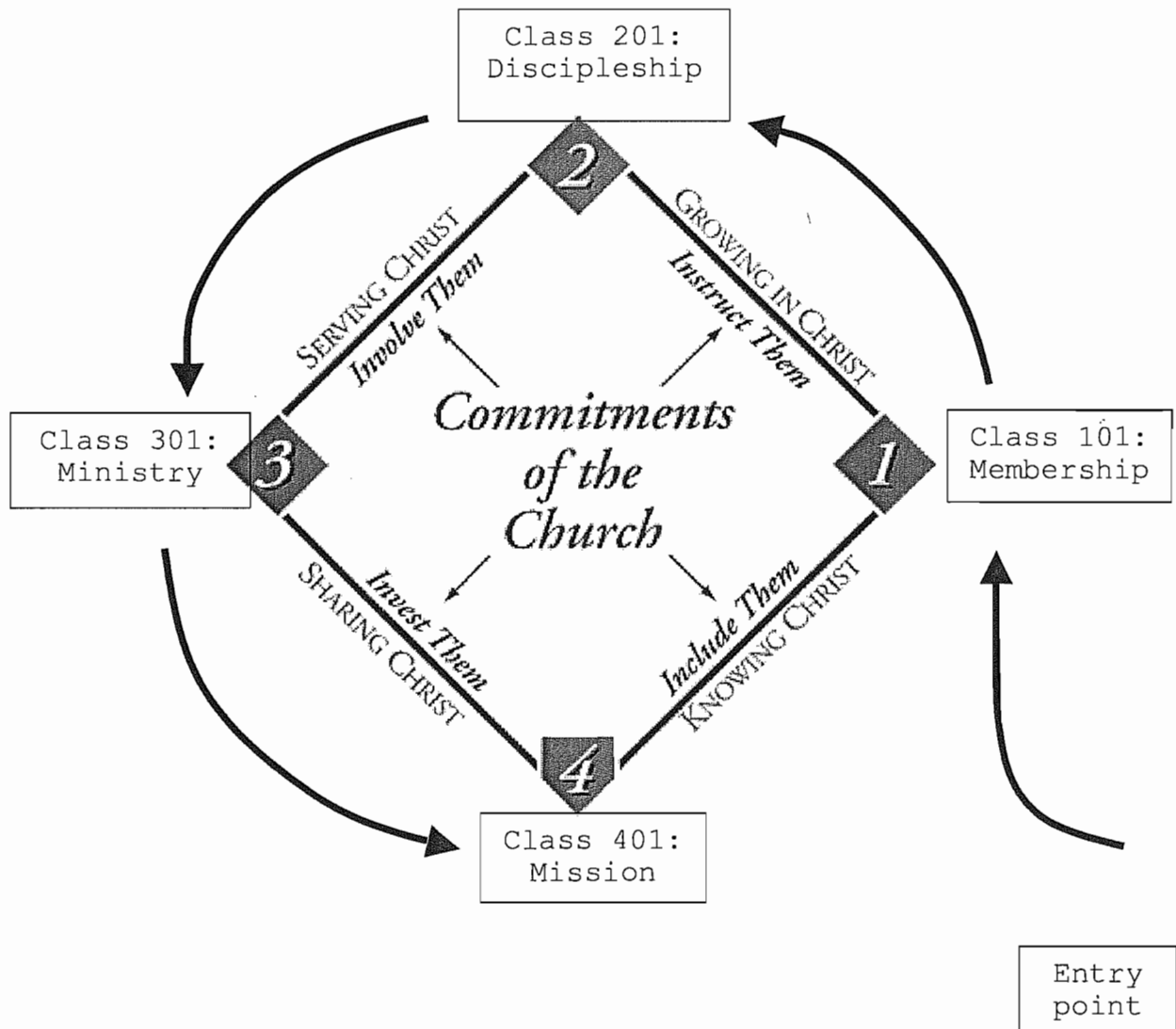
The Inner Circle, C-1, consists of lay-ministers called the "Core" of this infrastructure (Ibid.). These are the committed workers and leaders in the different ministries of the church. This group has gone through a 4-hour introductory class to ministry commitment and has signed the third level ministry covenant. Now they can be involved in specific ministries to others according to their individual ministry profile.

"Everything we do at Saddleback is aimed at moving people through the circles of commitment to get every person into the core where they have a ministry in the church and a mission in the world" (Ibid.).

Another graphic used to describe the sequence or progression of maturity is the baseball diamond. It describes four levels of distinct commitments. Each commitment level is introduced by a seminar identified by the acrostic "C.L.A.S.S." (CLASS), which means "Christian Life And Service Seminars." Moving to the next level of commitment is only possible after each person has a thorough

understanding of what that new commitment will mean and the personal cost involved. Each 4-hour seminar defines what everyone will be accountable for who make that level of commitment.

In the illustration of the circles, only the final three circles require special understanding and a formal commitment: Membership, Discipleship and the Core. The Core circle represents two commitments: Ministry and Mission.



These are the two stages for the Core group. The diamond graphic further illustrates these final four commitments.

The baseball diamond best reflects the curriculum approach to SCC's program of teaching and training. Warren says,

"When I first started the church, I tried to get everyone to make a deep complete commitment to Christ at the membership class. For example, I wanted them to make a commitment to church membership, to ministry, to witnessing and to separation from sin. I found that approach did not work in Southern California. I had to learn to lead people by steps -- one step at a time. People must be led gradually to increase their commitment."

Because of his personal experience, Warren came up with a teaching program that he calls, "A Sunday School without walls". He also describes it as a Sunday School that graduates people when they complete the curriculum. It is called "C.L.A.S.S." (Towns, 1990, p.45).

At SCC, people move through four levels, advancing only after they have completed and are practicing a previous

level. "A church is defined by what it is committed to do." said Warren (Pastor's Seminar, 1992). "Everything we do at Saddleback is aimed at moving people through the circles of commitment to get every person into the core where they have a ministry in the church and a mission in the world." (Towns, p. 48).

### Spiritual disciplines

The key to spiritual maturity is similar to the development of physical fitness. That is, if one will regularly practice certain exercises and follow healthful eating disciplines until they become habits, then the physical fitness of a person will result. These same principles, when applied to spiritual maturity, result in the development of a Christian character (Warren, p. 334).

These disciplines include daily practice of Bible reading seeking God's guidance for the day, prayer, intercession for others, private worship and seeking to serve others in order to reflect Christ's love and message. The key to the development of these habits is the involvement in small groups where mutual accountability of agreed upon habits give the structure and motivation in order to encourage the environment for spiritual maturity.

## Background and Purpose of the Study

American missionaries serving under the Association of Baptists for World Evangelism (ABWE) founded the New Life Baptist Church [*La Iglesia Bautista Vida Nueva*] in Asunción, Paraguay, in 1987. The church grew to between 80-100 in attendance, then stabilized for about ten years. In spite of many evangelistic efforts, campaigns, special programs and special speakers, the church failed to grow consistently beyond the 100-barrier in attendance.

In February of 1998, we introduced the CLM. Within a year, the attendance doubled and by the end of the second year, the attendance had more than tripled. After two years of the implementation of the CLM, 74% of the congregation progressed through the Membership commitment, 48% progressed through the Discipleship Commitment, and 36% progressed through the Ministry Commitment level. Currently these numbers continually vary due to the influx of new attendees, which change the base number for the statistics.

In this research project, randomly selected church members provided the data through questionnaires and interviews to determine the amount of continued practice of

specific Biblical principles called for at each of the commitment levels.

One of the objectives any church ministry is to develop "spiritual maturity" in the lives of its constituency. For the purpose of this research, I am defining "spiritual maturity" in a manner that can be measured both subjectively and objectively. That is, Spiritual Maturity is a process of the development of one's personal life with Christ and the Body of Christ, the Church, which can be measure according to habits of intimacy with Christ and self-motivated involvements in serving others in a local church. The CLM considers the first level towards maturity to be a commitment to membership in a local church, including loyalty, basic doctrinal understanding, support and involvement in church activities. The second level is a commitment to the spiritual disciplines, such as Bible study, memorization, systematic reading program, prayer, tithing and a small group Bible study. The third level guides members to an authentic service in a specific ministry of the church according to individual spiritual giftedness and personal profile. For the sake of this project, the author has defined Christian maturity as the goal of guiding believers to become fully



functioning members of the Body of Christ according to how God has made them both naturally and spiritually. Many other aspects are involved in the development of a Christ-like spiritual maturity, but the principal elements of this research project are the foundation for developing spiritual maturity.

If the CLM approach to ministry is successful, the project should reveal a progressive and permanent change in spiritual habits that indicate progress towards spiritual maturity. For those people at the higher levels of commitment, the questionnaire will indicate the fulfillment, or lack thereof, of earlier commitments.

#### Significance of the Study

If significant changes are occurring in a high percentage of individual lives in NLBC because of making knowledgeable, reasonable and Biblical commitments, then making such graded commitments could become a significant approach to guiding believers towards their spiritual maturity and their fulfillment in the Christian life. Instead of expecting people to change as a result of hearing an inspiring message, to volunteer to serve in some area because of an expressed need, or to respond to manipulation

techniques, the CLM depends on the Spirit induced motivation that God has placed within the individual to fulfill his design and destiny through a local church ministry.

To apply correctly the Model in a local church, everyone must begin at the same level, accepting the philosophy and specific behavior for each commitment level. Theoretically, participation in serving others should become integral in lives, bringing unity and oneness. By following the CLM, approach all members of the church will have understand the same philosophy of the Christian life and the same value of the ministry in the local church. This project will seek to measure the progression in randomly selected members of their steps towards spiritual and ministry maturity.

By structuring the church to incorporate multiple levels of maturity into its different ministries, will these committed members become long-term partners in ministry? The significant factor is the self-motivation that accompanies a specific commitment. If people begin to ask how they can utilize their gifts and where they can contribute to the ministry, then a significant change has begun to occur toward their maturity.

The goal of SCC is that every person converted eventually mature into a "minister". The teaching continually creates the value in every believer that motivates him to become a servant-minister. Warren (1995) insists that every Christian is *created* for ministry (Eph 2:10), is *saved* for ministry (2 Tim 1:9), is *called* into ministry (1 Pet 2:9-10), is *gifted* for ministry (1 Pet 4:10), is *authorized* for ministry (Matt 28:18-20), is *commanded* to minister (Matt 20:26-28), should *prepare* for ministry (Eph 4:11-12), is *needed* for ministry (1 Cor 12:27), is *accountable* for ministry and will be *rewarded* for ministry (Col 3:23-24) (p. 368).

For this research project the concept of ministry is a service rendered to the Lord in both personal worship and sacrificial service extended to benefit a fellow believer or non-believer. In Mathew 25:40 Jesus stated that any service that "ye have done unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me." Ministry must benefit someone else, and Christ perceives it as service to Him. "A love-prompted service to Him will express itself in service to others. Jesus taught that He would recognize such service as done unto Him" (Hiebert, 1983, p. 157)

There is not an additional commitment level for being a *leader* after becoming a *minister*, because the commitment levels deal with the stages that every believer should progress through, not just a leader. There should not be an expectation that every member become a leader. There is, however, an expectation that every member become a minister (Eph 4:12). Some ministers may be leaders, but most will not be. Leading is simply one of the areas of ministry. However, when considering the sum of the valid gifts for today, leadership is only one of the gifts. Nowhere are believers encouraged to desire the gift of leadership in the church, as if this were the goal of the ministry. In 1 Tim 3:1 Paul declares it is a "good work" to desire the "position of a bishop." The role of a bishop in a church is not a spiritual gift, but rather the application of various spiritual gifts to the task of "overseeing" or caring for believers. It is healthy to desire a broader service to others for their benefit and it is a good reason for perfecting the spiritual giftedness that God has given each believer.

Each Christian progressing toward spiritual maturity should discover and operate within the ministry area that

requires his/her gift(s). At the same time, the church structure must be able to accommodate multiple expressions of the spiritual gifts.

The CLM gives believers a clear, understandable and progressive track towards their unique spiritual maturity and usefulness in the Body of Christ. It gives the leadership a reasonably accurate picture of where individuals are in their progression towards maturity and on whom they can depend for different levels of responsibility. It also minimizes the bureaucratic political power struggles for a higher, more prestigious position, and places the emphasis on ministering to others as the goal of spiritual growth and service in the church. This model places in the hands of the member-ministers the primary responsibility for developing ministries (Warren, *Saddleback Pastor's conference*, 1996)..

#### Hypothesis or Research Question

Will believers in a Latin American church accept and progress through the commitment levels with permanent behavioral changes according to the respective commitments? The investigation will show that more than 60% of the believers will respond to specific challenges of obedience steps that are relevant to their stage in spiritual growth

and will maintain that level of commitment for a period of 6 to 18 months if there is an infrastructure in the church that reinforces those commitments.

#### Limitations

No one would suggest that spiritual power could be organized, formulated or programmed. We assume that some individuals can make fake commitments and pretend for extended periods. We also believe that the flesh is weak, and eventually where insincerity exists, a break will occur. The most any church can do for its membership is to provide the proper direction and circumstances for the heart to respond to truth. As members see a model of Biblical values and principles in the lifestyle of its leadership (Heb 12:7), they can apply those principles in different manners in their own lives. Whereas each member is accountable in a loving manner to specific spiritual disciplines according to his commitment level, the leadership is committed to pray that all the commitments made in his heart are a sincere expression of his desire to grow into the likeness and ministry of Christ.

At SCC, they had not developed an instrument to determine the percentage of on-going practice of the elements

for each of the commitment levels of its members. This project attempts to measure the actual behavioral and attitudinal changes in the different commitment levels of individuals selected at random in our congregation. However, this should not be assumed normative in all CLM churches. This project simply seeks to describe how 45 adult members of the NLBC have changed since making their respective commitments to Membership, Discipleship or Ministry. The statistics used in this project are only comparable after making a similar evaluation in other churches.

The project, since it was researched in Asunción, Paraguay, was done in Spanish and the results translated into English.

## CHAPTER 2

### Relevant Literature Review

A survey of literature related to the CLM has uncovered a number of books, articles, journals and Internet themes, all of which tend to emphasize different aspects of the Model, while only a few address the total subject. The number of churches, which follow the CLM, is multiplying around the world, because the concept is very attractive and the growth that results is captivating. The literature review will focus on the Biblical models, aspects of motivation, commitment and the application of progressive steps to secure educational, psychological and spiritual growth. These areas of focus are the basis for growth principles in the church.

### Biblical or Theological Foundation

The basic idea of commitment levels is supported by Jesus' statement to the disciples in John 16:12: "I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now". In this passage the Greek word for "now" is *harti*, denoting "strictly present time," signifies "just now, at this moment," (Vine, W.E., Unger, Merrill F. and White, William. *Vine's Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words*). The maturity of the disciples at that



moment would be a temporary stage in their development, not a permanent condition. Jesus waited for the right time to teach more truth that would demand from them more commitment to His kingdom. Several principles can be derived from the way Jesus treated his disciples.

#### In the ministry of Jesus

Jesus taught about different levels of spiritual receptivity, which reflect different levels of commitment to the truth or the Word. In the parable of the sower and the soil, in Matthew 13:3-23, Jesus showed how spiritual receptivity varied in different people. Some are open to the Word and others are closed. There are four responses to the gospel message in the parable. (1) Those who reject the Word when they hear it, primarily because they did "not understand it" (Mt 13:19), could not make a commitment to what they had heard. This hard packed soil represents harden or closed hearts as if they were already committed to other things. (2) Those who initially are open or receptive to make a commitment, but later are hindered to fully commit due to pressure from friends. This rocky soil by the path represents shallow hearts or superficial commitments that are more preoccupied with or committed to

their popularity than to truth. (3) Those who respond with an initial commitment to the message, but later let worries, desires for riches and pleasures choke their new life. This soil among the weeds represents distracted hearts or a basic self-centered commitment. (4) The final illustration represents those who accept the message and whose commitment produces a variety of growth and reproductive results. This good soil represents receptive hearts committed to the truth no matter what. Different people are at different levels of receptivity for a multitude of reasons, including a previous disposition to truth and a willingness to commit to it.

Jesus stressed the importance of commitment. Jesus would call people into a relationship with Him that demanded commitment and obedience. He often spoke of a total commitment (Luke 14:25-33; 9:62; John 8:31; 13:12-17; 16:1-8; Matthew 19:21). The ultimate level of discipleship would require this level of commitment.

Jesus expected people to respond to Him according to their different levels of maturity or commitment. He once stated that someone was "not far" from the kingdom (Mark 12:34). When people were invited to come to Him, their

commitment to follow, which reflected their maturity level, varied, apparently according to the individual. Warren (1995) uses the different natures of Jesus' invitations to follow Him to support the use of progressive commitment levels (pp. 134-136).

Stage one: "Come and See" (John 1:39). This invitation was the first given to John and Andrew. He apparently wanted them to examine His lifestyle. He was creating an interest and desire in them. He wanted to show them His credibility and authenticity to motivate their commitment (John 1:14). Mills (1998) shows that commitment is the result of being drawn to it, rather than responding to demands. "He had created a desire in their hearts to commit and now their imagination was exploding with the possibilities of what they could become by following Him" (p. 68).

Stage two: "Come and Follow" (Matt 4:19). Now there is a specific invitation to become an imitator or disciple, a follower of Jesus. Mills suggests that this phase may have lasted approximately ten months (Ibid.).

Stage three: "Come and be" (Mr 3:13). Many were following Jesus up to this point, but now He selects twelve

to "be with Him" (Mr 3:13). Now they would discover and develop their God-given gifts and leadership abilities. Mills suggests this apprenticeship stage lasted for approximately twenty months (Mills, p. 69). They were sent out into ministry with authority, returning to report their experiences. They learned that great things could only happen when there is a vital and intimate relationship with Christ (Mt 14:29) and through prayer (Jn 15:5).

Stage four: "Come and Act" (Mt 28:19-20; Jn 15). They had watched Jesus do the ministry for over 3 years and now He says to them, "You go and make disciples", NIV. He called them to commit to a life mission. Now He left the future of the church in their hands. "Jesus passed on the baton to the disciples" (Mills, p. 70).

Another evidence of the Biblical basis of gradual commitments is seen when Jesus targeted His ministry to specific groups of people during His earthly life. He came seeking the lost sheep of Israel (Matt 15:22-28) and sent His disciples exclusively to the lost of Israel (Matt 10:5-6). Since Jesus was sent to the world (John 3:16), this focused ministry should not be seen as a basis for excluding Gentile people from the gospel, but rather as a

principle of receptivity. Certainly He had the sovereign right to direct His ministry any way He desired, and the methodology He chose certainly played a part in the effectiveness of the results.

This focus is further evident by the fact that He came to seek and to save all the lost (Luke 19:10) and by the fact that He eventually sent His followers to all groups of people around the world (Matt 28:18-20). This initial strategy was temporary, since it would change upon His resurrection, leaving the impression that it was designed for reasons of receptivity. Strategically it was effective because the people most likely to initiate His global strategy were converts from the nation of Israel, who would already be at an advanced level of Biblical knowledge and commitment to Biblical values.

Warren (1992, Pastor's Seminar) explained how he developed the CLM strategy from a study of the ministry of Jesus. He shows how the commitment levels can be seen in how Jesus ministered to people at different stages of their commitment to God.

1. Jesus ministered to the community. He started where people were. With a morally lacking woman at the well He

talked about living water (Jn 4); with fishermen He talked about catching fish (Mt 4:18-19); with farmers he talked about sowing seeds (Mt 13). He began with people's hurts, needs, experiences and interests (Matt 10:8). They identified with His message as One who not only understood the Bible, but understood their lives as well.

