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## An Analysis of the Gift of Faith in Church Growth

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ANALYSIS OF THE GIFT OF FAITH  
IN CHURCH GROWTH

A Dissertation  
Submitted to the Faculty of  
The School of Theology Fuller  
Theological Seminary

In Partial Fulfillment  
The Requirements for the Degree  
Doctor of Ministry

by  
Elmer L. Towns  
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## INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this dissertation is to examine the gift of faith in church growth. It is the author's hypothesis that faith in the pastor when properly exercised will result in church growth. However, since the hypothesis concerns Christian service, the author has sharpened his focus to analyze the gift of faith in church growth. To accomplish this aim, seven questions were asked.

1. How is the term spiritual gift used in Christian literature?
2. How is the term gift of faith used in Christian literature?

These two questions gave direction to the author for his original research and the answers are found in Chapter One. He examined the literature to determine the meaning of the term spiritual gift and how it relates specifically to the gift of faith. The term gift of faith was researched in the literature and three different definitions became apparent; (1) instrumental, (2) insight, and (3) interventional. These definitions of the gift of faith were applied to ministry.

At this point a limitation of this study must be noted. The author will not attempt to examine every aspect of faith, but will concern himself with the gift of faith, which is the explicit purpose of Chapter One. Even though the nature of faith is the same in salvation, living by faith and the gift of faith; the focus of this study centers on Christian service.

In Chapter Two an attempt is made to measure and compare expressions of faith toward the same areas by ten different ministers. There are three questions that guided the research.

3. How can the gift of faith be expressed in church growth?
4. What ten churches had the most growth among the graduates of the Liberty schools?
5. Is there a correlation between the perception of faith in church planters and the results in their church growth, when compared to areas where faith is expressed?

The motivation for the study of the gift of faith was the fact that the pastors of the largest churches in America and Jerry Falwell in specific were reported to use faith as the primary cause of growth. When studying Jerry Falwell, his faith seems apparent in several areas, but the author chose to examine the expressed goal of Falwell to plant 5,000 new churches by the year 2000 A.D.

Falwell seemed to express the gift of faith in church planting and church growth to four areas; First, faith was related to choosing a location; second, faith was related to the message upon which the churches were built (doctrine); third, faith was related to carrying out the objectives of the church; and finally fourth, faith was related to applying the principles of church growth learned at Liberty.

Another limitation is noted at this point because it grows out of the nature of the research. The term church growth is related to numerical growth in this thesis. The author is aware there is spiritual growth in a church as well as growth in finances, Sunday school and several other areas, but these are outside the purpose of this study.

A survey was sent to all the churches of the Liberty graduates (seminary, college and institute) to find an answer to question four. The author used Decadal Growth Rate to determine the ten fastest growing churches. Only those churches which had been in existence five years and had built or purchased a permanent location were considered in determining the ten. These were ranked in order of growth. The ten fastest (DGR) were then compared to the average Liberty church.

To answer question five, the pastors of the ten fastest DGR were then asked to rank their faith on a scale of one to ten, specifically in correspondence to the four areas that relate to church planting and church growth. The answers of the ten Liberty church planters were placed on a quadrant so they could be compared and analyzed. The author does not claim that the faiths of these men are measured but that the perception by these church planters is being measured. However, the author points out that there seems to be a correlation between a person's perception of his relationship to God and a person's actual faith in relationship to God.

Next, the author wanted to go beyond a statistical comparison of faith. He interviewed the ten Liberty church planters following a case study model used in analyzing other churches and pastors. The following questions guided his research into the ten church planters.

6. How have you applied faith to plant and build the church? The author attempted to determine how the church planter related his faith to the four areas of concern; location, doctrine, objectives and principles. The author constructed his case study by asking eighteen questions that guided his research. All questions were asked to each church planter in an attempt to be consistent. The results of the interviews are found in Chapter Three to Twelve; one chapter is used to describe each church planter and his church. Each chapter includes five sections; (1) Community and Contextual Factors, (2) Diagnosis of Church Growth, (3) History of the Church, (4) Analysis of Faith, and (5) Summary and Conclusion. The purpose of these ten chapters was not to analyze the principles of planting a new church, nor to examine all the principles by which they grew. The purpose was to examine the faith of the church planter and its correlation to the four specific areas; location, doctrine, objectives, and principles. However, some principles of church planting and growth are presented in these chapters. Not every area of faith expressed by the church planters in building his church was examined, although there are references to saving faith in some church planters, and the life of faith in other church planters. These are included only as they are concerned with the gift of faith. Also, every expression of the gift of faith was not examined, especially when it did not relate to church growth.