2. Jesus evangelized the crowds that would gather to hear Him with a commitment philosophy. He taught (Mt 5:2; 13:54; Mk 1:21; 2:13; 10:1; 12:35; Lu 5:3), healed (Mt 10:1) and fed the crowds (Mt 14:17-21; 15:34-37), then asked them to believe and trust in Him as the Son of God (Mt 9:28; 21; 25; Mk 1:15; 5:36; 9:23; 11:24; Lu 8:50; 22:67; 24:25). He attracted crowds (1) by loving unbelievers (Mt 9:10; 11:19; Mk 2:15; Lu 5:30), (2) by meeting people's real or felt needs (Mt 9:12; Mk 2:24-25; Lu 9:11) and (3) by teaching in a practical, interesting way (Mt 7:29; 13:54; Mk 4:2; Lu 4:15). He showed genuine love to people, creating an aura of acceptance of the individual without approving of their behavior (Mt 5:46; 19:19; 22:39; Mk 10:21; Jn 11: 5, 36; 13:23; 15:9). He wanted people to take the step of a commitment to trust Him

for their needs and their forgiveness. He served their needs to demonstrate that He was trustworthy.

3. Jesus gathered a crowd of eager followers (Mt 13:2). He got their attention by ministering to the whole person (Mt 15:31; 17:14; Mk 8:21; Jn 6:2). He began with needs, hurts and interests (Mt 14:14, 19), while relating truth to life and using an interesting style filled with stories and simple language (Mt 13:34; 15:10; 22:33; Mk 3:9). He communicated real solutions to real problems (Mt 18:21; Jn 8:6-11; 9:2). He expected His disciples to commit themselves to His practical teaching and hold each other accountable (Jn 13:34; 15:12, 17). He sent them out two by two (Mk 6:7; Lu 10:1) to practice His approach to ministry.

4. Jesus served those who were committed. He communicated the need of giving themselves for others, especially to those who were following Him (Mt 5:43; 10:24; Jn 13:34-35; 15:9, 12, 13). The disciples said they saw His "glory... full of grace and truth" (Jn 1:14, NIV). The purpose of His ministry was to reach out to people, bring them into a relationship with Him, then to reproduce this process in the lives of His followers. He taught them to reach out to others as He did leading them to know Him

personally (Jn 20:21). He was constantly building new relationships with people, while showing His godly character as a friend in a small group of disciples. He used a combination of "one-on-one" activities, and ministered through large group activities, such as the Sermon on the Mount and preaching in the temple area. Jesus also committed Himself to a nurturing ministry in small groups, developing their understanding for more faith. He modeled His faith to them and they learned how to relate to God as they watched Him and listened to His teachings. He then invited them to a life of service for others (John 13:12-17). It was a progressive, planned and purposeful guide for the disciples leading them to the depth of commitment that they were willing to make.

5. Jesus trained a group of disciples (Mt 10:35). He developed leaders for a world vision. Mills (1997) demonstrated how He trained His disciples for leadership with a specific strategy: (1) He ministered first, living a dynamic life, healing, praying, miracles and loving people while the disciples watched. (2) He ministered to others taking the disciples with him. He taught the twelve through various ministry situations. (3) The disciples then did the



ministry and Jesus accompanied them. He sent out the seventy, but He remained close by. (4) They did the ministry and Jesus was in the background to encourage. When Jesus ascended into heaven, He empowered His disciples to continue His ministry through the Holy Spirit (Mills, p.75-76).

The final phase of the Great Commission is "teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you" (Mt 28:20, NIV). The content of the teaching is given by inspiration in the Scriptures. The method of assuring that the disciples are obeying or practicing the Scriptural mandates can vary. A Biblical principle of spiritual maturity is putting "off the old man and his deeds" while putting on the "new man" (Col 3:9-14) and his deeds. In the CLM commitment to discipleship, the specific deeds and attitudes of the old man are put off and those of the new man are put on. "The most practical and powerful way to get believers headed in the direction of spiritual maturity is to help them establish habits that promote spiritual growth" (Warren, 1995, p. 348).

The CLM is an attempt to structure a church ministry around the principles and objectives of Jesus' ministry.

By designing a sequence of commitments that attempt to encourage a progressively higher involvement in the personalized ministry of every individual, it is hoped that the Spirit motivated commitment will generate a self-motivated ministry in the church. (See appendix for a chart of the four stages adapted from Hull).

The Biblical exhortations to make significant commitments to Christ and His Kingdom are often repeated (Mt 6:33; 16:24; Lu 14:31-33). These challenges of Jesus were delivered to His followers, who had already made a commitment to follow Him (Mt 8:19; 9:9; Mr 2:14; Lu 5:27), but now would hear challenges that could and would later cost them even their lives. Jesus did not deal with them with regard to where He would later lead them. Once they knew Him as the God-man, the value of His teachings and the reality of the coming kingdom, the fuller commitment to His purpose made sense and seemed worthwhile. Even towards the end of His ministry there were teachings that the disciples were not ready to hear (Jn 16:12), which indicate that understanding and maturity are progressive and require certain levels of development in order that an individual be entrusted with more knowledge and responsibility.

### Other NT evidence of maturity levels

Paul warned Timothy to avoid placing a "novice" (1 Tim 5:6) in a place of leadership. They would not be equipped to handle the visibility nor the focused satanic influence. Though the implication that a *novice* has only a short time in the Lord, time is not always an assurance of maturity.

The author of Hebrews expressed his disappointment with the Jewish believers who had not progressed to become "teachers" (Heb 5:12) after having been in the church for an undefined, but sufficient time. His remedy is that "ye have need that one teach you again". They had transitioned to the "strong meat" prematurely, not having the preparation necessary to apply the "strong meat" to their lives by being able to "distinguish good from evil" (5:14). The "meat" should have left them better equipped to make wise and moral decisions concerning the will of God. If the analogy suggests a difficulty to internalize the Word (metaphorically, to digest), then the hearers knew more than they were willing to practice. It became imperative that they receive a solid grounding in the "milk", the easier things to receive (that is, all that has been given by grace), which should be established before facing the

more costing elements of discipleship. Walvoord, and Zuck (1983, 1985) write "It is not so much that a spiritual "infant" lacks information—though at first he obviously does—but rather that he has not yet learned to put "the teaching about righteousness" to effective use. He lacks the "skill which goes with maturity and which results in the ability to make appropriate moral choices" (p. 793).

Jesus introduced the concept of "meat" in John 4:32, 34, where He defined it as, "My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work." If one understands the will of God without having made a definite commitment to fulfill it (Jn 7:17), the knowledge gives little benefit to spiritual maturity. Growth in commitment to obedience should parallel growth in knowledge (also 1 Cor 3:21).

In a context of transition and cessation of spiritual gifts Paul discussed the transition of moving from a "child" to a "man" or adult (1 Cor 13:11). The transition point occurred when he "put away" the "childish things". The verb, *katargeo*, in the perfect tense means a definite and determinate change, which makes the former way of

living "inactive or inoperative". This indicates a clear commitment to a transition or continual change.

Thomas (1993) wrote, "By nature the process described by *katergeka* ("I render inoperative") in Heb 13:11 indicates an altered condition that continues. It is a dramatic perfect. It indicates "a change of state which still continues; the emancipation from childish things took place as a matter of course . . . and it continues." (p. 194).

The development of the believer into a mature follower of Christ goes through various stages. The transitions do not occur automatically, or by merely hearing sermons. The CLM believes that people should be guided into a sequence of specific graded steps that lead to spiritual maturity and service to others in the church.

It has been the author's experience that only those taking these steps should be given responsibility, and that, which is commensurate with their dedication or commitment. All too often this requirement is not considered in selecting the different stages of leadership in a church.

### Spiritual disciplines for spiritual maturity

For the sake of this project "spiritual maturity" will be defined and measured by the faithfulness to spiritual habits that will foster Christ-like character and maturity in the likeness of Jesus Christ. In order to encourage this transformation specific disciplines or habits are encouraged. Warren (1995) says, "Spiritual growth has to be intentional and we become whatever we are committed to" (p. 334). Fowler (1987) is convinced that spiritual maturity rests in the hands of the leadership because they are the only ones who can model and establish priorities with contagious enthusiasm for setting up "faith development inventories or checkups" (p. 118). However he states that few churches he knows have the boldness to follow-through with these checkups.

The need for this emphasis is brought out in research done by Roehlkepartain (1993) at the Search Institute in Minneapolis. According to this study, using the criteria of basic spiritual disciplines as a measure of maturity, only 32% of adults have a mature faith and more than half of all youth have an underdeveloped faith (p. 19).

Although there are different approaches to spiritual disciplines, most focus on relationships and habits.

Keith Drury (1991) describes the disciplines as follows:

1. Inner Personal Disciplines: *grudges* - releasing old hurts; *thought life* - overcoming impure thoughts; *humility* - putting off pride; *ambitions* - abandoning selfish ambition.

2. Interpersonal Disciplines: *restitution* - making things right; *restoration* - restoring a fallen Christian; *honesty* - speaking absolute truth; *peacemaking* - mending broken relationships (Keith Drury, *Spiritual Disciplines for Ordinary People*, pp. 13-24).

Richard Foster (1988) approaches the disciplines as follows:

1. Inward Disciplines: meditation, prayer, fasting and study.

2. Outward Disciplines: simplicity; solitude; submission and service.

3. Corporate Disciplines: confession, worship, guidance and celebration (Richard Foster, *Celebration of Discipline, The Path to Spiritual Growth*, p. 8).

Dallas Willard (1991) suggests that the spiritual disciplines can be grouped into two categories:

1. Disciplines of Abstinence (things you do without): solitude, silence, fasting, simplicity, chastity, secrecy and sacrifice.

2. Disciplines of Engagement (things you do): study, worship, celebration, service, prayer, fellowship, confession and submission (Dallas Willard, *The Spirit of the Disciplines*, p. 7).

Clarensau, Lee and Mills (1998) give the following reasons for developing habits in order for the believer to grow spiritually.

1. Spiritual growth is not instantaneous. God is at work in the believer by his Spirit. He is a gardener (John 15:1-9; 2 Pet 1:4-8). Spiritual growth occurs as our relationship with God develops. It happens in the context of a friendship between Creator and creature. It takes time to develop a relationship.

2. Spiritual growth is not spontaneous. One grows as he gains more knowledge about God through the Bible, from other Christians, in books, experiences and the world around, applying that knowledge to his personal life. As



one learns more about how God is, he learns how a whole person should be. One can see what God does in us, how He treats us, and thereby the believer can learn how to treat others. He is to imitate the perfections of God (Mt 5:48). Spiritual growth is a process that includes growing in knowledge and holiness.

3. Spiritual growth is not superficial goodness. We grow as we grow in holiness - as we become like Jesus in everything we think, say and do (Ps 1:1-2; 119:97-105; Eph 5:1-2). Spiritual growth shows in the way we live our lives according to Gal 5:22-23.

#### Levels of commitment in the CLM

The transitions from one level to the next follows attendance at a "C.L.A.S.S.", which is an acronym that signifies the following:

Christian

Life

And

Service

Seminars

These C.L.A.S.S. courses are designed to explain to the members the exact meaning of each commitment level, the

opportunities that each commitment opens for their involvement and recognizes their progress toward spiritual maturity. Each commitment level is introduced by a C.L.A.S.S. (101, 201, 301 respectively), then a formal commitment to the new values, habits and beliefs.

Commitment to Membership: the first level of commitment  
(CLASS 101)

Instead of mere agreement with the doctrinal position of the church, a profession of faith in Christ and submission to baptism as the requirement for membership, the CLM asks for a definite commitment to the church and loyalty to its leadership. Those who desire to make this commitment must attend a four-hour orientation course, which includes a clear explanation of the gospel, the meaning of baptism, a review of the doctrinal statement, and a history of the church and its philosophy of ministry, strategy, objectives and vision. This commitment is for all members to assure the unity of belief and vision of the body. The commitments at SCC are the listed below (Warren, 1995, pp. 321-322).

1. I will protect the unity of my church

...by acting in love toward other members

- ...by refusing to gossip
  - ...by following the leaders
2. I will share the responsibility of my church
    - ... by praying for its growth
    - ... by inviting the unchurched to attend
    - ... by warmly welcoming those who visit
  3. I will serve the ministry of my church
    - ... by discovering my gifts and talents
    - ... by being equipped to serve by my pastors
    - ... by developing a servant's heart
  4. I will support the testimony of my church
    - ... by attending faithfully
    - ... by living a godly life
    - ... by giving regularly

The membership commitment is designed to facilitate an active, unified and faithful membership. In some churches this commitment is renewed annually to determine active and inactive membership (Warren, Pastor's Seminar, 1996).

Commitment to Discipleship (or Spiritual Maturity): the second level of commitment (CLASS 201)

The objective of the commitment to discipleship is a personal development towards maturity, while maintaining

the commitment of the first level. Before making this commitment attendance in a four-hour orientation course is required. The commitment does not assume that spiritual maturity is an accomplished fact, but rather, clear objectives are made, the determination to practice spiritual disciplines and the willingness to be a part of a small group where accountability of the agreed upon spiritual habits is practiced. The concept of discipleship is life-long, and corporately sustained by encouraging one another. This level includes a commitment to four basic habits and participation in a small group. They are stated as follows:

1. I will establish and maintain a daily Bible reading program.
2. I will practice a daily prayer time.
3. I will give a weekly tithe of my income to the Lord.
4. I will be a participant in a small group for edification and ministry (Warren, 1995, p. 350).

The specific habits that are encouraged in the CLM model are slightly amplified as an acronym: HABILITSS (Fields, 1997, p. 187) for ease of memory: HABILITSS. The

following *Seven Habits for Spiritual Growth* which form the core of the discipleship commitment are:

Habit #1: Have Daily Devotions

Habit #2: Attend Church services

Habit #3: Bible Memory and Study

Habit #4: Identify a Mentor

Habit #5: Tithe your Income

Habit #6: Strive to Obey God

Habit #7: Share your Faith

As the believer matures in each of these areas his spiritual development equips him for an increasingly satisfactory relationship with God and effectiveness in the service to others. All the relationships and organizations hold each other accountable for these habits.

The key to the effectiveness of this commitment is involvement in a small group where acceptance, love, accountability and exhortation occur. Members are taught how to read, study and apply the Scriptures. These principles are then practiced in the small group. Prayer is a constant practice in the group, making prayer and meditation in the home an easier habit to establish.

Commitment to Minister: the third level of commitment

(CLASS 301)

As with the previous two commitments, the third level of commitment requires attendance at a four-hour orientation class. This includes a description and guidance in discovering one's spiritual gifts, how to recognize the passion for a specific ministry that the Spirit has infused in one's heart, and how one's personality and past experiences have moulded him toward a specific type of ministry. Once the believer has committed to church membership (level 1) and then the habits essential for spiritual maturity (level 2), and agreeing with Ministry Statement (Warren, p. 381) he makes the following commitments.

1. To discover his unique S.H.A.P.E. (an acronym that is explained below) for ministry and serve in the area that best expresses what God made him to be. S.H.A.P.E. means:

Spiritual gifts: What are the gifts that the Spirit has given to each believer to motivate his service to others?

Heart: What special concern has the Lord placed in his heart? What does he love to do or desire to accomplish for Christ?

Abilities: What are the natural talents that God has given to each individual, enabling him to accomplish His purpose?

Personality: What is the type of personality that God has given to each individual, fitting him for a specific service?

Experiences: How has God prepared each person for his unique contribution to the church? The experiences are detailed in a time-line format for visualizing their whole life pattern on one page. At the conclusion of this process every person has a profile, which is designed to point toward a specific type of ministry.

2. To prepare for ministry by participating in S.A.L.T., an acronym, which is explained below.

S.A.L.T. is an acronym that signifies the following:

Saddleback

Advanced

LeadershipTraining

This is a monthly meeting of all the members who are involved in any ministry in the church where leadership qualities and motivation are emphasized.

3. Demonstrate a servant's heart by serving where needed in secondary ministries. Secondary ministries are ministries where one's main spiritual gift may not be utilized, but the ministry is necessary for benefit of the church. The leadership tries to keep this involvement below 60% of the member's service involvement to avoid discouragement.

4. Cooperate with other ministries and place the greater good of the whole Body over the needs of personal ministry.

The third commitment is ultimately to a specific ministry of the church. A counsellor or pastor of ministries will evaluate the S.H.A.P.E. profile of the individual and align this profile with the available positions in existing ministries.



At Saddleback Community Church following this third commitment there is a commissioning service and the awarding of a certificate which reads, "This certifies that \_\_\_\_\_ is a commissioned minister of Jesus Christ through Saddleback Valley Community Church and is entrusted with the related responsibilities and privileges." It is a serious commitment to be a minister or lay minister (Warren, 1995, p. 382).

Commitment to Mission: the fourth commitment level (CLASS 401)

This is a commitment to find one's personal mission as he seeks to live out God's purpose for his life in ministry. SCC had not formally developed this program at the writing of this project, so our evaluation of personal growth will only be graded through the Ministry Commitment. The mission stage may take a number of years to evaluate as experience, knowledge and sensitivity to the Spirit's leading become increasingly apparent. Mention of this commitment level here is included only to complete the explanation of the four-level Model.

### Developing commitment

A progressive commitment sequence is necessary in many areas of life. Studies have shown that the majority of people are resistant to change and must be led gradually through a process of change. Rolf Smith (1997) hypothesized that "normal behavior" is to resist change. According to his investigations two-thirds of all people resist change. Nearly half of all people will strongly resist change (46%). About one-third (the remaining 32%) will be receptive to change, while only 10% will be strongly receptive to change and act as change agents (p.17).

Overcoming this natural tendency demands that a strategy for motivating and achieving change must take into consideration the reality of human nature. Smith designed a seven-step process to create more effective workers in the market place. He insisted that, for each level, a specific commitment to a new way of thinking and a specific behavior model was essential to progress (Smith, p.37). Change best occurs in a step-by-step sequence.

According to Smith (1997) the expectation that people will change automatically or quickly towards a biblical

life pattern and ministry is contrary to research and Biblical understanding. This resistance can be overcome when the commitment is seen as a "next step" rather than a mountain to climb (Ibid.). The CLM establishes the "next step" sequence for building a base of spiritual maturity and ministry.

#### Principles of motivation

How to motivate someone has been a major thrust of many investigations in an attempt to understand, correct and predict human behavior. Johnson (1973) differentiates between two types of commitment: the relationship between "want to" and "have to". He describes the three elements of motivation: a positive element, a negative element and a bond between the two. The positive element can be an objective or subjective value or benefit to the person. For example, motivation could be a pension from a job (objective), a reputation to be gained or a security from a relationship, like a sense of success (subjective). The negative element can be an objective or subjective risk willingly assumed as a challenge: a doctor could lose a patient; a climber could possibly fall; an athlete could lose a game. Ironically, the higher the risk, the greater

is the motivation (pp. 114-117). The combination of negative and positive elements, or their bonding, is what determines the nature of a commitment.

Cognitive dissonance.

The combination of these elements is also called "cognitive dissonance", a theory that has been a dominant influence in modern social psychology. Festinger (1957) held that the presence of positive and negative cognitive elements is a source of tension, which motivates someone to seek the removal or reduction of the tension.

A person's attitude is inconsistent with his behavior if he believes one thing (e.g. that smoking causes cancer) while acting contrary to that belief (e.g. smoking a pack a day). The greater the difference between the two (belief and behavior), the greater is the dissonance. Three changes are possible to remove dissonance: (1) Change one's belief removes or reduces dissonance (e.g. ceasing to believe the evidence relating smoking to cancer); (2) Add a new belief (e.g. believing that smoking calms the nervousness, reduces weight or leads to an enjoyable lifestyle); (3) Change one's behavior (e.g. giving up smoking). Those who communicate convincing arguments of a

new belief concept can motivate people to act according to their new beliefs (p. 124).

Dissonance can be resolved in one of two ways: (1) by deciding to lower one's values to match existing behaviors, or (2) by changing or improving existing behavior to conform to personal values. "The decision, and the commitment to align behavior with values, is the first key to successful and lasting behavior change" ("Eight Keys to Change", [www.ncti.org](http://www.ncti.org))

It is not by accident that the Book of Proverbs dedicates the first nine chapters to convincing the reader of the value of living by the principles of the wisdom of God rather than by the wisdom of men. Once a person is convinced of a new value, the principles for change are sought and applied with motivation. It is vital that a dissonance between actual maturity and possible spiritual maturity be reiterated periodically in order to stimulate the motivation necessary for growing in spiritual maturity. In Heb 13:7 the author wanted the readers to imitate the faith of their leaders (evidently greater than the readers) and to consider the results of their lifestyle (supposedly better off than the reader) to create a difference. In

electricity this is called "electrical potential." The greater the difference is the higher the voltage. Such dissonance is experienced by a sense of a lack, a shortcoming, a fault or a dream that is beyond the present reality while experiencing encouragement to attain the desired goal. The understanding of the different levels of spiritual growth opens the door for an application of these principles.

Gangel (1997) declared that adults are motivated to learn when the teaching "centers in unleashing an awareness of needs" (p. 74). Then he lists three primary area of needs, namely: 1) relationship needs or "belongingness", 2) recognition needs and 3) reality or "felt" needs (p. 75-76).

#### Achieving motivation.

The positive and negative elements of motivation are either perceived or taught, consciously or unconsciously. By whatever means a person acquires his beliefs and values, these elements then form his perspective for evaluation with respect to what he thinks he wants or needs in life. The way these values were acquired makes no difference in the level of commitment (Crabb, 1975, p.53-58). They can be

acquired consciously or unconsciously. Once placed in the belief pattern of an individual, all his activity becomes motivated by these values, goals or needs. It is difficult to live in contradiction to one's beliefs and values, because they form the basis of motivation. One of the major objectives of preaching is to form beliefs and values in the church member to guide him to a higher commitment.

#### Principles of Commitment

Festinger (1957) said that motivation and commitment overlap with commitment taking priority for the long term. The individual will experience "commitment" in one of two manners: persistence or enthusiasm. The persistence element is present when the context is negative or difficult, and the enthusiastic element is present when the context is positive or rewarding. Persistence characterizes behavior when it is necessary to sacrifice or resist temptation, especially to quit a habit or yield to a correction. This is the sense of a call to duty. Enthusiasm senses no sacrifice, because it interprets behavior as immediately meaningful or satisfying to varying degrees. When an action is met with gratifying results or reinforcement there is greater motivation to repeat the

experience and increased commitment is a natural result (Festinger, p. 128).

#### Unconscious Commitment.

Some of the cognitive processes that determine commitment take place outside of awareness, that is, not by a conscious decision. Wilson (1975) showed two ways in which commitment relates to awareness. First, commitment is a device for automating things, simplifying them, and putting them out of awareness. Once the mind is made up, the action becomes automatic or a reflex. One can devote attention to something else. It is a pre-decision decision: when certain circumstances occur the reaction is already decided. Unconscious commitment is the kind of commitment that pilots make to follow certain procedures when emergencies occur. They don't think about it, nor do they make a decision. Their responses are automatic or mechanical since they have already been decided. The more of these "pre-decision" commitments in a life, the more predictable and disciplined is the person.

Second, commitment is also a device for remaining focused. By tuning out distractions and preventing one's attention from wandering from the task at hand good



decisions are more likely. These become key principles in all levels of discipleship (p. 56).

Committed leaders can point the church toward specific commitments that will carry the church through the difficult times of few results, doubts, divisiveness and persecution. Commitment takes over where motivation falls short.

#### Sociology and commitment.

The commitment concept has been analyzed from a variety of perspectives to discover its secret for applicability in the business world. Commitment has been described in a number of ways. It is considered a psychological attachment that an individual internalizes or how one adapts the goals and values of an organization to their own needs (O'Reilly and Chatmann, 1986), p. 71). Another definition is "an individual's affective attachment to the goals and values of an organization, to (his or her) role in relation to these goals and values, and to the organization for its own sake apart from its purely instrumental worth to the individual (DeCotiis and Summers, 1987, p. 445). Commitment is seen as the process by which the goals of the organization and those of the individual

become increasingly integrated and congruent (Hall, Schneider, and Nygren, 1970, p. 182-186).

Commitment is also viewed as a multidimensional approach involving a willingness to exert effort on behalf of an organization, loyalty to the organization, the degree of goal and value congruency with the organization, and the desire to maintain membership in the organization (Angle and Perry, 1981, p. 7). One of the means of evaluating the level of this commitment would be the involvement of laypersons in ministry positions. The higher the number of laypersons freely involved, the more commitment has been communicated.

#### Factors that Motivate Commitment

All of the above definitions indicate that commitment is derived from a strong identification with the organization in which individuals show strong acceptance of its goals and norms. This indicates the importance of leaders constantly communicating the goals and vision of an organization to everyone under their authority. The end result is individuals who are willing to devote effort and time to the endeavors of the organization and what will benefit it. If these investigations are correct, then

commitment can be measured by the goals and values of its membership, and the disposition to contribute to the objectives with their time, talent, resources and disciplines. This concept of the integration of attitudes is the basis of the interviews to be utilized by this Research Project.

Goals and the level of commitment.

Several studies have been done to identify the factors that encourage the acceptance of the goals of an organization and the ultimate commitment, which this acceptance brings. The degree of commitment that an individual feels towards his organization has varying degrees of influence on his behavior (Harris, Stevens, Chachere, 1996, p.74). The antecedents of commitment seem to lie in three areas: (1) characteristics of the organization for which an individual works; (2) characteristics of the jobs or tasks an individual must perform; (3) some personal characteristics and conditions. Many of these observations have direct correlations to church ministry.

### Factors of the organization

Several factors about different organizations surfaced in the literature that affect the level of commitment those members are likely to have. It should be noted that most research findings are the results from for-profit organizations. This project will look at applications not related to finances in order to make the transference to charitable organizations and churches.

Commitment is likely to be higher in organizations which are decentralized, where there are formally written rules and procedures, and where employees have a significant amount of dependence upon each other (Morris and Steers, 1980, p. 518-519). ). The team concepts, which are guided by purpose and strategy manuals, and training programs, are designed to enhance competency, build unity and personal relationships. When there is clarity in the philosophy, strategy and job description there is a progressively higher motivation with fewer misunderstandings. Where role conflict, role ambiguity and role overload are low, employees are likely to be strong in their commitment. Making assignments easier is not the key element to commitment, but the designed tasks should be

according to the realistic capability of the individual (Mowday, Porter, and Steers, 1982, p. 224-226).

Organizations known for their dependability in looking after the interests of employees are more likely to generate commitment (Steers, 1977, p. 48). When leadership is committed to the success of its team members, motivation, and therefore commitment, are high. Employees who sense they are being used for the benefit of others, without any recognition or compensation, tend to have less commitment.

Equality, ownership and recognition surface as the key factors in securing commitment. Organizations that make their employees feel personally responsible for the success of the organization are likely to have more committed workers (Rhodes and Steers, 1978, p. 22). Recognition of a worker's contribution is more important than attributing the credit to a higher-ranking person who had little to do with the hands-on operation.

Communication of the value of each member's contribution in the church is seen in 1 Cor 12:23-24. Evidently in the Corinthian church people desired the popular gifts because of the supposed importance and they

probably thought they would receive more recognition because of the assumed importance. If there were a concentrated effort to make every contribution to the church ministries equally as important and as appreciated, then higher motivation would result to serve in the church as God has gifted each one. When the value of the contribution and the recognition from the leadership are equal, then motivation is possible.

Factors related to the job.

Research shows that motivation and commitment are likely to be higher in jobs that are (1) challenging and worthwhile (Mowday, Porter, and Steers, 1982, p. 225), (2) where participation and involvement in decision-making is high (Rhodes and Steers, 1978, p. 28), (3) where there is more social involvement (Fukami and Larson, 1984, pp. 368-369), (4) where the need for achievement is met (Steers, 1977, p. 49), (5) where the security and affiliation needs are considered (Hall, Schneider, and Nygren, 1974, p. 188), (6) where self-image is reinforced (Buchanan, 1974, p. 345), and (7) where professional prestige is expressed (Lee, 1971, p. 232). Commitment is higher (8) where the leadership is given to those initiating a new concept, that

is, if they have leadership qualities. (Brief, Aldag, and Walden, 1976, p. 265).

These eight proven elements necessary for commitment in the market place should be emphasized characteristics of the CLM. The parallels of the principals mentioned from sociology are seen in these eight aspects of the CLM: (1) A significant challenge for world evangelism and developing Christ's character in fellow believers, (2) Delegation of authority to individual ministries to decide their futures, (3) Meaningful service to others through social involvement, (4) Sharing of satisfaction and a sense of achievement as members serve in the area of their spiritual gifts, (5) Acceptance of individuals as God has gifted them for service, (6) A sense of acceptance as a valued participant in a team ministry, (7) Feedback and evaluation for constant improvements, and finally (8) Structuring the organization around the gifted individuals that God raises up in the congregation instead of a preconceived traditional church structure.

#### Factors related to the individual.

Not only are the factors of the organization and factors of the job elements important in building

commitment, but also statistics indicate that individuals are more committed to an organization as they achieve longer tenure (Buchanan, 1974, p. 342). Commitment is higher among lesser-educated individuals, especially where responsibility is delegated according to skill, competence and job satisfaction instead of mere academic accomplishments (Al-Meer, 1989, p. 81). Employees with higher skills are likely to be more committed (Stevens, Beyers, and Trice, 1978, p. 382), especially when given the opportunity to use their skills.

It is perhaps self-evident that commitment is higher when there is congruency of both the individual's goals and those of the organization (Bateman and Strausser, 1984, p. 108). The commitment level increases as their higher order needs are seen as important to the individual (especially the sense of achievement), when their sense of self-competence is good, and when they have work-oriented central life interests, that is they are similar or parallel (Van Maanen, 1975, p. 221). Individuals who feel personally important to an organization are prone to be more committed, especially when leadership makes it a point to make them feel important. If a compliment is faked or



exaggerated, the employee is made to feel more important than he knows or believes he is, then it is perceived as manipulation, resulting in resentment (Steers, 1978, p. 48).

In the CLM the infrastructure provides room for giftedness and continual training for more effectiveness in ministering to others and keeps the priority on everyone's ministry to others. A core value in the CLM is to assure everyone of his or her valuable service to the ministry. The end product should be that more people want to be a part of the ministry than there are positions to fill. The ministries are continually expanding according to the gifted leadership that arises within the church.

#### Outcomes resulting from commitment

There are many outcomes possible when the level of employee commitment to their organization is high. Such higher levels of commitment normally result in a decrease in absenteeism, a decrease in turnover, a decrease in the job search activities of employees, and to a lesser extent, an increase in performance effectiveness (Angle and Perry, 1982, p. 48). Employee morale is likely to be higher as the level of employee motivation increases (Mowday, Porter,

and Steers, 1982, p. 246). The evidence shows that the same characteristics should be expected in any organization. Although the church is made up of volunteers, where these characteristics are present there is a higher commitment to the church.

The literature discussed has focused on job satisfaction, completion of tasks and long-term involvement with the companies studied. The application of successful business practices to a spiritual commitment should bring similar benefits, levels of commitment and self-motivation. The style of leadership in any organization has direct bearing on the commitment level of its constituents.

#### Basis of Developing Spiritual Commitment

Literature emphasizing the development of spiritual commitment can be understood by knowing what faith is and how it develops. Anderson (1972) shows biblical faith to be a complex activity that is made up of three elements:

- (a) The *intellectual* element which is concerned with the knowledge of faith. When a person comes to Christ, it is with some fundamental knowledge about the object of that faith in which he is willing to trust or commit himself.
- (b) The *emotional* element involves the acceptance of the

validity of the knowledge of this faith as it is actively embraced. It is one person feeling a need that only another can meet, and then a wonderful attraction to that person for having met the need. (c) The *volitional* element of faith is the will, or making a choice, to respond, act on or commit to what is believed or understood in God's Word (p. 4).

These three dimensions of faith can be commitments of how a person grows in Christ: (a) understanding or thinking correctly by holding to correct beliefs, doctrine, divine presence and confidence in His purpose through daily circumstances; (b) loving God more deeply, that is, a growing dedication to please Christ and to fulfill His purpose in this life as a result of all He has done for the believer; and (c) living for Christ in decisive service to others and growing in obedience as an expression of trust and affection (Anderson, p. 5-6). These three stages of faith have remarkable parallel to the three commitment levels of the CLM.

#### Developmental Theories

The process of guiding others into a continually deeper and growing commitment is best developed in stages. Jesus

led His disciples into a progressively higher commitment level.

The CLM is based upon the premise that spiritual maturity should be sequential, systematic and progressive. Until the first steps are integrated into a life it does little good to give more advanced training or responsibility. The concept is parallel to the general ideas of developmentalism. Most developmental theories focus on childhood development especially Piaget (1970, 1977) who was followed by Levinson (1978), Gould (1978), Havighurst (1972) and Erikson (1963) who applied the principles to adults.

The theories of learning of developmentalism and behavioralism are not seen as necessarily mutually exclusive. Ted Ward (1982) saw benefit in both.

"Much that is done in institutional education today reflects a behavioristic philosophy. Teachers set learning goals for students without involving them in the process. Learning outcomes are assessed in terms of behavior change (e.g., listing the themes of each chapter of the Pauline Epistles). Educational planning is seen as a technical concern for establishing the

*conditions* that will *cause* the learning that are *intended*. A major alternative to behaviorism in social science and education is the developmental perspective. Developmentalist's focus on what is *within* the person—what the patterns of unfolding and fulfilling tell about the nature of humankind.

Softheaded developmentalism simply romanticizes these processes and characteristics, often giving little thought to the responsibilities of the family, the community, and the individual. The resultant passive and romantic naturalism falls ignorantly back into determinism" (p. 202-203).

It is not the purpose of this research to defend or disprove the works of these men, nor is it necessary to borrow the specifics of their research. The primary point of the literature review is to show that specialists treat the quest for maturity as a complex process, and it should develop in a structured sequence of activities, understandings and commitments both guided from without and sequential development from within the individual equipping them for the next phase of growth. Each stage should build upon the previous stage in the developmental process.

The literature that describes developmental theories of faith and maturity can help leaders understand that a person grows progressively and sequentially. Developmental theories, though naturalistic, are observations of how maturity develops in universal steps or sequences. It is true that Piaget's cognitive theory gives only a marginal place for instruction and nurture in human development, since it is designed to be unaffected by outside influences (Aden, Benner, and Ellens, 1992). Virtually all theories of development propose a sequence and structure that act like building blocks upon which to build all types of maturity under consideration.

Piaget (1969) is considered the father of contemporary structuralist approach to understanding personality development. He demonstrated in practical experiments with his own children the predictable stages of human cognitive development from birth to death. Kohlberg (1974, 1976) described the comparable developmental stages that could predict human moral development. Erickson (1963) declared that the stages of psychosocial growth are predictable parallels of the cognitive and moral development patterns described by Piaget and Kohlberg. Fowler (1981) applied the

structuralist theory to the patterns of religious or faith development. His research demonstrated that the structural patterns are as predictable in spiritual formation as in cognitive, moral and psychosocial growth. The theories and research of developmental psychology suggest that people will best mature in every area in sequential stages.

### Structuralism

There is a common thread in all the different structuralistic theories of development that hinges on the concept of stages of development, however they are defined. Without going into exhaustive details of each stage of each theory, this review will only be interested in the fact that a structured sequence is necessary and natural in personal development. J. Harold Ellens (Aden, Benner and Ellens, 1992, pp. 127-131) gives the basic outline of each of the four major contributors to the Developmental Theories.

Piaget's Cognitive Development stages are six defined progressions from birth through 35 years of age. Kohlberg's Moral Developmental reveal seven stages through 60 years of age. Erikson's Psychosocial Developmental suggests seven stages that most people will transition

through in their progression toward natural maturity. Fowler's Faith Development six stages through approximately 35 years of age.

Bruce Powers (1996) sees faith development as a cyclical process that continually helps a person adjust to life's needs. This process involves awareness of a growing need, recall of Christian teaching, understanding of the possibilities for response, conviction of certain actions, and application of one's knowledge and talents in Christian service. His five steps are the result of integrating Fowler and others with a reflection on his own faith pilgrimage. Rather than describing stages, he speaks of five phases of development (pp. 78-94). Life is fixed on the values and beliefs developed in the earlier phases. Unless there is an intervention to change the foundations already developed little will vary in new development in a life.

#### Method for Developing Commitment

Much of the literature that describes studies having to do with the development of faith and commitment is designed for youth ministries where spiritual maturity is the most dynamic need. Some of the foundational factors to



facilitate the development of faith and commitment in people are the following.

#### Congregational factors

Linda Snyder (1990) refers to Search Institute's study on effective Christian education that measured specific indicators of Christian faith to determine spiritual growth. It discovered that youth who have a mature Christian faith "trust and believe in God, experience self-acceptance, integrate faith and life, nurture faith in friends, hold life-affirming values and act on their faith by serving others." The survey identified five aspects of congregational life that contribute to the development of faith: (1) Provide a challenging and thinking climate, (2) plan relevant worship experiences; (3) Practice a servant-like attitude, (4) develop a sense of family, (5) offer active Christian education with specific progressive commitments (pp. 23-25). The commitment to these principles should prove effective in any age group.

#### Organizational factors for Commitment

Diane Fischer and Mike Woodruff, in *Why Kids Stay Committed to Christ*, Group Magazine, September 1992, present the results of a survey among college students who

committed to Christ during high school. They asked: "How did your high school youth group help you lay a solid foundation for your faith?" They discovered four keys to commitment:

1. Accountability. They had someone who held them accountable spiritually.

2. Responsibility. They had positions within local churches that made them feel like they owned their own growth.

3. Special Events. They spoke of camps, retreats and special trips that had contributed to their long-term Christian growth.

4. Youth Pastors. Groups that matured had leaders who modeled their Christian faith, in fact, the more time a youth leader spent with a young person, the more likely that young person was to attribute his or her spiritual growth to the help of that leader. Obviously, there are many other factors involved in long-term spiritual growth. Nevertheless, these four are central: accountability, responsibility, opportunities and mentors (pp. 118-121). The ministry that could incorporate these factors would be more effective.

### A Summary of Steps for Increasing Commitment

To increase the commitment of church members to their own church body and its ministries, the application of the literature reviewed suggests the following objectives:

1. Define and communicate specific church goals and a sense of mission. The member, who knows what their church stands for and where it is going, tends to commit himself to its objectives. When his personal objectives and values are similar to the church's values, an increased in commitment should result.

2. Decentralize the leadership and authority of the ministries and allow participation in the goal setting and planning. Equipping members to lead the various ministries of the church and make the decisions for their ministries within certain guidelines makes everyone feel a part of the team. It is their ministry as well. Participation enhances the perception of belonging. They feel a union with the larger membership.

3. Develop a church style that appeals to a specific group of people. Different churches should appeal to different personalities. The style of the church determines to whom the church will appeal or reach with their message

(Warren, 1995). The style or personality of the church builds on the principle of identification of the member with the organization.

4. Communication ties should be creative, multiple and constant. The use of newsletters, bulletins, telephone calls, meetings with individuals and small groups and networks of telephone contacts which include all circles of committed people should be used to keep people informed and persuaded of the values of the organization. Thus communicating a sense of feeling like an insider who knows what is going on (Harris, Stevens, Chachere, 1996).

5. Continue to develop meaningful church programs. Involving people as much as possible in significant projects creates the feeling of accomplishment. Both time spent in busy work with little benefit to anyone and delegated responsibilities that are beyond member's capabilities are demoralizing (Mowday, Porter, and Steers, 1982). Permanent lifestyle changes generally only occur in the context of peers of similar persuasion and cultural norms, which are most often unstated. The church has the unique opportunity to build that culture which will produce healthy and motivated growth in Biblical maturity.

6. Give recognition to meaningful contributions. Those individuals and groups who really give a great deal of time and effort to the church and its activities should be recognized, praised, and thanked for their efforts and their accomplishments should be reported to the congregation (Steers, 1977).