The final question facing the author dealt with the conclusion that could be drawn from this study and offered as principles to guide other church planters and pastors.

7. What principles regarding faith can be drawn from this study and applied to other church planters and pastors?

The author has chosen to carry out this research in a narrow church group, Liberty graduates, because of the general reputation they enjoy regarding the relationship of their faith to church growth. Also, the findings from a controlled group are more likely to reveal a pattern; hence, conclusions might be easily observed which would give insight to the hypothesis that the

gift of faith as perceived and applied by the church leaders is one of the factors for their success in church growth,

However, even with the controlled group (same higher educational institution, same human motivation such as Jerry Falwell, and same support system such as Liberty Baptist Fellowship) the ten pastors differ in the nature of their faith and the expression of faith. Many might have expected all Liberty men to be in a close agreement because of the explicit expectations of “faith and polity” by the Liberty Baptist Fellowship. But their differences are evident. Probably the main reason for their differences is the fact that they are human, the Holy Spirit leads differently, and their community context differs. But with their differences, there is general agreement, explained by Paul, “Now there are diversities of gifts but the same Spirit. There are differences of ministries, but the same Lord. And there are diversities of activities, but it is the same God who works all in all” (1 Cor. 12:46, NKJV).

## CHAPTER 1

### Defining the Gift of Faith

The motivation for this paper grew out of a conviction by the author as he studied some of the largest churches in America, that the faith of the pastor was one of the main reasons for their growth.<sup>1</sup> Next the author became involved with Jerry Falwell and Thomas Road Baptist Church, Lynchburg, Virginia. As he watched the church grow, he felt the greatest spiritual gift possessed by the pastor, Jerry Falwell, which was a source of growth of the church, was the gift of faith.<sup>2</sup> However, the author did nothing with this conviction until Peter Wagner stated in his lectures that the spiritual gifts of faith and leadership were the common denominator that he found in the pastors of the largest churches. Wagner went on to explain that the pastors he observed in large churches had different gifts; as such, some pastors were extraordinary preachers, while others were average speakers. He saw the same difference in administration, counseling and teaching, but he felt all the pastors of large churches had the spiritual gift of faith. Wagner writes, “The super church pastors I know all have this gift (the gift of faith) . . . I had come to the conclusion that God had given him [Robert Schuller] the gift of faith.”<sup>3</sup>

The author has found almost no research or comprehensive discussion on the spiritual gift of faith. The topic is usually discussed briefly in the material dealing with spiritual gifts, but most usually the material on the spiritual gift of faith is covered in a paragraph or at most a few pages. Whole books and dissertations are given over to the discussion of the spiritual gift of tongues, miracles or healings, while this topic has been neglected too long. The author contends the spiritual gift of faith is one of the foundational abilities for church growth or any work for

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<sup>1</sup> Elmer Towns, *The Ten Largest Sunday Schools* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1969); Elmer Towns, “The Seventy-five Largest Sunday Schools in America,” *Christian Life* (August 1970) :15.

<sup>2</sup> A description of the growth of Thomas Road Baptist Church and the results of faith are noted, but not analyzed in Elmer Towns and Jerry Falwell, *Church Aflame* (Nashville: Impact. Books, 1971); Elmer Towns and Jerry Falwell, *Capturing A Town for Christ*, (Old Tappan, New Jersey: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1973).

<sup>3</sup> C. Peter Wagner, *Your Spiritual Gifts Can Help Your Church Grow* (Glendale: Regal Books, 1979), p. 159.

God; and those who have accomplished much for God have exercised the spiritual gift of faith. Therefore, it is surprising that this topic has received so little attention.

The author intends to define the phrase *spiritual gifts* in light of the biblical use of the terms that are connected with its use. Then a comparison will be made of the biblical terms with contemporary definitions of *spiritual gifts* with a view of arriving at a workable understanding of the abilities that a Christian possesses in serving the Lord. Next, the author will attempt to define the spiritual gift of faith by noting there are three uses of the phrase in the literature.<sup>4</sup> He has entitled these, (1) instrumental, (2) insight, and (3) interventional. These three aspects of faith will be explained and examined in light of their use in serving the Lord. Even though there are three different ways that the gift of faith is interpreted in the literature, the author believes that these are three aspects or three cumulative steps to exercise the gift of faith.