7. Provide opportunities for interaction among the membership. The more committed members tend to interact frequently with fellow members. If a new member or a prospective member fails to make a social affiliation with another member of the congregation within four to six weeks after joining the church or attending the services, he will be more likely to drift away from that church. Barna (1999) shows that 60-70% of the new members of a congregation continue to attend because of significant personal relationships that had been established (p. 76). Small group ministries offer excellent socialization opportunities and affiliation should be encouraged.

8. Give caring and compassionate attention (Steers, 1978). Committed church members are those who feel that their needs are looked after and that the church leadership cares about them. From the preaching to the programming,

the whole ministry should communicate dedication to meeting the needs of the members, not using them to enhance the ministry. Special needs should motivate special programs.

9. Design the ministry with clear channels for participation; giving every individual the possibility of rising to whatever capability God has given him. There should be multiple areas of ministry, constant training for leadership and service, and the liberty to contribute according to the cares and burden of each individual (Barna, 1999, p. 61-62).

The use of a model for church development

A model is a specific church philosophy in practice. The importance of a model is to graphically illustrate the principles and theories of how a ministry can be structured. What makes a given model function is much more than the principles of operation. The elements that cannot be imitated, yet are essential to the success of a ministry, include the composite of personalities, mixture of geographic, demographic, psychological and economic characteristics, special talents and sovereign blessing of a ministry. However, the parts of a ministry that can be adapted are called "transferable principles" (Hybles,

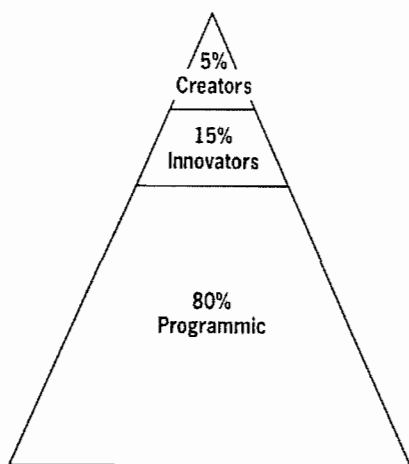
1991). All churches can benefit by the philosophy and infrastructure of growing churches.

Hull (1997) warns, "Today there is a dangerous groveling at the altar of pragmatism within the evangelical church. Working models are useful; in fact, we must have them, but we must offer them only after the principles are developed, and they must be based upon those principles" (p. 33). With all the variables of a rapidly growing ministry, no church should attempt to copy another ministry. The purpose of a model is to serve as a guide as to how certain ministry principles were applied in their circumstances. A model show how to better organize the local church into a functioning, harmonious organism where the Spirit's work in lives is honored and the church is enabled to take advantage of the people that the Spirit has established in each church.

#### Importance of a Model to follow

Hull (1993), while describing the necessary training program for transforming the church, presents a graphic that was borrowed from Peter Drucker's, Way of Thinking, in which he divides the nature of pastors observed in the study. Only 5 percent of the pastors create new ideas,

concepts or ways of expressing themselves. Another fifteen



percent are innovative, advocating change and effectively adapting creative thinking to make it work better. The vast majority, eighty percent, rarely is creative or innovative. They need concrete, planned steps laid out before them to follow. They need a model to

emulate (p. 84).

#### Models of Commitment Level Churches

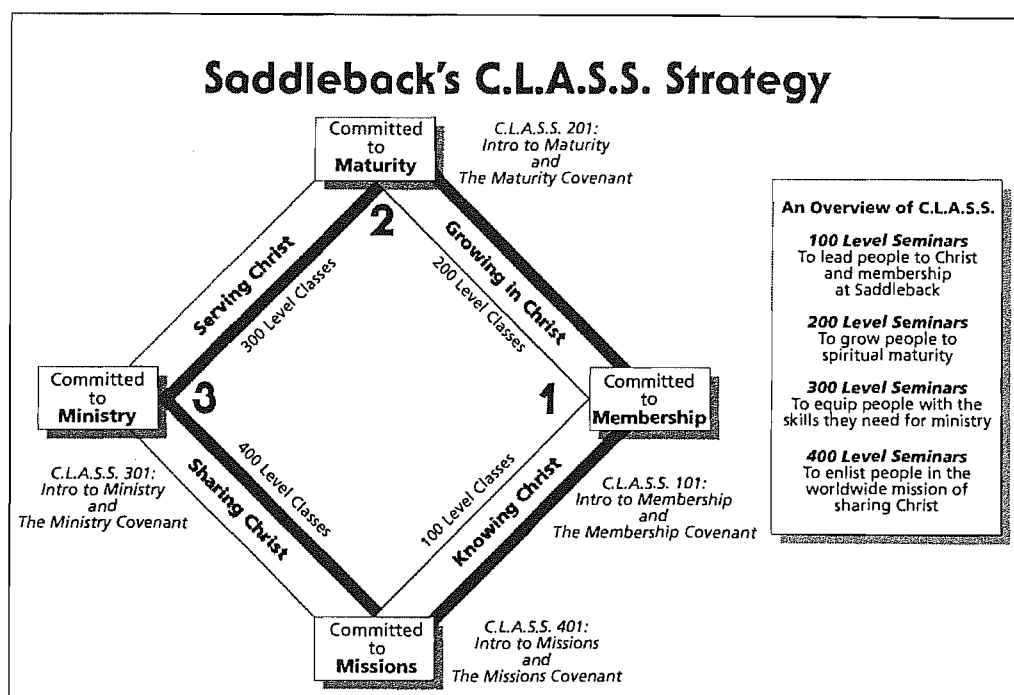
The following models of this approach are presented for consideration:

##### Saddleback Community Church

Saddleback uses *The Life Development Process* to disciple people. It is an educational process that encourages people to act on what they have learned and then rewards them when they do so. A baseball diamond is used to visually explain the education and assimilation process to their members. Each base represents a completed class and a deeper level of commitment. Each level has a clearly defined goal: (a) to lead people to Christ and church



membership; (b) to grow people to spiritual maturity; (c) to equip people with the skills they need for ministry; and (d) to enlist people in the worldwide mission of sharing Christ. The diamond diagram gives a graphic description of where people are located on the maturity scale.



(Aubrey Malphurs (1996), Strategy 2000, p. 176)

Rick Warren (1995) explains:

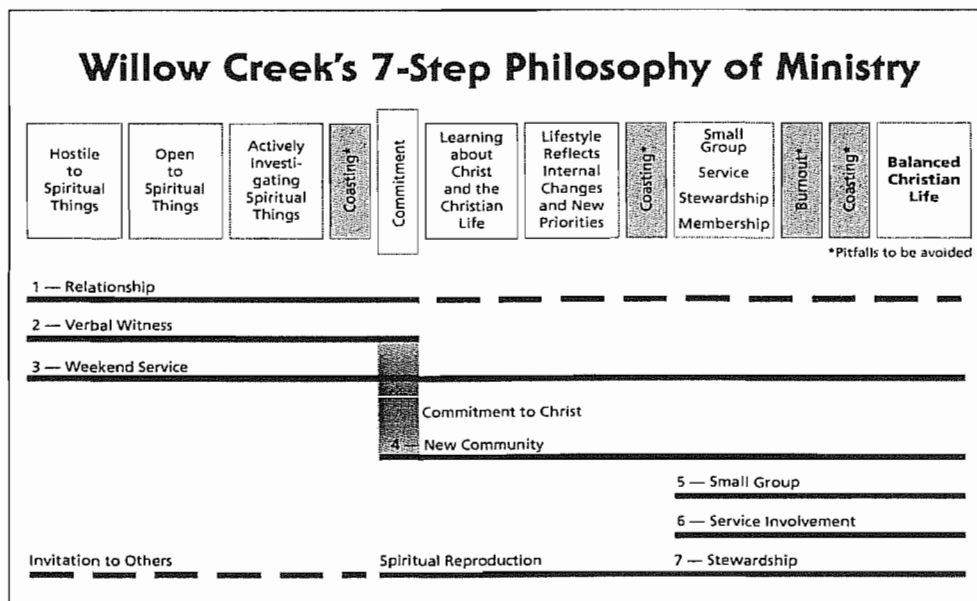
"You get to first base by completing Class 101 and committing to Saddleback's membership covenant. You arrive at second base after completing Class 201 and committing to a spiritual growth covenant. You make it to third base by completing Class 301 and committing

to serve in a ministry of the church. And you finally get back to home by completing Class 401 and committing to sharing your faith both at home and on mission trips...There is a written covenant at each base that we expect people to sign and commit to before moving ahead. No member may proceed to the next base until he has committed to the requirements of each covenant. Most churches do a fairly good job of getting people to first base or even second base. People will receive Christ, be baptized, and join the church (that's getting to first base). Some churches also do an excellent job of helping believers develop the habits that lead to spiritual maturity (that's getting to second base). But few churches have a plan to ensure that every believer finds an appropriate ministry (third base), and even fewer equip members to win others to Christ and fulfill their life mission (home plate)" (*The Purpose Driven Church*, page 145).

#### Willow Creek Community Church

Another style of commitment level is that of Willow Creek Community Church, Barrington, IL., which involves the following commitment steps: attend a believer-orientated

service; join a small group; discover and use spiritual gifts; and steward resources in a God-glorifying way. The ministry at Willow Creek has a seven-step process that moves a young person from being a casual seeker to an established believer.



(Aubrey Malphurs (1996), *Strategy 2000*, p. 172)

For discipleship, steps 5 to 7 are of particular interest. The steps of progress toward maturity are: (a) *Integrity Friendship* - believers are challenged to build relational bridges with their seeking friends. (b) *Verbal Witness* - core members are taught to look for opportunities to share and discuss their relationship with Christ. (c) *Seeker*

service - a weekly seeker-sensitive program used as a tool by the core members in reaching their seeking friends. The seeker service is a high impact program of music, media, drama, and a message.

#### Extension of influence

Both of these churches, Willow Creek and SCC hold large pastor's conferences. SCC now transmits its conferences live via satellite to more than a hundred different locations in the US. Their concepts have been followed, mixed, adapted partially or completely, or some very talented teams have attempted to copy the form and the function of these ministries.

The We-build-people Ministry is the paradigm of the Assembly of God denomination ([www.we-build-people.org](http://www.we-build-people.org)). It is an excellent example of adapting the principles of SCC for different forms of churches.

#### Conclusion from the research

Though no ministry is perfect, some have been considerably successful. Some elements can be adapted to different situations and cultures. What is specifically cultural (style of music, thrust of the messages and

personalities) has to be overlooked to examine the principles and structure that permits the ministry to function. The infrastructure, methodology and values are areas that are adaptable to different situations. For some it can be difficult to make the distinction between the principles of a ministry and some practices of that ministry, for example contemporary music, thus forcing them to reject the opportunity to learn from the leading models in church ministries.

The most radical of all the changes in the new paradigm of the church is the intentionality of building disciples. The CLM of building churches is a discipling philosophy that can be adapted in different church contexts around the world. The core value of the CLM is to systematically help people mature through the five circles of commitment into their unique ministry and mission in life. The basic training at each base around the diamond prepares each person for a new level of spiritual development. The sequence of the commitments is as important as the preliminary theorems in geometry.

There is substantial literature on motivation and commitment that points towards the need of a progressive,

sequential, systematic and structured series of commitments within an environment of acceptance, patience and challenge. The goal of pointing believers towards Christ-likeness and effective participation in His Church in the world is the objective of the CLM. One of the chief advantages of CLM is its simplicity. None of the elements of CLM is revolutionary, new or unheard of in the Christian ministry. Its uniqueness is the structured approach to assure the sequential insistence on step-by-step commitments of universally acceptable Christian habits. The appropriateness of the present project

Malphurs (1992) states that eighty percent of the churches in America are plateaued or declining (p.35). How to develop a growing church that multiplies itself both in new converts and infrastructure, is a major question of the church age in the accomplishment of the Great Commission. Previously an emphasis has been on the congregational meeting and the sermon. With this new paradigm the emphasis is on relationships, universal participation in the ministry and practical applications of Biblical wisdom and truth that benefit and transform a life.

Application of the CLM has been proven in the North American culture to be adaptable and effective. Does leading believers through a systematic scaled levels of discipleship result in permanent life changes developing the spiritual maturity of the believer in a Latin American context? That is the question this Research Project is designed to answer.

## CHAPTER 3

### RESEARCH DESIGN AND PROCEDURE

The proposition to evaluate the program effectiveness of the CLM against designed behavioral objectives, which should result in spiritual maturity, thrusts the project into the realm of the behavioral sciences. This is not a theological evaluation, but rather an attempt to measure the amount of behavioral change that resulted from the application of CLM concepts of ministry.

#### Understanding of Limitations of Behavioral Sciences

Behavioral sciences, however, fail to leave a clear explanation of what actually causes specific behavior. Each of the theorists has assumptions that are presumed to be true and necessary for their theory to be valid or helpful (Slife and Williams, 1995, p. 4). In spite of this difficulty several assumptions will be made that need explanation to give meaning to the research.

One assumption is that people will respond to a series of commitments that are reachable and progressive, which require specific attitudes and behaviors that are assumed to be essential to spiritual maturity. The *dependent variable* in this research is the progressive spiritual maturity and a self-motivated service for the Lord. The *independent variable* is the gradual commitment levels with



their respective privileges and responsibilities.

Additional motivation comes from the enthusiasm of others in the same process, the benefits accompanying each commitment level in the infrastructure of the church and the stated goal of progressing through the commitments toward the goal of maturity, while practicing the behavior or disciplines of each level.

Perhaps spiritual maturity is a phenomenon that can be observed, but all of the actual causes are beyond description. It may be conceptually impossible to prove by scientific experiment that the one variable, a specific commitment or series of commitments, is the only variable that causes the desired result of spiritual maturity. This research project will evaluate the results of the presence of an independent variable when a particular effect is observed in the dependent variable. Slife and Williams (1995) declare that the observation of the desired results still does not explain all that caused the results of the experiment merely because it occurs when the independent variable is applied. "This would be a logical fallacy of affirming the consequences" (p. 190).

The understood reasoning is that other associated variables are also present, motivating or discouraging the end result. Most of these variables are not under the

control of this research. The effect of personality, previous dedications, ministry experience, negative experiences and training are not taken into consideration.

When one observes a specific behavioral objectives, which represents something that cannot be observed (i.e., spiritual maturity) it is called "operationalizing". What is observed is called the "operational definition." Although maturity cannot be observed directly, what maturity causes can be observed and thus it is assumed to be an existing quality. For each level in the CLM there is a respective commitment to certain behaviors or commandments, habits or actions, which, if applied sincerely, should result in an increasing level of spiritual maturity. The present research is searching for these *operational definitions*, which will give evidence to the quality of spiritual maturity.

In behavioral sciences it is debated whether people can be manipulated by behavioral technology. "There is a good argument that the first and most important goal of science is not manipulation or controlling, but understanding" (Slife and Williams, 1995, p. 193).

Thus the purpose of this research is not to discover what manipulates people, but rather under what conditions

or circumstances people tend to mature spiritually and grow progressively.

### Research Design

The data for the Research Project was gathered by two input formats: a fifty-item questionnaire and a personal interview of each of the participants at each of the three commitment levels. All participants are from the New Life Baptist Church in Asuncion, Paraguay, an independent Baptist church in the Association of Baptist Church of Paraguay, a group of churches under the Association of Baptists for World Evangelism.

The questionnaire was pretested on members of a like-minded church in another country, Argentina, as well as a Plymouth Brethren church, which has not instituted the CLM in their church structure. The latter was used as a base of comparison.

### Overview

#### Background

The New Life Baptist Church was a traditional, mission-founded, and American missionary-led church in Asuncion, Paraguay until two years before the present testing. The church was eleven years old and has had four missionary pastors. The church grew to about one hundred within the first four years and maintained that attendance

until a national music leader was added to the staff. During a furlough of the missionary pastor, the two Paraguayan assistant pastors became the acting and then permanent co-pastors. The attendance grew to an average of 140 for two years.

Internal control wars were constant with many threats to leave the church due to the leadership's inability to incorporate members into the infrastructure and the decision-making circle. The pastoral leadership was discouraged, threatening to resign, and reacting by applying discipline, imposing authoritative opinions, and ignoring the mounting opposition, all of which provoked more rebellion.

In this environment the writer of this project proposed the application of the CLM over a three-month study with just the leadership. Frank, yet loving confrontations with the national pastors to help modify their leadership style and philosophy eventually led to the adaptation of the CLM and the sharing of the pastoral role with two other pastors, myself included.

The transition to the new church model was a new experience for everyone and would take over two years to fully implement. Each level took explanation, motivation and modeling. Not everyone wanted to take the initial

steps, so the leadership was encouraged to show patience. The difficulty was the initial commitment. Once the first commitment was made the remaining commitments were not as difficult. It seems that resistance to commitment is overcoming the will, and the desire to be in control of life. A commitment is a threat to this desire for control. However, once commitment is made the sense of freedom is evident and the remaining commitments are not as threatening.

The change in attitude of the entire church body was remarkable. Those who were most dissident quickly became the leaders of the new philosophy of the ministry. With each new commitment came new opportunities for leadership and responsibilities.

The question for this project is: Have the changes made permanent differences or have they been merely superficial changes that have not made life-changing differences. Not only is there a desire for empirical evidence that supports the changes against the critics of change, but proof that the application of the CLM principles is transcultural and flexible to many situations.

Contextual information related to the program

It is the observation of the author that the Latin American church has had little emphasis on the priesthood of believers. The missionary emphasis of the NLBC had emphasized the concept of a "priest" leader, or "chief" leader doing the spiritual ministry. The goal of the missionary is to find that one leader who can take the leadership of the church after the missionary leaves. The author has observed that this concept has penetrated the missionary church leadership in this predominantly Roman Catholic country. Only leaders are valued and fulfill the image of a "priest" in the average mindset of the converted Catholic. There is little or no emphasis on the universal "calling" to ministry; in fact, the general notion of a "calling" is related only to the preaching ministry.

In the NLBC a certain level of obedience, usually limited to baptism and a general evangelical life-style, along with a general agreement with the church polity, accomplished the traditional evangelical membership. Discipleship was understood to be either faithfulness in church attendance and giving a tithe or at best a ten-step plan of initiating a new Christian life. The concept of ministry involvement required a previous Bible Institute training, usually with little emphasis in practical

obedience, but rather a strong emphasis in doctrinal understanding and perhaps, some ministry practice. This has resulted in a church with head knowledge at best, searching for a "professional" leader and little need or opportunity for members to minister to one another. It was a sort of evangelical catholic-like priesthood-leadership. For ten years the church had hoped and prayed in vain for such a leader to copy the missionary's leadership style.

The search for a national pastor was always outside the congregation. The hope was that a Bible Institute would provide the leader they desired. The missionary leadership would continue until that occurred.

The CLM church is a move in a direct opposite direction. This evaluation is to determine how effective the program motivates people to move against their culture and church expectations.

#### Origin of the program

Adapting the CLM mode in the NLBC is the result of a personal quest for a better way of guiding the church to a more mature way of ministry. After evaluating several different models of church strategy, I visited SCC in Mision Vieja, California for a pastor's conference.

After random interviews with members of the church, analyzing the principles behind the infrastructure and the

design of the ministry, observing the effectiveness of the ministry philosophy in developing multiple ministries through the involvement of the membership itself, I was convinced that this model could lead to significant benefits for the maturity of Latin American believers.

Permission was granted to translate and adapt their materials in Spanish and design a test instrument for evaluating the effectiveness. SCC has no such test instrument and is interested in testing this instrument in their church.

#### Demographics of the target group

The New Life Baptist Church (NLBC) is considered a middle class church. 82% of the young people are preparing to become professionals or technical operators. Those who have only completed primary school are 6%, those completing secondary school are 37%, while 15% of the adults are college graduates and 42% have finished a professional training program. Twenty two percent of the adult male church population are business owners or operators of businesses.

The average level of schooling in the country of Paraguay is the fourth grade of primary school. There are barely 19,000 university students in the entire country of



4.5 million. This places the membership of the NLBC in an above average bracket of the Paraguayan social life.

#### Breadth of participation

Of the participants in the questionnaire and interviews 11% were under twenty-five years, 48% were between twenty and thirty years of age, 29% were between thirty and forty years of age and the final 11% were over forty years of age. This distribution approximates the age distribution of the church.

The average educational level of the participants is 13.1 years of schooling.

Of the participants 58% were business or professional persons, 31% were housewives, and eleven percent were students.

The married participants numbered 37% and 63% were single persons at the time of the questionnaire.

#### *How items of program were determined or designed*

Each of the levels of Commitment has its own training manual. These manuals describe the behaviors or attitudes that are expected at each level of commitment. Each member studies this manual during a seminar or small group. Once understood, the member is to make a commitment to faithfully practice the principles in their lives and engage in a follow-up accountability structure to help

motivate the respective disciplines. The commitment is not to say that they are being practiced at the time of making the commitment, but rather that the member is going to move in the direction of these specific items of obedience. This is why a time of at least three months is required after making the commitment before participation in this evaluation can be considered reliable.

Each level was given a separate evaluation according to the contents of the manual for each level of commitment. Nothing was asked that was not included specifically in the manual, except for ten questions that referred to the other commitment levels. This was to see if they were already obeying a higher commitment level behavior and/or if they were continuing to obey the previous commitment level behavior after moving to a higher commitment.

Critical features of the program and the evaluation

Any change in a church or organization has the potential of creating a split or division. Previous to any congregational or public presentation, the leadership, whether official or unofficial, must understand and believe in the philosophy of the changes.

Program implementation depended simultaneously upon several factors. Any change required a full commitment of the leadership who must believe that the change was

significant and vital to the well being of the church. The only ones who could implement significant changes in a church were the pastors, in particular, the senior pastor. Without his leadership, not merely support, the program would fail. Inevitable opposition to change would require a high leadership commitment and belief in the values of the changes.

The gradual introduction of members into the commitment levels and the full introduction of new members must be done diplomatically so as to not cause any kind of a division. Once the initial group experiences the benefits of the new changes, their testimonies to the remainder of the church are key to keeping the unity of the church in transition.

The follow-up of each commitment level is dependent upon the action of small group leaders and ministry leaders who must involve everyone under their ministry in a form of accountability of the commitments made. Thus a leadership training orientation to accountability is essential.

In order to facilitate the transition to a new church structure Thomas Fishcer (1998) recommended five principles that we attempted to follow during the period of transition:

1) The principal of Relative Advantage. The proposed changes were shown to be better than the present state of the church. To facilitate a change it helps if the present church situation were a bit desperate.

2) The principle of Compatibility. The only changes should be to the form of church, not the function, thus the changes were shown to be consistent and in harmony with the existing values and needs of the people. The previous tradition and experiences of the church were not discredited or maligned in order to convince the congregation of the value of the new approach to the ministry. This would have created polarity, division and hurt feelings.

3) The principle of Complexity. The degree to which the change was perceived as relatively difficult to understand and implement becomes a factor of resistance. We overcame this difficulty by printing out all the materials, gradually introducing it in small groups of the congregation, training the small group leaders in accountability, while restructuring the ministries of the church to incorporate new "ministers" before initiating the commitment levels in the church at large.

4) The principle of Trialability: A new approach to a ministry was experimented on a limited basis before

launching the program with the whole church. The first group was comprised of the four pastors, and then we began with the deacons, finally three men's small groups before presenting the program as a general approach to church ministry.

5) The principle of re-invention. The liberty to adapt a program to the context of the local church made it more acceptable. There were no absolute or unchangeable aspects to the program. Many different church ministries adopted elements of the different levels to fit their particular values. By going slowly and evaluating each stage of the commitment levels, many had inputs into the final design, which also communicated a shared ownership.

A final word on the critical factors in implementing transition is that the word "change" was kept to a minimum, rather words like "improvement, modification, update" or "progress" were used. "Change" implies something was wrong or rejected from the former ministry. This would have been divisive. The concept of "improvement" implies moving from a fair or good situation to a better situation. The entire leadership team was to promote a vision for the church that would accomplish the mission of the church.

(<http://genesis.acu.edu/ministryhealth>

### Level of involvement

The evaluation has taken ten to fourteen people from each commitment level, without regard to their involvement in the overall ministry.

Of those taking the evaluation of the Second level, 65% were active in a small group. Of those in the third level, 72% were active in a specific ministry at the time of the evaluation.

Since neither the small group ministries nor the lay-led ministries were functioning before the implementation of the Commitment Level program, there was a hundred percent change in the level of involvement in these two key ministry concepts.

### What purpose will the implementation study serve?

The evaluation of a program is often very subjective and opinions are formed on the basis of a limited input of accurate information. The objective of this evaluation is to determine if the CLM provides a sufficient and effective infrastructure to motivate and reinforce the spiritual maturity of church members.

The open awareness of the level of commitment of members of the church lets the leadership know whom they can depend upon, in what area of the ministry and up to what extent. This awareness should help prevent leadership

abuse and manipulation, burnout, and misunderstandings. Once people are committed to a church, are incorporated into accountability groups for spiritual disciplines and have discovered their spiritual gifts, talents, personality and passion for specific needs and ministries a leader can organize and structure ministries with self-motivated teams. When 40-60% of the congregation is at this level of commitment the church is functioning as a Body, not just an organization.

#### Subjects

The questionnaire was delivered personally to individuals who had accepted the different commitments and were willing to be evaluated. The persons were selected at random from each level. It was understood that this might result in an unrealistic composite of people with a positive predisposition towards the program. Unfortunately the numbers of people at each of the levels were somewhat limited and those making the first transitions tended to be quicker to accept a new concept of the ministry, thus their responses and opinions were unusually positive.

The secretary of the church selected fifteen persons from each of the three commitment levels of which a minimum of ten persons would be required. The chief requirement was that each participant passes a minimum of three months

since making his or her respective commitment. This was to determine the minimum durative effect of their commitment behavior. An average time since commitment was determined for each level: Level I, 8.4 months; Level II, 6.4 months; Level III, 5.2 months.

The percentage of returned questionnaires from the delivered questionnaires was 58% from Level I, 60% from level II and 75% from Level III.

#### Testing and Observation

The amount of life covered by the report is basically a photograph of their present habits or disciplines. There is some reference to their previous life-style when seeking to determine the amount of change that has occurred.

According to the instructions given orally and in writing to each individual, the answers should reflect their actual state and not what they would like to become. They were to report what they practiced of their spiritual disciplines that day or the previous week. The interviews revealed how accurately these instructions were followed.

#### The kinds and degrees of differences and similarities between the groups

The three commitment levels were not mutually exclusive, but rather were a gradual continuum. For this



reason some parts of the different commitments may be common practice before individuals make a formal commitment. Since the contents of the questionnaire deal with the basics of the Christian life, the longer a person had been a Christian, theoretically the more of the disciplines of the higher commitments he should have incorporated into his life. Thus the time one had been a believer was a distinction that would be made to determine the new changes in life-style that were a result of the program or previous ministry of the church.

The interview focus attempted to validate whether the changes are a result of a previous ministry experience or involvement in the CLM program.

#### Typical program experience

Those who had never been in another evangelical church before their encounter with the gospel through NLBC were 84% of the participants. None had participated in a formal written evaluation of a ministry program either by questionnaires or by interviews. None had any idea what to expect.

With limited experience in program evaluations it is understood that there is a tendency to attempt to look as good as possible, even if the questionnaires are anonymous. The reliability factor was enhanced by the interviews.

### Interview according to a set checklist

Everyone was asked the same questions in the interview and the similarities were considered a group together and the differences were compared. Part of the search was to determine if the percentages on the questionnaire could be verified with the personal interview. The interview questions were not determined until more than seventy percent of the questionnaires were analyzed.

### Future program development and/or evaluation

As the input data from this evaluation program increases, a full-fledged database program should be used to further compare the data collected and to make numerous other comparisons. The initial program utilized was Excel.

The percentages of each area will help discover the weak areas of a ministry, that is, where resources and effort should be focused. The tendency is to strengthen the strong areas and ignore the weak areas, but such evaluations, as this program, should help churches to shift the focus to weak areas in order to balance and maintain the health overall of a church.

### Instrumentation

The data collection method is self-reporting. A questionnaire was designed for each level of commitment with multiple responses possible to give a range of

responses of opinions for each item. Various questions approach the same concept from different reference points which results are compiled or averaged to see if opposite answers cancel out or combine to become meaningful.

A second source of data, also a form of self-reporting method, is the interview with the same persons completing the questionnaire. The questions in the interview are designed around the difficulty and faithfulness in fulfilling the respective commitments. The respondents are free to describe their experiences fully. The written reports will be summaries of the recorded interviews that are pertinent to the investigation.

#### Validity Concerns

Although the report will only show what people said they did, a type of secondhand information, the results will indicate a trend or transition, which brings permanent change. Since the report indicates the accounts of what others have done, without actually being observed doing it, the information is only a possible indicator. When a large base of information with similar findings results, the validity of the findings should increase.

The respondents are given a week in which to complete the questionnaire to avoid any pressure to answer without

giving serious consideration to the questions. Seven requested an additional period of three days to complete their questionnaires, and it was granted.

The questionnaire is made up of mostly closed-response format. In the open-response format the respondent is asked to write a short answer to a personal opinion question. In the closed-response questioning the respondent is asked to select between a series of options as to which one most likely applies to them. For statistical analysis the closed-response questions are ideal since they can be converted into numerical values. Answers to open-response questions were grouped by similarity of responses and reported as a unit.

#### Research Design over Variables

Each of the commitment levels has a forty-eight or sixty-four page manual that is reviewed in a special class. The questionnaire is made up of questions concerning disciplines or commitments from the separate manuals. It was a subjective selection of items judged to be both representative and critical to the permanence of each commitment.

Each of the commitments entails three or four major components with various related segments. The questions would look at the same major component from different

perspectives. The results were cumulated from a net result of the major area.

#### Data collection procedures

After distributing the questionnaires everyone was enthusiastic and promised their quick response. Of the three commitment levels the third level, the ministry commitment, responded the highest at 75%. I think I asked one person if he had filled out the questionnaire yet, and he gave it to me the next day.

The other two levels were a little more difficult. Only forty-eight percent of the second level and twenty-six percent of the first level responded spontaneously. After one call or request to fill out the questionnaire all but eight returned them within a week. The final eight had to be given an additional week. The interviews revealed that only six were reluctant to be transparent in their answers, but when assured of confidentiality again, they were more positive.

Of the 70 questionnaires given out to members of the congregation, 44 were returned for evaluation and interviews, resulting in a 68% rate of return.

Based on this rate of return (68%), at the 95% confidence level, there is a confidence interval of 6%. The confidence interval is the plus or minus factor, which

is applied to the percentage of each question on the questionnaire. It represents the factor of variation for how all of the individuals selected would have responded to the questionnaires.

Extrapolating further, according to statistical data, we could be 98% confident that the responses of all selected candidates would have been within 7%, and further extrapolating we could be 99% confident that the answers would be within 7.8% of the reported numbers.

#### Statistical Data

Each of the questions were given five possible responses:

Always	Mostly	More or less	More or less	Never
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For evaluation purposes the upper two levels, "Always" means a very great extent of the time and "Mostly" signifies a great extent of the time. These were combined into a percentage average and the low two levels, "More or less" which means occasionally and "Never", were combined for another percentage equivalence. It is assumed that the block titled "More or less" is neutral and means sporadic attempts, not permanent change factors that are important for this study. They will be noted but not considered as sufficient evidence for a change factor.

Basic elements of Commitment I: Membership

Each of the questions arises from the major tenants of each of the commitments. The following will be the major topics of the Membership commitment with the question numbers that refers to the specific topic.

1. Understanding of basic doctrine: 7, 9, 10, and 24.

2. Commitment to protect the unity: 1, 3, 4, 5, 6, 8, 11, 12, 13, 14, 36, 44, 2, 15, 25, 27, 30, 32, 42, and 45.

3. Commitment to share responsibilities for the ministry of the church: 46, 18, 20, and 29.

4. Commitment to serve others in some way: 47, 38, 48, 16, 31, 37, and 40.

5. Commitment to support the work of the ministry: 49, 41, 17, 21, and 50.

6. Questions that made reference to Commitment II: 19, 23, 28, 33, and 43.

7. Questions that made reference to Commitment III: 22, 26, 34, 35, and 39.

Basic elements of Commitment II: Discipleship

The following will be the major topics of the Discipleship commitment with the question numbers that refers to the specific topic.

1. Commitment to spend a time alone with God: 1, 6, 19, 23, 24, 28, 44, 48, and 49.

2. Commitment to a daily Bible reading: 2, 9, 12, 14, 15, 16, 21, 26, and 31.

3. Commitment to a prayer ministry: 3, 10, 20, 22, 27, 29, and 33.

4. Commitment to tithing of income: 4, 34, 36, and 37.

5. Commitment to fellowship in a small group: 5, 8, 13, 30, 32, 38, 42, 43, 45, 46, and 50.

6. Questions that made reference to Commitment I: 7, 11, 17, 18, and 25.

7. Questions that made reference to Commitment III: 35, 39, 40, 41, and 47.

#### Basic elements of Commitment III: Ministry

The following will be the major topics of the Ministry commitment with the question numbers that refers to the specific topic:

1. Commitment to discover your spiritual gifts: 2, 6, 32, and 47.

2. Commitment to discover your passion, talents, personality and experiences: 28, 21, 31, 15, 33, 16, and 30.

3. Commitment to participate in a specific ministry: 1, 4, 5, 7, 9, 10, 12, 14, 18, 19, 20, 22, 23, 25, 26, 27, 34, 35, 42, 44, 45, 46, 48, 49, and 50.



4. Commitment to be trained for your specific ministry:  
8, 17, 40, and 41.

5. Commitment to fellowship in a small group ministry:  
5, 8, 13, 30, 32, 38, 42, 43, 45, 46, and 50.

6. Questions that made reference to Commitment I: 11,  
13, 37, 39, and 43.

Questions that made reference to Commitment II: 3, 24,  
29, 36, and 38.

The following are the results of the questionnaires  
according to each level.

Level I: Questionnaire for Membership commitment

The questions underlined are from the Level II  
questions and the questions in italics are from the Level  
III. Summaries of this data will follow in chapter four.

The first part of the questionnaire sought general  
information on the personnel at each level and is common to  
all the questionnaires.

Personal information.

Average Age: 28.1; S.D.: 26

Gender percentages: Male 83%, Female 17%

Married status percentages: Married 42%, Single 58%

1. Highest level of education: Secondary: 24%,  
Technical: 47%, University (at least partial): 24%, other  
studies: 6%.

2. Average time as a member of New Life Baptist Church: 0.9 years
3. Satisfaction with church: 89%
4. Number of Small Group participated in: 6% in none, 24% in one, 41% in two, 29% in three.
5. Average time as a Christian? One to two years: 18%, three to four years: 29%, five to seven years: 12%, eight or more years: 18%
6. Member of another evangelical church: 11%
7. Services missed over the past six months: Average 3.2
8. Friendships with church members: 1-2 12%, 3-5 18%, 6+ 58%
9. Percentage of your gross income given in tithes and offerings for church support: 1-5%: 18%, 6-9%: 37%, 10%: 45%
10. How many times have you invited church members to your home for a dinner in the past year? 0: 6%, 1-3: 36%, 4-5: 41%, More than 5: 18%
11. Approximately how much time you spend in prayer each day? 0-10 min.: 24%, 10-20 min.: 35%, 20-30 min.: 29%, 31-45 min.: 6%, 46-60 min.: 6%.

12. Number of books of the Bible read in the past six months: 0-2: 12%, 3-5: 35%, 6-8: 29%, 9-12: 12%, More than 12: 12%.

13. Time you spend in your ministry involvement: 1 hour: 29%, 2-3 hrs: 35%, 4-7 hrs: 29%, 7-10 hrs: 6%.

14. Have the formal commitment levels (membership, discipleship, or ministry) made a change in your life?  
Yes: 82%, No: 18%

In this questionnaire the questions that refer to other commitment levels are marked as follows: Level II, underlined; Level III, Italics.

Responses to the ministry questionnaire for Level I.

Number	Theme of question	Always	Mostly	More or less	Hardly	Never
1.	I feel like our church is our family	4	5	3	2	0
2.	I respect my pastors as my spiritual leaders	4	5	5	0	0
3.	I sense a genuine relationship with God	4	6	3	1	0
4.	I feel there are areas of my life that show the blessings of God's presence	4	6	3	1	0
5.	Being a member of the church is important to me	9	4	1	0	0
6.	I have a clear understanding of the gospel	10	4	0	0	0

Number	Theme of question	Always	Mostly	More or less	Hardly	Never
	of the gospel					
7.	I enjoy explaining the gospel to others	2	2	7	3	0
8.	I often reflect on how much Christ had to pay in suffering in order to forgive me	4	2	6	2	0
9.	I know there is only one mediator between God and mankind	10	3	1	0	0
10.	I have a full assurance of my salvation	11	2	1	0	0
11.	It was not difficult to accept having to be baptized	10	4	0	0	0
12.	I understand the significance of immersion	11	3	1	0	0
13.	The Lord's Supper is very important to me	12	2	0	0	0
14.	Because of our commitment, our church is united and I feel we care for one another	5	7	2	0	0
15.	I understand the five purposes of our church	7	5	2	0	0
16.	I love the people in our church and I want to learn how to serve them practically	2	4	6	2	0
17.	Our church has made a great difference in my personal worship	4	7	3	0	0
18.	<u>I have made a commitment to bring my unchurched friends to church or to a small group</u>	3	5	4	2	0

Number	Theme of question	Always	Mostly	More or less	Hardly	Never
	<u>meeting to hear the gospel</u>					
19.	<u>I delight in my worship experiences like prayer, singing spiritual songs, listening the to Bible</u>	5	3	5	1	0
20.	Since being committed to membership I have invited my friends to church	6	4	4	0	0
21.	I learn something every weekend in our services that help me	6	6	2	0	0
22.	<u>I am eager to contribute to the service of our church</u>	5	6	3	0	0
23.	I believe in the authority of the Bible and am willing to trust its promises in my daily life	7	6	1	0	0
24.	I do not doubt my salvation	12	2	0	0	0
25.	I think our church is big enough	2	4	6	2	0
26.	<i>I agree that every believer is a priest or minister</i>	3	5	5	1	0
27.	I am glad that our church is independent and not controlled by higher authorities	3	5	5	1	0
28.	I am conscious of the Spirit's power in my daily life	3	4	6	1	0
29.	I have several people I want to help to know the gospel	7	5	2	0	0

Number	Theme of question	Always	Mostly	More or less	Hardly	Never
30.	I understand the strategy of our church's ministry	3	4	6	1	0
31.	I am willing to be a little uncomfortable in church if our program attracts my non-Christian friends	3	6	4	1	0
32.	I really wanted to sign my commitment to this church	2	5	4	3	0
33.	I am conscious of how much I must grow in my Christian life	5	6	3	0	0
34.	My ambition is to contribute a specific role in the life of our church someday	4	6	4	0	0
35.	I am conscious that I am a minister in training	4	5	5	0	0
36.	Respect for unity	4	7	3	0	0
37.	<i>I appreciate that there is no bureaucracy in our church, only different ministries in which to serve</i>	4	6	4	0	0
38.	In our church the pastors are trainers, not the only ministers	3	5	5	1	0
39.	I agree that in our church members lead the ministries as we serve one another	3	6	4	1	0
40.	If Christ is committed to the Church, I want to be as well	4	6	3	1	0
41.	<u>My church has helped in my spiritual growth, marriage and family life</u>	4	6	2	1	0

Number	Theme of question	Always	Mostly	More or less	Hardly	Never
42.	I want the leadership to know they can count on my commitment to help them	8	5	1	0	0
43.	I want to grow spiritually and not stay the same	6	7	1	0	0
44.	I protect the unity of the church by not gossiping and backbiting and gripping	8	6	0	0	0
45.	I am willing to follow our church leaders	10	4	0	0	0
46.	I pray regularly for the growth and salvation of visitors	7	5	2	0	0
47.	I am eager to discover my gifts and use them in serving others	5	5	4	0	0
48.	I feel our pastors have much to teach me that will help me	5	5	4	0	0
49.	I delight in contributing weekly in the offerings	3	4	6	1	0
50.	I am committed to attend the weekly services of our church	10	4	0	0	0

### Questionnaire for Discipleship commitment

In this questionnaire the questions that refer to other commitment levels are marked as follows: Level I, underlined; Level III, Italics. The level I is of special interest to observe the continuance of basic level I convictions.