## I. DEFINING SPIRITUAL GIFTS

There are five terms that are used interchangeably or explicitly in Scripture to identify spiritual gifts. These five terms occur in the introduction to the discussion of spiritual gifts in First Corinthians 12. An understanding of these terms will give insight into spiritual gifts and will lead to a workable definition; first, *pneumatikon* (plural) spirituals, I Cor. 12:1; second, *charismata* (plural) gifts, I Cor. 12:4; third, *diakonia* ministry, I Cor. 12:5; fourth, *energema* working, I Cor. 12:6; and fifth, *phanerosis* manifest, I Cor. 12:7.

1. *Pneumatikon*. Paul advises the Christians in Corinth, “Now concerning spiritual gifts, brethren, I would not have you ignorant” (I Cor. 12:1). The word *gifts* is not in the original text but is supplied in the English translation, perhaps because the term appears in verse 4. Also the word *pneumatika* is found in I Cor. 14:1 and again the word *gifts* is added to spiritual, inferred from the context. Without the word *gift*, the term simply means, “the spirituals.”

*Pneumatikon* is an adjective, which gives meaning to the thing or person that possesses it. Hence, when the word *pneumatikon* is used, the author is emphasizing the spiritual nature of the gift. Therefore, the Holy Spirit who is the source of a Christian’s spirituality, who also dispenses the gift; makes the gift spiritual. Walvoord agrees,

The Greek word *pneumatikon* is found in I Corinthians 12:1 and indicates the “things of the spirit, i.e., spiritual gifts.” The word directs attention to the source, the Holy Spirit, and the realm of these gifts.<sup>5</sup>

2. *Charismata* is found in I Cor. 12:1 and is translated “spiritual gifts.” The root of the word comes from *charis*, which is grace. Of course, grace is given freely in salvation (Eph. 2:8,9), but when *charis* is used with spiritual gifts it implies a “gift” (freely and graciously

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<sup>4</sup> These three uses of faith could be described as three aspects of the gift of faith, or three steps in one definition of the gift of faith. See section III Three Views of the Gift of Faith.

<sup>5</sup> John F. Walvoord, *The Holy Spirit* (Wheaton: Van Kampen Press, 1954), p. 164.

given).<sup>6</sup> Hence, a spiritual gift is that which is not sought or earned by human initiative, but is bestowed by the Spirit.

3. *Diakonia* is translated “ministries” or “administrations,” but is a reference to the spiritual gifts. “And there are differences of administrations, but the same Lord” (I Cor. 12:5). Hence, a gift is a ministry that is given by the Lord. When the word *diakonia* is used in the context of spiritual gifts, it implies that spiritual gifts are in fact spiritual ministries. Therefore, gifts are for a purpose, i.e., to be used for ministry. The verb form *diakoneo* means to be a servant, to serve or wait upon another person, particularly to wait on tables by serving food to guests.<sup>7</sup> Hence those who are given a spiritual gift should receive it with the purpose of serving other people. This implies a spiritual gift is not received to minister primarily to oneself, nor is a spiritual gift given to serve itself. A spiritual gift is given to serve others.

4. *Energema* is translated “operations” in I Cor. 12:6. As such Paul teaches, “And there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God which worketh all in all” (I Cor: 12:6). “Paul uses the word *energema* to denote spiritual gifts as the activity produced by God’s enduments of men for service.”<sup>8</sup> The word from *energeo*, where we get energy, implies the power or energy of God to activate or set something in motion. Hence, a spiritual gift is not the natural ability of the individual but is a ministry that is empowered by God.

5. *Phanerosis* is translated “manifestation” in I Cor. 12:7, to describe a spiritual gift, “But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal.” Hence, a spiritual gift is a manifestation of the Holy Spirit. The word *phanerosis* comes from the verb *phaneroo* which means to make visible or to make clear.<sup>9</sup> A spiritual gift is a clear and visible manifestation of the ability of the Holy Spirit to work through the Christian even though the gift is identified as residing in the believer. When a Christian exercises a spiritual gift it should be an evident work of the Holy Spirit.

Therefore, a spiritual gift is spiritual in character (*pneumatikon*), sovereignly given by God the Holy Spirit (*charismata*), to minister to others (*diakonia*), in the power of God (*energema*), with an evident manifestation of the Holy Spirit through the Christian as he serves God (*phanerosis*).

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<sup>6</sup> Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, trans. by William F. Arndt and F. Wilbur Gingrich (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1957), s.v., “charisma.”

<sup>7</sup> Joseph Henry Thayer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament* translated, revised and enlarged (New York: American Book Co., 1889), s.v., “charisma”; Colin Brown, *The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology*, 3 vol. (Exeter, U.K.: The Paternoster Press, Ltd., 1978), s.v., “diakonia.”

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., s.v., “energema.”

<sup>9</sup> Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, s.v., “phaneroo.”