Personal information.

Average Age: 27.6

Gender percentages: Male: 57%; Female: 43%

Married status percentages: Married: 43%, Single: 57%

1. Highest level of education: Primary: 7%, Secondary: 36%, Technical school: 43%, University: 14%.
2. Employment satisfaction: 64%
3. Average time as a member of New Life: 2.2 years.
4. Satisfaction with church: 71% positively satisfying, 33% emotional, 7% rarely satisfying.
5. Number of Small Group participated in: none: 7%, one: 21%, two: 50%, three: 14%.
6. Average time as a Christian? Less than one year: 22%, one to two years: 43%, two to five years: 21%, five to ten years: 7%, More than ten years: 14%
7. Member of another evangelical church: No, 71%
8. Services missed over the past six months: Five or less: 86%
9. Friendships do you have with church members: one to two: 21%, three to five: 21%, six to ten: 21%, more than ten: 68%



10. Percentage of your gross income you give in tithes and offerings for church support: one to four percent: 29%, five to nine percent: 43%, ten percent: 28%
11. How many times have you invited church members to your home for a dinner in the past year? None: 21%, once: 29%, two to three: 29%, four or more 21%
12. Approximately how much time do you spend in prayer each day? 10 min.: 21%, 10-20 min.: 50%, 20-30 min.: 29%.
13. Number of books of the Bible have you read in the past six months: one to two books: 29%, three to five books 50%, six to eight: 21%
14. Time you spend in your ministry involvement: none: 7%, one hour: 36%, two to three hours 36%, four to six hours: 21%.
15. Has the formal commitment levels (membership, discipleship, or ministry) made a change in your life? Yes: 86% No: 14%

Questionnaire for Level II.

In this questionnaire the questions that refer to other commitment levels are marked as follows: Level I, underlined; Level III, Italics. The level I is of special

interest to observe the continuance of basic level III convictions.

Number	Question for evaluation	Always	Mostly	More or less	Hardly	Never
1.	I understand that the Christian life is not automatic, but rather a process.	10	4	0	0	0
2.	I spend a daily time in God's Word.	3	7	4	0	0
3.	Prayer is very important to my Christian life.	8	5	4	2	0
4.	I have learned to tithe from all my income.	3	5	4	2	0
5.	I love to be around the other Christians and to share with them about my life.	7	5	2	0	0
6.	<u>I am eager to hear what God has to say to me.</u>	7	4	3	0	0
7.	I do not have a closed mind regarding whatever God wants me to do.	8	4	2	0	0
8.	I do not have a superficial mindset, which is willing to accept a form of Christian life, without commitment.	3	5	4	2	0
9.	My mind is not preoccupied with other activities, which case me to ignore the Bible teaching.	2	4	5	3	0
10.	I regularly confess my bad habits and sins, which I want	5	5	2	2	0

Number	Question for evaluation	Always	Mostly	More or less	Hardly	Never
	to abandon.					
11.	I take notes on the sermons and teachings in our church.	1	3	2	3	1
12.	I have been systematic in reading the Bible everyday since making this commitment.	1	4	5	3	1
13.	I genuinely try to act on what I hear taught in our meetings.	5	4	4	1	0
14.	I study the Bible daily looking for truths to apply to my life.	2	5	6	1	0
15.	I have memorized specific Bible verses to resist temptation.	2	4	4	3	1
16.	<u>I have memorize verses to make a good decision.</u>	2	3	5	3	1
17.	<u>I am motivate to invite friends to church meetings.</u>	5	4	4	1	0
18.	I understand the five purposes of the church and I can name them, if asked.	3	5	5	1	0
19.	My devotions strengthen me for the day.	3	3	7	1	0
20.	I have received direction for my life in my prayer time.	5	5	4	0	0
21.	I evaluate my life on a daily basis.	2	5	5	2	0
22.	Everyday the Lord fills me with joy.	1	7	4	2	0

Number	Question for evaluation	Always	Mostly	More or less	Hardly	Never
23.	I have a specific time with God everyday.	3	5	4	2	0
24.	I have a special place to meet with God alone.	3	3	7	1	0
25.	<u>In the past month I have not gossiped, nor gripped about the people or leaders at church.</u>	3	2	5	2	2
26.	I memorize Bible verses regularly.	0	3	5	4	2
27.	I love to worship in prayer.	3	7	4	0	0
28.	I keep finding more reasons to worship God.	7	4	3	0	0
29.	I pray for others on a regular basis and keep a prayer list.	1	5	5	3	0
30.	<i>I have and will reconcile conflicts and offenses that develop between me and others.</i>	3	5	4	2	0
31.	I have a specific plan to follow when I am tempted to sin.	3	5	3	3	0
32.	I have recently asked someone to forgive me for offending or hurting them.	2	5	4	0	3
33.	I can describe a specific answer to prayer that occurred this past month.	6	4	3	1	0
34.	My form of giving keeps me from wanting to be too materialistic.	4	4	5	1	0

Number	Question for evaluation	Always	Mostly	More or less	Hardly	Never
35.	I am participating in a ministry with a specific responsibility according to my gift.	4	2	5	3	0
36.	Since making my commitment I practice tithing weekly.	3	6	4	1	0
37.	I have given God all that I have and am.	4	5	5	0	0
38.	<i>I trust God to bless me when I tithe and give my offerings.</i>	6	5	3	0	0
39.	I receive nourishment and instruction in our church meetings.	7	3	4	0	0
40.	<i>I have a very clear idea about which gift(s) I have.</i>	3	3	5	3	0
41.	I look for things to do for others in our church.	4	5	4	1	0
42.	<i>I enjoy serving even when I don't receive any recognition.</i>	3	3	4	4	0
43.	<u>I regularly invite friends to church and my small group.</u>	1	3	5	3	2
44.	I have seen some of my friends be saved through my efforts.	7	5	2	0	0
45.	I am now willing to be accountable to someone for specific changes in my life.	7	5	2	0	0
46.	Since making my commitment I have formed new spiritual habits in my life.	10	4	0	0	0
47.	My gift really motivate me to serve others.	4	5	3	2	0

Number	Question for evaluation	Always	Mostly	More or less	Hardly	Never
	serve others.					
48.	I know the vision of my church and want to be a part of fulfilling it.	5	7	1	1	0
49.	I consider my life to be different since making a commitment to be a disciple.	4	6	3	1	0
50.	My small group is the key to my commitment to be a long-term disciple.	8	3	2	1	0

Questionnaire for Ministry commitment

Personal information.

Average Age: 28.6, SD: 16.3

Gender percentages: female, 57%; male, 43%.

Married status percentages: Married, 36%; single, 64%.

1. Highest level of education: primary, 21%; secondary, 36%; technical, 36%; university, 7%.
2. Employment satisfaction: 64% satisfactory
3. Average time as a member of New Life: 3.8 years.
4. Satisfaction with church: 73% satisfactory

5. Number of Small Group participated in: none, 7%; one, 57%; two, 36%.
6. Average time as a Christian? One to two years, 79%; three to five years, 21%.
7. Member of another evangelical church: yes, 29%; no, 71%.
8. Services missed over the past six months: five or less, 55%; six or more, 45%.
9. Friendships do you have with church members: none, 14%; one to two, 29%; three to five, 43%; six to ten, 14%.
10. Percentage of your gross income you give in tithes and offerings for church support: five percent or less, 83%; six to nine percent, 7%; ten percent, 11%.
11. How many times have you invited church members to your home for a dinner in the past year? None, 14%; Once, 43%; two to three times, 14%; four to five times, 29%.
12. Approximately how much time do you spend in prayer each day? Less than ten minutes, 14%; 10-20 min., 57%; 20-30 min., 29%.

13. Number of books of the Bible you have read in the past six months: one to two, 21%; three to five books, 50%; six to eight, 29%.
14. Time you spend in your ministry involvement: None, 29%; one hour, 57%; two to three hours, 13%.
15. Has the formal commitment levels (membership, discipleship, or ministry) made a change in your life: Yes, 79%; No, 21%.

Questionnaire for Level III.

In this questionnaire the questions that refer to other commitment levels are marked as follows: Level I, underlined; Level II, Italics. The level I is of special interest to observe the continuance of basic level I convictions.

Number	Question for evaluation	Always	Mostly	More or less	Hardly	Never
1.	I have a strong desire to serve in a ministry of our church.	10	4	3	0	0
2.	I have a clear understanding of God's will since understanding my "workmanship".	5	8	4	0	0
3.	<u>I am active in a small group.</u>	11	2	0	0	4
4.	I am using my spiritual gifts on a weekly basis.	10	5	2	0	0



Number	Question for evaluation	Always	Mostly	More or less	Hardly	Never
	weekly basis.					
5.	I am beginning to serve others in the area of my giftedness.	5	8	3	1	0
6.	My spiritual gifts give me a sense of purpose.	7	5	2	3	0
7.	I accept the fact that I am a minister.	8	3	5	1	0
8.	I know where I have to prepare for an effective ministry.	7	5	4	1	0
9.	I feel others really need my contributions.	6	5	4	2	0
10.	I am willing to be responsible for my ministry.	10	3	3	1	0
11.	<u>I fully enjoy the congregational meetings of our church.</u>	7	4	2	1	0
12.	I feel part of the team.	6	6	4	0	1
13.	<u>I feel that the church is part of my extended family.</u>	6	5	4	2	0
14.	My heart and passion is focused on one clear purpose.	5	6	5	2	0
15.	My personality compliments and contributes to my ministry profiles.	7	5	4	1	0
16.	All my experiences have helped to mature me, even those that hurt me.	10	4	2	1	0
17.	Good teachers have taught me.	3	5	5	3	1
18.	Difficult experiences don't discourage me, because I see their purposes.	4	6	4	3	0

Number	Question for evaluation	Always	Mostly	More or less	Hardly	Never
19.	I have made a commitment to a specific ministry in our church.	10	5	2	0	0
20.	I have been interviewed and am now part of a ministry team.	6	5	3	2	1
21.	I have talents and abilities to use in serving others.	6	7	2	2	0
22.	My gifts really motivate me to serve others.	7	5	3	2	0
23.	Others have confirmed their help or benefit through my service to them.	6	3	5	3	0
24.	<i>I am studying a book of the Bible or a specific theme in the Bible.</i>	5	4	3	5	0
25.	I am willing to become a model of service in my gifted area.	6	7	3	1	0
26.	I feel humbled, yet good, by my gift.	7	3	6	0	1
27.	I am also willing to serve outside my gifted area, if needed.	4	7	3	3	0
28.	God has given me a special passion or burden, that I want to help resolve.	7	4	3	2	1
29.	<i>I practice spiritual disciplines or habits every day.</i>	6	7	3	1	0
30.	My experiences in my youth have helped equip me for my mission.	8	4	4	1	0
31.	I know what my talents are.	8	4	4	1	0
32.	I have been discouraged in the ministry to others.	5	4	7	1	0

Number	Question for evaluation	Always	Mostly	More or less	Hardly	Never
33.	I recognize the strengths and weaknesses of my personality.	5	6	4	2	0
34.	I recognize my "workmanship" as my "calling" in this life.	8	5	3	1	0
35.	I feel fulfilled in serving in my gifted area.	7	5	4	1	0
36.	I continue to practice my daily devotions and prayer for our church.	4	9	4	0	0
37.	Leaders in our local church are recognized for their giftedness.	6	4	4	3	0
38.	I have kept my commitment to tithe my monthly income.	10	2	3	1	1
39.	The key to any ministry is leadership, so I have made a commitment to lead or help our leaders be effective.	9	4	3	0	1
40.	I am being trained for my ministry, as I am involved in service.	4	5	6	1	1
41.	My commitment motivates me to train better.	8	4	4	1	0
42.	I am especially committed to one of the purposes of our church.	8	4	2	1	2
43.	I have kept my commitment not to gossip or gripe about our leaders.	7	2	4	4	0
44.	My service has more expression in church ministries.	6	4	2	4	1
45.	My service has more expression in small group ministries.	5	3	6	2	1
46.	I have practiced my commitment for more than 6 months.	8	3	3	3	0

Number	Question for evaluation	Always	Mostly	More or less	Hardly	Never
	more than 6 months.					
47.	I have a clear sense of God's will for my life since learning my spiritual gift.	11	3	3	0	0
48.	I am actively participating in a ministry of our church.	8	3	4	2	0
49.	I am exercising my giftedness in a specific ministry of our church.	8	3	4	2	0
50.	I feel fulfilled in serving others according to my God-given make-up.	11	0	3	3	0

Basic elements of the questionnaires taken from the instruction guide of each commitment level resulted in the

Basic elements of Commitment I: Membership

The following will be the major topics of the Membership commitment with the question numbers that refers to the specific topic.

8. Understanding of basic doctrine: 7, 9, 10, and 24.

9. Commitment to protect the unity: 1, 3, 4, 5, 6, 8, 11, 12, 13, 14, 36, 44, 2, 15, 25, 27, 30, 32, 42, and 45.

10. Commitment to share responsibilities: 46, 18, 20, and 29.

11. Commitment to serve in some way: 47, 38, 48, 16, 31, 37, and 40.

12. Commitment to support the testimony: 49, 41, 17, 21, and 50.

13. Questions that made reference to Commitment II: 19, 23, 28, 33, and 43.

14. Questions that made reference to Commitment III: 22, 26, 34, 35, and 39.

Basic elements of Commitment II: Discipleship

The following will be the major topics of the Discipleship commitment with the question numbers that refers to the specific topic.

8. Commitment to spend a time alone with God: 1, 6, 19, 23, 24, 28, 44, 48, and 49.

9. Commitment to a daily Bible reading: 2, 9, 12, 14, 15, 16, 21, 26, and 31.

10. Commitment to a prayer ministry: 3, 10, 20, 22, 27, 29, and 33.

11. Commitment to tithing of income: 4, 34, 36, and 37.

12. Commitment to fellowship in a small group: 5, 8, 13, 30, 32, 38, 42, 43, 45, 46, and 50.

13. Questions that made reference to Commitment I: 7, 11, 17, 18, and 25.

14. Questions that made reference to Commitment III:  
35, 39, 40, 41, and 47.

Basic elements of Commitment III: Ministry

The following will be the major topics of the Ministry commitment with the question numbers that refers to the specific topic:

7. Commitment to discover your spiritual gifts: 2, 6, 32, and 47.
8. Commitment to discover your passion, talents, personality and experiences: 28, 21, 31, 15, 33, 16, and 30.
9. Commitment to participate in a specific ministry: 1, 4, 5, 7, 9, 10, 12, 14, 18, 19, 20, 22, 23, 25, 26, 27, 34, 35, 42, 44, 45, 46, 48, 49, and 50.
10. Commitment to be trained for your specific ministry: 8, 17, 40, and 41.
11. Commitment to fellowship in a small group ministry: 5, 8, 13, 30, 32, 38, 42, 43, 45, 46, and 50.
12. Questions that made reference to Commitment I: 11, 13, 37, 39, and 43.

Questions that made reference to Commitment II: 3, 24, 29, 36, and 38.

### Personal Interviews

Following the return of the questionnaires, personal evaluation interviews were organized to determine the personal responses and opinions of the participants in the commitment levels. Some of the data collected from each of the participants in the interviews was not included in this transcript because 1) similar responses were grouped and a common example was included or 2) a few responses got off track and were irrelevant to this research project (ej.: doctrinal issues, family problems or economic problems). The personal interviews are the most general and subjective instruments used in collecting evaluation data, but they do reveal attitudes and reactions to the program that are difficult to assign a numerical equivalent.

Much of the value of the development of commitment in church members is determined not so much by the immediate results of an orientation class leading to a specific commitment, but rather what has remained in the participant's character and discipline after he has been on his own for a period of time. This portion of the evaluation will provide some insight into the long-term effect of the commitments, and what has and has not

functioned in their lives. Personal statements often provide more value than statistics alone. The evaluation interview consisted of six general questions calling for opinions and effects perceived as a result of their making specific commitments. The following is a representative sampling of the evaluation interviews from forty-four participants.

#### Results of the Evaluation Interview

Question #1: What would be the most significant value or principle you gained from the commitments you have made?

José        Although I had graduated from Bible Institute many of the disciplines practiced there had been ignored for several years until faced with the commitment to practice them and someone was going to ask me weekly how I was doing.

Ester        Understanding that the church is not just a meeting place, but also an opportunity to minister instead of just being ministered to, has generated an excitement in me for the church.

Federico    It has given me the incentive to stand up for Christ in the University. Every week someone is asking me if I am faithful to my



commitment while on campus. I know I have to answer to someone.

Angélica For years I thought the church was an obligation and usually a boring one. Now I feel it is mine and the responsibility for its success depends on my contribution.

Christian It is so easy to assume you are a good Christian because you may not smoke or get drunk or drugged, but now the definition of a spiritual Christian is clear and the steps can not be ignored or denied.

David The motivation to grow and be consistent in every phase of your life now makes sense.

Jorge I used to think I was a good Christian, but I never knew what it took to be one. I thought my opinion was as good as anybody's, but did not realize how to recognize spiritual leaders. Now I want to progress through the commitments to acquire my mission in life.

Ana Now I can understand my husband's enthusiasm for the church ministry.

Guillermo Being accountable to a small group of friends for spiritual habits and obedience to the Bible has changed my life. The commitments

started me right, but the small groups kept me on the right track.

Question #2: What do you see as the long-term effect of these commitments?

Juan I can't pretend any longer to be something I'm not. I am now a disciple for life. I don't ever want to get away from this church.

Esteban I came to know the Lord in the Membership commitment class. I never knew what it meant to be saved. I'll never be the same.

José My commitments to my fellow members and to practice the Bible teachings have forced me to take the Bible serious. Before I could hear something taught and ignore it. Not now.

Edgar I was pretty stagnated in my life, faking it more than living it. No one ever knew the difference. I began to believe that everyone was faking it and did not have confidence in anyone. Now we are all struggling together.

Maria I used to be very careless with my tongue, but now have committed to only speak about others what builds up their reputation.

Marcos I have never been in a church where the ministry was made to depend upon the members. When I understood the concept of how to minister to others, my whole church concept changed. I know how to minister to others and love doing it.

Question #3: How has your commitment influenced your attitude toward the church and your role in the ministry?

Edgar I was getting pretty discouraged about my role in the ministry.

Reynaldo I always thought the leadership in the church was to be on a committee and make decisions for the entire ministry. This concept has changed the church concept to being serving others instead of power struggles on church boards. My whole ambition in the church has changed.

Cirilo I never thought I could have a part in the ministry. I thought it was just for preachers and deacons. Now I am committed to help in the youth ministry and it feels good.

Raúl I recognize that my gifts are helping gifts so I don't need to be in the leadership. I want to help another leader to be successful in the ministry as we work together.

David It has been amazing how the church has supported the concept of everyone having a ministry. I want to be faithful to my commitments so I can fulfill a ministry that will please the Lord.

Question #4: What effect has the commitments had on your relationships with church members and the leadership?