With this biblical description in mind, several definitions of spiritual gift must be analyzed: First, a definition suggested by John R. W. Stott, “spiritual gifts are certain capacities bestowed by God’s grace and power, which fit people for specific and corresponding service.”<sup>10</sup> Stott’s definitive term is capacity, which means a spiritual gift is a capacity. Three observations are immediately evident from Stott’s definition. First, capacities imply human ability, even though given by God. Obviously, *energema* is God’s ability working through people. Second, Stott adds human responsibility in exercising the gift. The word *diakonia* implies a servant is entrusted with the gift and has a responsibility to use it. With that responsibility is accountability for success or failure. Third, Stott makes the gift passive by calling it a capacity. But spiritual gifts are both passive to the believer (because it is God’s ability) and are active from the believer (gifts have human responsibility). Stott uses the definitive term *capacity*, which implies they are passive, but the definitive term *ability* could be used to describe spiritual gifts when referring to human responsibility.

Howard A. Snyder amplifies the definition of a spiritual gift by adding the idea of ministry.

Spiritual gifts are given not merely for personal enjoyment nor even primarily for an individual’s own spiritual growth, although this too, is important. Gifts are given for the common good, ‘that the church may be edified’ (I Cor. 14:5).<sup>11</sup>

As a result, spiritual gifts are also called “ministry gifts,” because they are exercised to the benefit of others.

The well-known book on spiritual gifts by Leslie B. Flynn devoted an entire chapter to define, “What Is A Gift?” He limits spiritual gifts to exercise in the church or the body of Christ. He also adds the designation that all believers have a gift.

A gift has been described as a special qualification granted by the Spirit to every believer to empower him to serve within the framework of the body of Christ.<sup>12</sup>

Flynn provides a shorter working definition, “A gift is a spirit-given ability for Christian service.”<sup>13</sup>

*The Scofield Bible* adds another dimension to the definition of gifts when they are identified first as ability, and second as a person.

. . . certain Spirit-endued men, viz. apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers are themselves the gifts whom the glorified Christ bestows upon His

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<sup>10</sup> John R. W. Stott, *Baptism and Fullness* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1964), p. 87.

<sup>11</sup> Howard A. Snyder, *The Problem of Wine Skins* (Downers Grove: Inter-Varsity Press, 1976), p. 132.

<sup>12</sup> Leslie B. Flynn, *19 Gifts of the Spirit* (Wheaton: Victor Books, 1974), p. 20.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 21.

body the church. In Corinthians, the gifts are spiritual enablements for specific service; in Ephesians the gifts are men who have such enablements.<sup>14</sup>

Out of an examination of biblical words for spiritual gifts and the contemporary definitions derived from these words, the following chart can be constructed to describe (not define) spiritual gifts.

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|---|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Source: From the Holy Spirit.</li><li>2. Bestowed: To all believers.</li><li>3. Purpose: For Christian service.</li><li>4. Nature: Spiritual ability.</li><li>5. Discovery: By proper relationship to the Holy Spirit.</li><li>6. Responsibility: To be exercised by believers.</li><li>7. Number: Plural.</li><li>8. Identification: Gifts are persons.</li></ol> |
|---|

Spiritual gifts are the various abilities given sovereignly to believers by the Holy Spirit so that when they faithfully serve the Lord, there are spiritual results in the work of God and the believer grows in his effectiveness and/or develops other spiritual abilities of service.

## II. RELATIONSHIP OF SPIRITUAL GIFTS AND THE GIFT OF FAITH

1. How many gifts may a person have? We should not think of spiritual gifts in a singular capacity, even though this project is dealing with one ministry gift, i.e., the gift of faith. What is suggested is that the gift of faith will be exercised in orchestra with other spiritual gifts. Note the plural designation of spiritual gifts. First, the church should be a body where many gifts are operative, hence the term is plural (I Cor. 12:4), and there are several lists of multiple gifts (Rom. 12:3-8; I Cor. 12:8-12; 28-29; and Eph. 4:11). Some authors, including Gene Getz are against referring to a plurality of gifts in the individual but suggests there is a plurality of gifts in the church. "God's plan is a multi-gifted body, a body made up of people who could all contribute in a special way to the building up of the church."<sup>15</sup> Getz then suggests that a person does not have more than one gift, "Rather . . . a multi-gifted man."<sup>16</sup> Flynn disagrees with Getz, teaching that an individual can have several gifts. He notes, "Paul's opening remarks in the section on gifts (I Cor. 12:1-4) negates their singularity and emphasizes their plurality."<sup>17</sup> Flynn implies one person can have two or more gifts.