Leandro The membership commitment to never gossip and not criticize the pastors to others was not easy. Twice friends have told me to watch what I say. Now I can accept their exhortation.

Ricardo I sense in the church a unique spirit of cooperation and enthusiasm, which I guess, come from so many being involved in a ministry or small group. It is great to see.

Christian Since we are committed to being obedient our small group searches the sermon on Sunday to

see what we are should be doing. When we meet we challenge each other to keep alive our commitment to be doers of the Word.

Federico I thank the Lord for our leaders who have entrusted me with a small group of people to lead.

Edgar I feel indebted to our leaders for the opportunity and training that I have received.

Reynaldo The change of deacons really affected me. I was resentful at first, because I thought all the authority was restricted to the pastors. When I was given the authority for a ministry, I began to understand. Now I feel we are genuinely sharing the church ministry.

Cirilo I feel that the pastors are my trainers, not my bosses. They are dedicated to helping me with my ministry.

Question #5: Has the series of commitments affected your family relationships as a parent or couple?

Juan For years I never knew how to be a spiritual leader in the family. I knew about devotions but never could do it with the family. My wife never respected me. Now that I have made the commitment to be consistent I have started sharing in my family. I am beginning to have respect.

Amado Our whole family took the commitment to be disciples and we started a small group in our home. Now our family has a ministry together.

Ricardo I have learned what I can teach my family. We share so many experiences now that our family has united as never before.

Question #6: On a scale of 1-10 what number represents your spiritual disciplines BEFORE making the commitments and which number represents your practice of spiritual disciplines AFTER making your commitments?

The average number selected for the "before" choice was 3.8 with an SD of 0.9. The average number selected for the "after" choice was 8.6 with an SD of 1.1. The choices were unanimously clear marking dramatic differences in their perspective of their own spiritual lives. This is

admittedly a subjective evaluation subject to either exaggeration of the worst and best of their personal maturity level. The significant factor, however, was the consistency of the responses.

#### Conclusion

Each of the questions on the three questionnaires came from an emphasis given in the respective class material for each level of development. The questionnaire was given to those who had passed a minimum of 6 months since making their last commitment to a specific level of their development to determine the level of continuance of their original commitment.

The questionnaire results showed a high level of continuance in each of the three levels of commitment and a positive attitude toward the spiritual habits or disciplines. The interviews revealed that the catalyst to the lifestyle changes was the emphasis on everyone making a specific volitional commitment following a brief clarification of the purpose, value and nature of that commitment. With an average of 82% of the participants declaring that their formal commitment marked a turning point in their spiritual lives, the questionnaires should reflect positive attitudes.

## CHAPTER 4

### FINDINGS

The three descriptive surveys used in this research were designed to reveal the progressive transformation in the lives of our church members after making agreements to practice specific spiritual disciplines according to their different levels of commitment to the church, their spiritual lives and ministry. The objective was to discover if the making of a commitment made a difference in their lives.

The three surveys called for specific and general responses in an effort to determine the amount of continuance of attitudes and habits. Admittedly the surveys resulted in a picture of the person at a moment of time. The comparison between two separated periods of time, perhaps a year or two might reveal more conclusive data. The interviews were designed to uncover the desire for knowing God and His will through the spiritual disciplines of the commitment levels and their long-term commitment to continuance.

In each of the three commitments there were forty questions over that specific commitment and ten over the other two commitments. The forty questions were comprised



of various aspects of the four or five basic elements of each of the commitment levels.

#### Summary Data

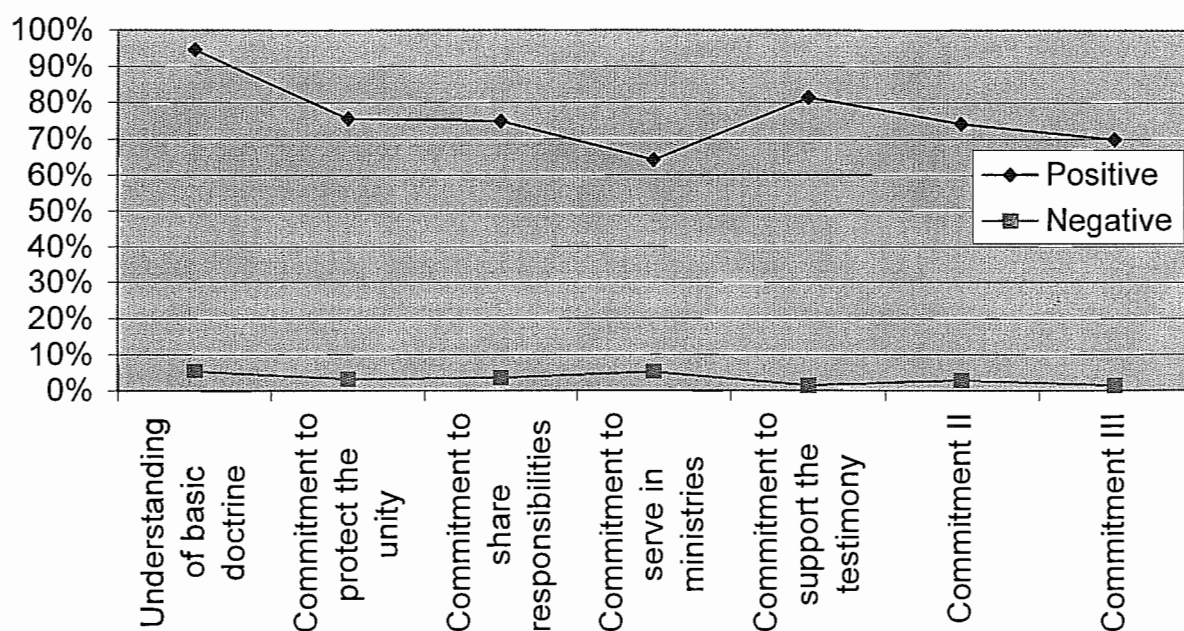
By combining the data collected from each of the major areas for each of the commitments, the following were results were observed:

#### The statistical combined results

The combination of the statistics was designed to compare positive, if not absolute, indications towards new practices that should indicate a move toward the practice of spiritual disciplines. The option in the questionnaires titled "More or less" is a neutral selection that has been eliminated from this consideration. It indicates neither a rejection nor a positive trend so it is not considered unless it is nearly as large as either one of the aforementioned.

Basic elements of Commitment I.

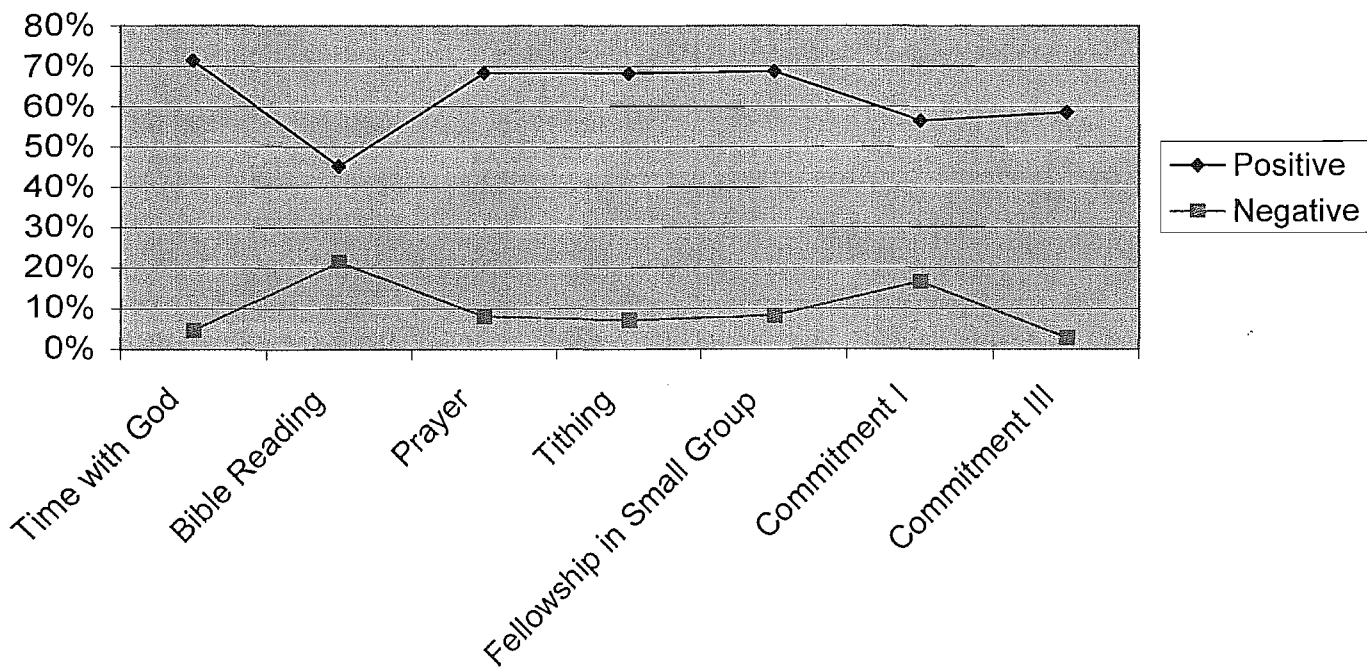
	Positive	Negative
Understanding of basic doctrine	95%	5%
Commitment to protect the unity	76%	3%
Commitment to share responsibility	75%	4%
Commitment to serve in ministries	64%	5%
Commitment to support the testimony	81%	1%
Questions about Commitment II	74%	3%
Questions about Commitment III	70%	1%

**Graph of Commitment I**

Basic elements of Commitment II.

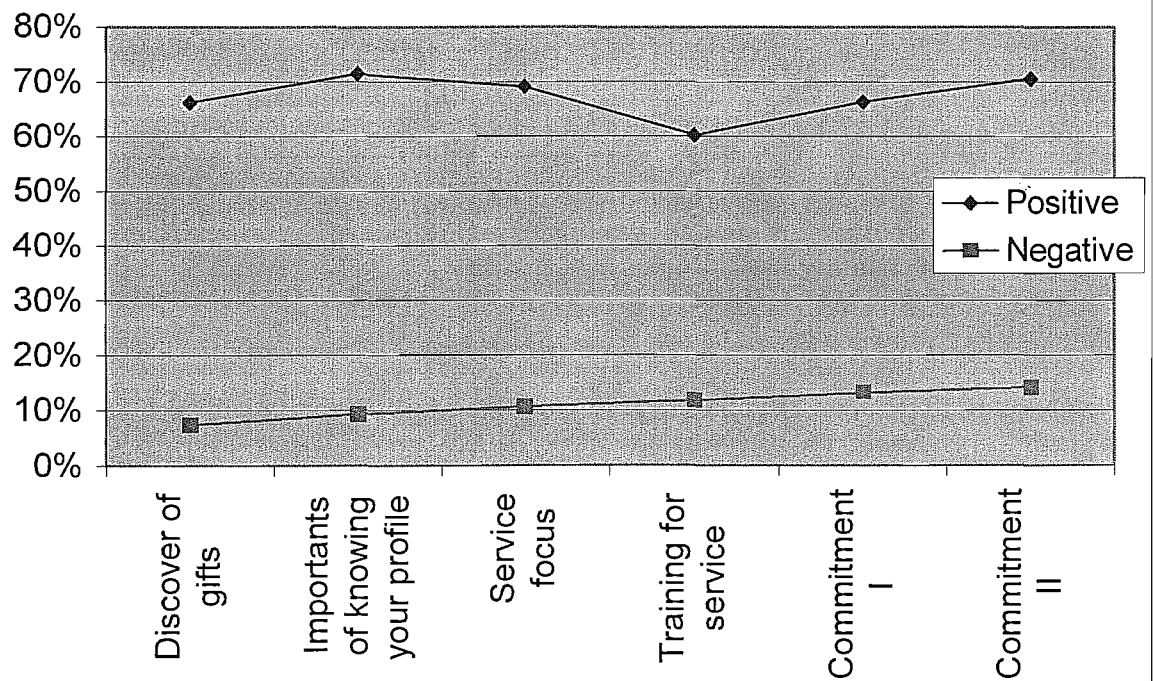
	Positive	Negative
Commitment to a time with God	71%	5%
Commitment to a daily Bible reading	45%	21%
Commitment to a prayer ministry	68%	8%
Commitment to a tithe	68%	7%
Commitment to a Small Group	69%	8%
Questions about Commitment I	57%	17%
Questions about Commitment III	59%	3%

**Graph of Commitment II**



Basic elements of Commitment III.

	Positive	Negative
Commitment to spiritual gifts	66%	7%
Commitment to discover your passion, Personality, talent and Experience factors	71%	9%
Commitment to a ministry focus	69%	11%
Commitment to training for service	60%	12%
Questions about Commitment I	66%	13%
Questions about Commitment II	71%	14%

**Graph of Commitment III**

## Changes in Variables

The questionnaire served as a personal inventory of how each participant viewed himself. This provided numerical data to present a graphic view of the impact of the program on individuals in the church.

The higher negative responses in the Commitment II and III, of 14% and 10% respectively, at first indicated some surprise and alarm, but then two factors must be understood: 1) The higher level of personal discipline required to put into practice these commitments. 2) These commitments should be understood to require more time and patience. The average time since making the commitments II and III, was barely 5.8 months.

The second variable factor that was key to the formation of new spiritual discipline habits was the participation in a small group. When the church member participated in a small group, the negative responses for the Commitments II and III were 4.6% and 4.8% respectively (as opposed to the 14% and 10% of the entire group tested). The higher percentage of negative expression in the Commitment III was partially due to the assumption that the participant was involved in an active ministry. Where this was not yet the case the responses tended to be more

negative. Most of those not yet involved in a ministry were still in the process of interviews and the selection of a ministry. It is assumed that a number of their negative responses are due to the lack of ministry participation.

#### Data from Interviews

The personal interviews were conducted after the completion of the questionnaire with the purpose of verifying the questionnaire data and gaining a general impression of what the participants thought was most significant to them and how firm they were in maintaining their commitment. The questions asked were of a semi-structured nature, that is, they did not have a predetermined, structured choice, but rather allowed individual response to specific behavioral attitudes. The questions were reasonably objective yet occasionally required clarifications.

The interviews were conducted after a brief informal explanation of the objective and benefits of knowing the real causes of life change in believers. The participants were promised a report of both the questionnaire and interviews for their understanding and comparison of their

opinions with others. The interviews were recorded on a small tape recorder for later transcribing.

In the interviews the focus was to determine if the participant felt there was a significant change in his spiritual growth as a result of the commitment level approach. Since the questionnaire only revealed the momentary status of the participant, the interview sought to reveal the changes and attributing causes.

#### Contrast between before and after

The responses to the questions about having initiated new practices for developing spiritual maturity indicated that eighty-six percent either renewed an abandoned practice or initiated spiritual disciplines for the first time (examples: daily Bible reading, meditation, structured prayer habits, journaling, tithing and small group participation). Another nine percent had been practicing these disciplines before the application of the program; however, of this group all were former Bible Institute graduates and had originally learned these disciplines there.

Only 17% reported little or no change had occurred as a result of making the commitments. Of this group there were two elements in common: 1) 45% of this group had previous Bible Institute training. The majority of these

participants already were practicing the spiritual disciplines. 2) An additional 32% were not participating in a small group where mutual accountability could encourage the practices.

#### Expression of cause

In almost every interview people expressed a conviction that being obligated (graciously) to make a specific commitment to a specific behavior was the prime factor in making a change in their life. When asked in the interviews if they would have responded to an oral challenge to form the same spiritual habits, 84% said that though they knew it was the right thing to do, they did not have the fortitude or determination to spontaneously make it happen in their lives. It took the signing of a commitment, being individually challenged with a decision or being a part of a small group that were making similar commitments while talking about it continually among themselves to make the difference.

#### What if never challenged by the commitment level

This question brought the most revealing of the interview responses. Virtually one hundred percent of the participants who had changed said they probably would have never practiced any of the spiritual disciplines. One said



that it took being "pushed over the edge" for him to be able to keep practicing the disciplines.

Acceptance of responsibility for personal and corporate growth in maturity

Perhaps because some of these changes have occurred in the past six months or less, almost half said that they needed the constant reminders and encouragement to stay consistent with their commitments. The small groups are encouraged not to put people on guilt trips, a form of manipulation, but rather to share the personal benefits of the practices and the positive experiences with the Lord as a result of keeping the commitments.

The other factor that was repeated in nearly all the interviews was the sense of personal satisfaction and enjoyment now in their relationship with the Lord. This has become an internal motivation to continue the disciplines.

Summary

It is not easy to measure the spiritual maturity motivated by a program. However well the foregoing results may reflect the spiritual maturity of the individuals who participated in this evaluation, only time will truly determine the genuine outcome. The questionnaire/interview approach to evaluating this program certainly indicates

considerably more positive than negative convictions in the lives of the participants. The sense of unity that one has in living among the members of the church coincides with the results of the evaluations. The enthusiasm for worship and ministry that is so evident in the congregation now has reason for being.

Conclusions drawn from the interviews were more positive than I had anticipated. The sensation that they have an active ministry, are vital to the ongoing ministry, and are pleasing God with their lives generates a positive spirit within the church. They are growing and progressing towards spiritual goals and their lives are counting for eternity. This generates a motivation that could never be obligated or manipulated.

## CHAPTER 5

### CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The Commitment Level Model church was shown to produce desired results in a Latin American church. The process of evaluating this Model has proven to be rewarding and valuable for our strategic planning. When one institutes changes in a church, there is always a risk that people will be hurt, divisions will occur or the program itself will fail. When these fears are proven to be false, there is great relief.

#### Conclusions

The project has given credibility to a first-time attempt at breaking the traditional church model without going to extremes and keeping the spiritual health of the church as a priority. The program itself is nothing new or revolutionary. It simply puts the Christian priorities in a sequence that is accomplished by a series of commitments. The commitments are neither secret nor private. Lists are maintained of the progress of every individual church member. The pastors are constantly reviewing the list to observe the progress of individuals.

The findings of this research have been a great encouragement to the pastors of New Life Baptist Church, as

well as an orientation of where to focus more emphasis for improvement. It has confirmed that a helpful structure in the United States can be transferred to a Latin American church and generate similar healthy results in lives. From these results we sense a freedom to encourage other churches in Latin America to make the significant changes necessary to build maturity into the lives of their congregation.

Win Arn (1988) showed that between 80 to 85 percent of the evangelical church is declining (p. 41). Wagner (1996) declared that the "causes for nongrowth in many churches can be traced to spiritual conditions. . . . When people in the church are not growing in the things of God or in their relationships with one another, the total health of the church deteriorates, and the church cannot grow" (p. 119). It is not because of improper doctrine, but because the people are not being taught how to practice what they know. There are too many assumptions. Measuring spirituality by church attendance and committee participation must cease. The CLM is not an experience-oriented program, but rather a spiritual-discipline-oriented program. The values of the Scriptures are held high, not the sensations or experiences

that one may have in his walk with God. Experiences are not bad, but they are not Biblical priorities.

One of the many results of this program has been the commitment of six small group leaders to prepare themselves for a pastoral ministry. Their experience in their gifted area was so successful and gratifying that they have begun a program of leadership development for the fourth commitment, that of their life's mission. This latter commitment was beyond the scope of this research paper, but the project sparked its development.

Perhaps one of the most significant results of the application of this Model to our church has been a unifying effect by creating a congregation likeminded in their perspective of the Christian life. The expectation of what a mature Christian is has been clarified. The goal of becoming a serving servant, not a ruling leader, and fulfilling the specific ministry that God has given to each one as he daily learns to walk in His presence are becoming the concepts that unify the church.

Although outside the scope of this project, the Commitment Level Model is now being practiced by five other churches in Argentina and Paraguay with similar results. Sharing these results has been very encouraging to other

churches and has motivated them to use the evaluation tools for their church as well.

#### Limitations

The effectiveness of the Commitment Level Model is more than just the three or four commitments, but rather the whole infrastructure that must accompany the commitments. It can be frustrating to encourage someone to discover their gifts and get involved in a ministry then not guide him into a ministry in which to participate. Expectations must be fulfilled or they cease to be a motivation. This requires a staff committed to building other people's ministries, not their own and a specially engineered training program according to gifted ministry orientation, instead of the traditional single-track training for the pulpit ministry. Churches must make a shift from the traditional leadership training to a ministry training, which may be less glamorous, but much more inclusive. Without this type of infrastructure from the top down the commitments will only be partially effective. It will always be better than the traditional pew-setter mentality, but may not reach the level of a "released" church full of ministers eager to serve others however God has equipped them.

Another limiting factor is the availability of materials and specialized training for launching this program. All the materials that we have used in Spanish are available through our church office in Asunción, Paraguay (Casilla de correo 15068). Materials in English are available through Saddleback Community Church, P. O. Box 6080-388, Mission Viejo, CA 92691 or can be downloaded directly from the internet (<http://www.pastors.com>).

Fear can be a major obstacle to the growth of the church in the world. A type of fear that effects churches can be a fear of what others will think, fear that a program or entrusted individual will fail, fear that one can not control the changes, fear that it might get out of hand or fear that all of the above will happen and I will look bad. However, fear is usually derived from the imagination, not the reality. As Proverbs says it, "The sluggard says, "There is a lion outside!" or, "I will be murdered in the streets!" (22:13, NIV). Fears are usually unfounded and imaginary become the justification for inactivity; however, the sensation one feels can be identical to the real thing. Hopefully one of the results of this project will be to dispense with possible fears in

the minds of church leaders to generate a change, which will give the healthy results desired in their churches.

#### Key elements to the success

The evaluation of the Commitment Level Model has made a significant contribution towards discovering areas for improvement and effectiveness of the local church ministry. The author hopes to continue in the development of a better evaluation tool for quickly assessing the needs of the local churches, even before implementing the Commitment Level Model. However there are some specific steps, which should be addressed to have an effective program:

1. The question of accountability should be on the lips of everyone. The saying goes, "You get what you inspect, not what you expect." This is ever true in training volunteer church members. People should be taught to incorporate into their small group vocabulary, "Tell me what God is teaching you in your devotions" or "How can we apply the values of the pastor's message on Sunday?" What we talk about is what we are going to produce. People must know that at some point weekly someone is going to lovingly ask them to describe something relating to their spiritual disciplines. If everyone knows that no one is going to



ask, then the get-by-with-the-least attitude takes over for the majority.

2. The accountability must be mutual and reciprocal. Even if someone has failed to fulfill consistently the discipline that he was asked to explain, he must return the favor by asking the original asker the same question. This teaches that failure does not mean rejection and that genuineness and transparency are possible.

3. The value of the contribution of small groups to the continuance of commitments cannot be over stressed. Testimonies should be used in the congregational setting to communicate the value of the small group. Leaders should be taught and held accountable for holding their group accountable for the spiritual disciplines and the emphasis of the Sunday message.

4. The ministry teams, pastoral teams, worship teams and others who may not be in a formal small group, but are in essence a small group themselves, must develop mutual accountability among themselves, without attempting to show each other up. It is impossible to show yourself genuine or transparent in a public ministry unless it is learned first in the private ministry of a small group of caring friends.

5. A program is nothing more than a structure that must be oiled constantly with repentance, brokenness and the living presence of God through praying often together.

#### Recommendations

The implications of this church concept are far reaching. If "teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you" (Mt 28:20) is as important a part of the great commission as any other part, then the church must develop the infrastructure not only to tell them what they are to obey, but to create a strategy for making sure that they are obeying continually the teachings of Jesus. This would mean a shift from just the pulpit or preaching skills emphasis in most existing training programs to the development of an organizational and training skill program, a technique similar to coaching, in order to help pastors mature their people into ministers. A leader who sees the value of all of the spiritual gifts functioning in a church and who has learned how to mature each member to their maximum capability is a skill to be developed. For these reasons the Commitment Level Model, however it may be modified, may deserve a focal place in the training and development of pastors.

In closing, this project has a strong message for those who seek to reform the church in order to unleash the dynamic potential held within every congregation. The extremist positions, the emotional manipulative positions of church structures are only superficial. The basics of commitment to unity, discipleship, serving and personal mission in life have always been and will always be the key to the expansion of the church to "every creature" that Christ so desires to help and empower us realize. These are the foundations of the Commitment Level Model that is being used in a church in Asuncion, Paraguay, South America.

## Questionnaire for Membership commitment

1. I feel like our church is our family
2. I respect our pastors as my spiritual leaders
3. I sense a genuine relationship with God
4. I feel there are areas of my life that show the blessing of God's presence
5. Being a member of the church is important to me
6. I have a clear understanding of the gospel
7. I enjoy explaining the gospel to others
8. I often reflect on how much Christ had to pay in suffering in order to forgive me
9. I know there is only one mediator between God and mankind
10. I have a full assurance of my salvation
11. It was not difficult to accept having to be baptized
12. I understand the significance of immersion
13. I agree that every believer should be baptized
14. The Lord's supper is very important to me
15. I sense that our church is very united, and care for one another
16. I understand the five purposes of our church
17. I love the people in our church and I want to learn how to serve them.
18. Our church has made a great difference in my personal worship
19. I have a special burden to bring my unchurched friends to a church or small group meeting to hear the gospel
20. I delight in worship experiences like prayer, singing spiritual songs, listening to the Bible
21. I have invited my friends to church
22. I learn something every weekend in our services that helps me
23. I am eager to contribute to the service of our church
24. I understand the main doctrines of our church
25. I believe in the authority of the Bible and am willing to trust its promises in my daily life
26. I do not doubt my salvation
27. I think our church is big enough
28. Our church emphasizes that every believer is a priest or minister
29. I am glad our church is independent and not controlled by higher authorities
30. I am conscious of the Spirit's power in my daily life.
31. I have several people I want to help to know the gospel
32. I understand the strategy of our church ministry.
33. I am willing to be a little uncomfortable in church if our program attracts my non-Christian friends.
34. I really want to sign my commitment to this church.
35. I am conscious of how much I must grow in my Christian life.
36. My ambition is to contribute a specific role in the life of our church someday.
37. I am conscious that I am a minister in training.
38. I have a great respect for the unity of our church.
39. I appreciate that there is no bureaucracy in our church, only different ministries to serve.
40. In our church the pastors are trainers, not ministers.
41. In our church, members lead the ministries as we serve one another.
42. If Christ is committed to the church, I want to be as well.
43. The church has helped in my spiritual growth, marriage and family.
44. I want the leadership to know they can count on my to help.
45. I want to grow spiritually and not stay the same.
46. I protect the unity of the church by not gossiping and backbiting and gripping.
47. I am willing to follow our church leaders.
48. I pray regularly for the growth and salvation of visitors.
49. I am eager to discover my gifts and use them in serving others.
50. I feel our pastors have much to teach me that will help me.
51. I delight in contributing weekly in the offerings.
52. I am committed to attend the services of our church.

## Questionnaire for Discipleship commitment

1. I understand the Christian life is not automatic, but rather a process.
2. I spend a time daily in God's Word.
3. Prayer is very important to my Christian life.
4. I have learned to tithe from all my income.
5. I love to be around the other Christians and to share with them our lives.
6. I am eager to hear what God has to say to me.
7. I do not have a closed mind regarding whatever God wants me to do.
8. I do not have a superficial mindset, which is willing to accept a form of Christian life, without commitment.
9. My mind is not preoccupied with other activities, which causes me to ignore the Bible teaching.
10. I regularly confess my bad habits and sins, which I want to abandon.
11. I take notes on the sermons and teachings in our church.
12. I have been systematic in reading the Bible everyday since making this commitment.
13. I genuinely try to act on what I hear taught in our meetings.
14. I have read through the entire NT.
15. I study the Bible looking for truths to apply to my life.
16. I memorize specific Bible verses to resist temptation.
17. I have memorized verses to help make a good decision.
18. The Bible verses I have memorized have helped strengthen me under stress.
19. The scriptures I know have been a comfort.
20. I want to meditate on the Scriptures to be more like Christ.
21. I sense when I am full of the Scriptures I tend to have more answered prayers.
22. I really enjoy my time alone with God.
23. My devotions strengthen me for the day.
24. I have received direction for my life in my prayer time.
25. I evaluate my life on a daily basis.
26. Everyday the Lord fills me with joy.
27. I have a specific time with God everyday.
28. I have a special place where I meet with God alone.
29. I have a specific plan for my devotions that I follow everyday.
30. I get up early to meet with God.
31. If I miss a day in my devotions, I don't get discouraged.
32. I love to worship in prayer.
33. I have and keep finding more reasons to worship God.
34. I pray for others on a regular basis and keep a prayer list.
35. I have and will always reconcile conflicts and offences that develop between me and others.
36. I have a specific plan to follow when I am tempted to sin.
37. I can forgive others when they hurt me.
38. I have discovered new aspects of God's character in my Bible study.
39. I can describe a specific answer to prayer that occurred this month.
40. My form of giving keeps me from wanting to be too materialistic.
41. I consider giving as an investment in the kingdom.
42. Giving generates a joy in my spirit.
43. I practice tithing weekly.
44. I give an offering beyond the tithe.
45. I have given to God everything I have and am.
46. I trust God to bless me when I tithe and give offerings.
47. I receive nourishment and instruction in our church meetings.
48. I have a specific service role in our church where I can serve others.
49. I look for things to do for others in our church.
50. I enjoy serving others, even when I don't receive any recognition.
51. I am active in a small group.
52. I regularly invite my friends to church and to my small group.
53. I have seen some of my friends saved through my efforts.
54. I have a strong desire to mature spiritually.
55. I am willing to be accountable to someone for specific in my life.
56. I have formed new spiritual habits in my life.
57. I know the vision of our church and want to be a part of fulfilling it.
58. I consider my life to be different since making a commitment to be a disciple.
59. I consider myself to be growing as a disciple.

## Questionnaire for Ministry commitment

1. I have a strong desire to serve in a ministry of our church.
2. I have a clear understanding of God's will since knowing my "workmanship" profile.
3. I feel I have discovered my spiritual gift(s).
4. I am using my spiritual gifts on a weekly basis.
5. I am constantly learning how to serve others.
6. My spiritual gifts give me a sense of purpose.
7. I accept the fact that I am a minister.
8. I know where I have to prepare for an effective ministry.
9. I feel others really need my contributions.
10. I am willing to be responsible for my ministry.
11. I know where I fit in with other servants in the church ministry.
12. I feel part of the team.
13. God has made me unique and I accept it gladly.
14. My heart and passion is focused on one clear purpose.
15. My personality compliments and contributes to my ministry profile.
16. All my experiences have helped to mature me, even those that hurt me.
17. Good teachers have taught me.
18. Difficult experiences don't discourage me, because I see their purpose.
19. I have made a commitment to a specific ministry in our church.
20. I have been interviewed and am now part of a ministry team.
21. I have talents and abilities to use in serving others.
22. My gifts really motivate me to serve others.
23. Others have confirmed their help or benefit through my service to them.
24. I am content with my gifts.
25. I am willing to become a model of service in my gifted area.
26. I feel humbled, yet good, by my gift(s).
27. I am also willing to serve outside my gifted area, if needed.
28. God has given me a special passion or burden, where I want to help resolve.
29. The history of my life points in a specific direction.
30. My experiences in my youth have helped equip me for my mission.
31. I know what my talents are.
32. I have been discouraged in the ministry to others.
33. I recognize the strengths and weaknesses (limitations) of my personality.
34. I recognize my "workmanship" as my "calling" in this life.
35. I feel fulfilled in serving in my gifted area.
36. The priority of my service to the Lord is through the local church.
37. Leaders in our local church are recognized for their giftedness.
38. I feel a part of our church body as a functioning part.
39. The key to any ministry is leadership so I have vowed to lead or help our leaders.
40. I am being trained for my ministry, as I am involved in service.
41. My commitment motivates me to train better.
42. I am especially committed to one of the purposes of our church.
43. I have learned to take correction in my service.
44. My service has more expression in church ministries.
45. My service has more expression in small group ministries.
46. I have practiced my commitment for more than 6 months.
47. Which of the following would you identify as your spiritual gift? (check all that are true)
 

<input type="checkbox"/> Leadership	<input type="checkbox"/> Faith	<input type="checkbox"/> Counseling	<input type="checkbox"/> Organization	<input type="checkbox"/> Pastoral service
<input type="checkbox"/> Teaching	<input type="checkbox"/> Evangelism	<input type="checkbox"/> Serving		
48. I am actively participating in a ministry of our church
49. I am exercising my giftedness in a specific ministry of our church
50. I feel fulfilled in serving others according to my God-given makeup

# General questionnaire for all commitment levels

## Personal information

Level of commitment made: \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_  
 Age \_\_\_\_\_ Gender \_\_\_\_\_ Married status \_\_\_\_\_

1. Highest level of education:
  - Primary
  - High School
  - Technical training
  - University
  - Other
2. Employment satisfaction:
  - Content at present job
  - I have a future at present job
  - I am unfulfilled in secular work
3. When did you become a member of Vida Nueva? \_\_\_\_\_
4. My church:
  - Fulfills my needs
  - Seldom meets my needs
  - Is exciting
5. I have participated in \_\_\_\_ small groups:
  - 0
  - 1
  - 2
  - 3
6. I regularly attend the following services:
  - Sat night
  - Sun morning
  - Wed. prayer meeting

## Select the response which best describes your true Christian life (not what you want to be, but what you are)

1. How many friends do you spend time with who are not church members?
  - None
  - 1-2
  - 2-4
  - 5-7
  - 8 or more
2. How long have you been a Christian?
  - Less than 1 year
  - 1-2 years
  - 3-5 years
  - 6-10 years
  - 11-20 years
  - 20-30 years
  - More than 30 years
3. Have you been a member of another church?
  - Yes
  - No
4. How many services have you missed over the past six months?
  - 0
  - 1-2
  - 3-5
  - 6-8
  - 9-12
  - More
5. How many friendships do you have with church members?
  - None
  - 1-2
  - 3-5
  - 6-10
  - 11-20
  - 21-30
  - More than 30
6. Approximately what percentage of your gross income do you give in tithes and offerings for church support?
  - Less than 1%
  - 1-4%
  - 5%
  - 6-9%
  - 10%
  - More than 10%
7. How many times have you invited church members to your home for a dinner in the past year?
  - None
  - Once
  - 2-3 times
  - 4-5 times
  - More than 5 times
8. Approximately how much time do you spend in prayer each day?
  - Less than 10 min
  - 10-20 min
  - 21-30 min
  - 31-45 min
  - 46-60 min
  - 61-90 min
  - More than 90 min
9. How many books of the Bible have you read in the past six months?
  - 0
  - 1-2
  - 3-5
  - 6-8
  - 9-12
  - More
10. Approximately how much time do you spend in your ministry involvement?
  - None
  - 1 hour
  - 2-3 hours
  - 4-6 hours
  - 7-10 hours
  - More than 10 hours
1. Has the formal commitment levels (membership, discipleship, or ministry) made a change in your life?
  - Yes
  - No

## PERSONAL INTERVIEW FOR PROGRAM EVALUATION

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Level of Commitment Made: \_\_\_\_\_ When? \_\_\_\_\_

Part of a Small Group? Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

1. What would be the most significant value or principle you gained from the commitments you have made?
  
  
  
  
  
2. What do you see as the long-term effect of these commitments?
  
  
  
  
  
3. How has your commitment influenced your attitude toward the church and your role in the ministry?
  
  
  
  
  
4. What effect has the commitments had on your relationships with church members and the leadership?
  
  
  
  
  
5. Has the series of commitments affected your family relationships as a parent or couple?
  
  
  
  
  
6. On a scale of 1-10 underline the number that represented your spiritual disciplines BEFORE making your commitments and circle the number, which represents your practice of spiritual disciplines AFTER making your commitments.

\_\_\_\_\_

1      2      3      4      5      6      7      8      9      10

Least spiritual habits

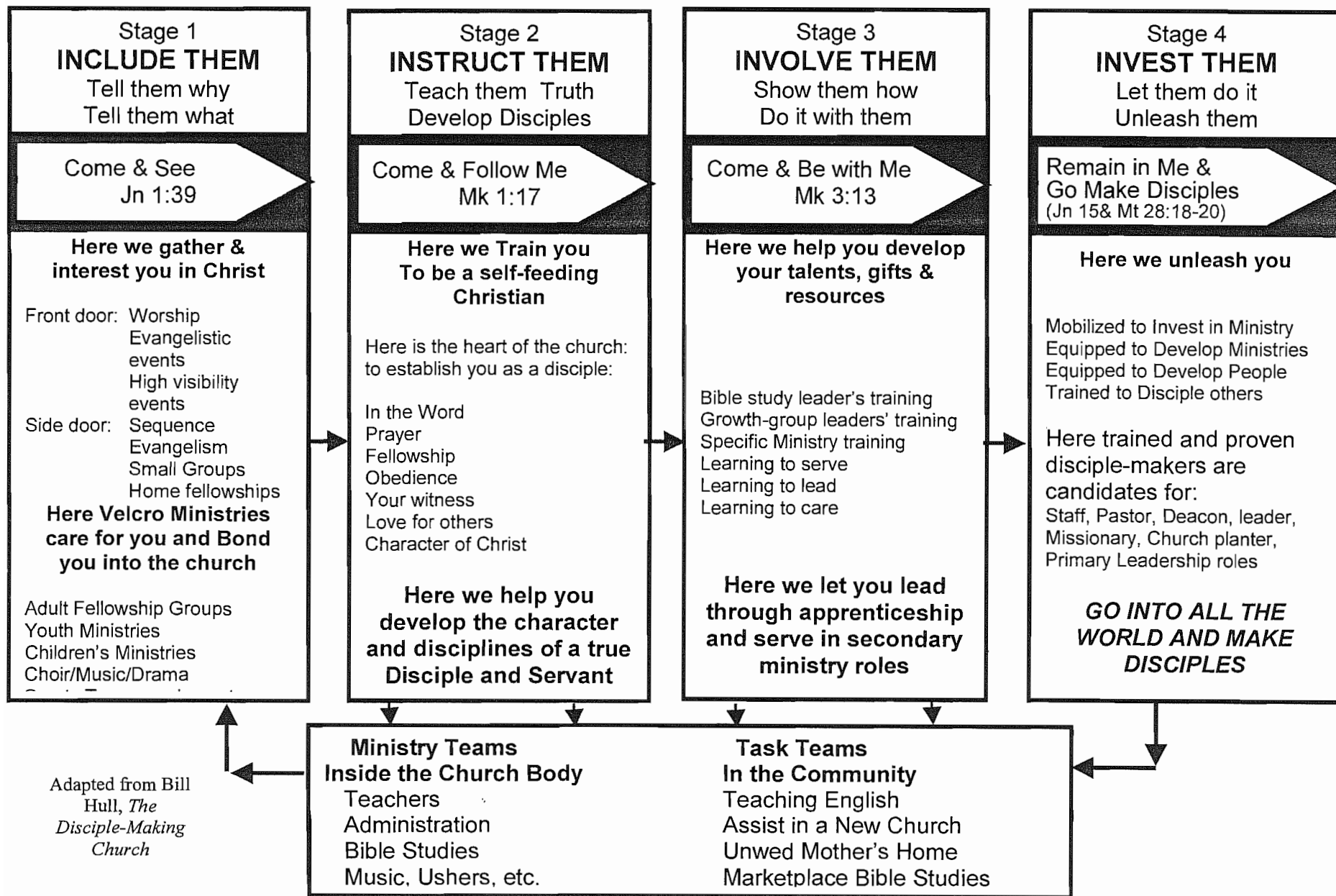
Most spiritual habits



# Four Stages of Spiritual Development

## Church-Centered Disciple-Building Structure

Building Healthy Christians in Today's Church



Adapted from Bill Hull, *The Disciple-Making Church*

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