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<sup>14</sup> C. I. Scofield, *The Scofield Reference Bible* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1945), p. 1253.

<sup>15</sup> Gene A. Getz, *Sharpening the Focus of the Church* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1974), p. 127.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., p. 127.

<sup>17</sup> Flynn, *19 Gifts of the Spirit*, p. 21.

When Jesus related the parable of the talents, the first servant was given five talents, the next three and the final servant was given one. A talent in the parable is interpreted as a gift or ability, for in the parable Jesus explains, “to every man according to his several ability” (Matt. 25:15). The servants represent multi-gifted individuals.

The word talents here is used to denote indefinitely a large sum, and is designed to refer to the endowments conferred on men. We have retained in our language the word talent as referring to the abilities or gifts of men . . . He makes distinctions among men in regard to abilities, and in the powers and opportunities of usefulness, requiring them only to occupy those stations, and to discharge their duties there.<sup>18</sup>

But in the discussion of the multi-gifted person, what about the person who seems to be less gifted, as some may appear; or without a gift?<sup>19</sup> Even though the word for spiritual gifts appear in the plural (I Cor. 12:4,31), some people may have only one gift. The Apostle Paul implies a person may have only one gift. “But every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another” (I Pet. 4:10). Therefore, it may be possible for some to have only one gift, while others are multi-gifted.

2. What is the relationship of the spiritual gift of faith to natural ability? A spiritual gift is not the augmented natural ability of a Christian, nor is it innate talent. From the use of *phanerosis*, a spiritual gift is the evident and manifest work of the Holy Spirit through the Christian. Leslie B. Flynn explains,

Talents instruct, inspire, or entertain on a natural level. Gifts relate to the building up of the saints (or to evangelism). Something supernatural happens in the one who is ministering when a gift is exercised. Nothing supernatural happens in one who is performing when a talent is displayed.<sup>20</sup>

As the spiritual gift of faith is analyzed, it could not be described as augmented “natural faith,” such as a trusting person, or a person who is generally optimistic. Yet, some may confuse the natural ability to speak or teach with the spiritual gift of preaching or teaching. The gift of faith is not the power of positive thinking nor “self-confident psychology.”<sup>21</sup> The gift of faith

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<sup>18</sup> Albert Barnes, *Notes on the New Testament, Matthew-Mark* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1949), p. 267.

<sup>19</sup> Charles C. Ryrie, *Biblical Theology of the New Testament* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1959), p. 196. In this volume, Ryrie implies that every Christian has a gift. As such each Christian has one gift. However, when the author took the course in Pauline Theology from Dr. Ryrie at Dallas Theological Seminary in 1956, Ryrie maintained every Christian had the gift of serving, giving and encouraging.

<sup>20</sup> Flynn, *19 Gifts of the Spirit*, p. 22.

<sup>21</sup> Robert Schuller, *Your Church Has Real Possibilities* (Glendale: Regal Books, 1974). Schuller has popularized the term “possibility thinking” suggesting that one take a positive approach to ministry. He does not base his positive thinking on the gift of faith. Schuller feels if one “finds a need and fills it” a person’s ministry will find receptivity, hence will be successful. Also, Schuller teaches a person should use up-to-date methods of organization, marketing and outreach. All of this if done with faith in God will prosper a church. As such, Schuller does not believe in the interventional but the instrumental approach to the gift of faith.

would be a supernatural ability whereby the person is able to win more souls to Christ or to gain a greater spiritual victory than could otherwise happen.

3. When does a person receive a spiritual gift? Most contemporary authors are not sure when the Christian receives his spiritual gifts. Since every Christian has the Holy Spirit (Rom. 8:9) and he received the Holy Spirit at salvation, then it can be implied spiritual gifts came with the Holy Spirit. Also, since every Christian has a spiritual gift (I Cor. 7:7; I Pet. 4:20), and the work of the Spirit regenerates a person at conversion (John. 3:5; I Pet. 1:23), then spiritual gifts were probably given then. Spiritual gifts are probably bestowed at salvation. But Paul seems to imply that gifts were given earlier, “When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men. (Now that he ascended, what is it but that he descended first into the lower parts of the earth . . . that he might fill all things). And he gave gifts to men.” (Eph. 4:8-11). Here Paul implies that gifts were given with the resurrection of Christ. Perhaps the answer is that God applied the benefits of resurrection to believers at conversion (Rom. 4:25, 6:4,5).<sup>22</sup>

But, experience reveals that the spiritual gifts of some are manifested at a time later in life than conversion. The answer, though only suggested in Scripture, seems to indicate that God gave spiritual gifts at conversion, but they lie dormant (or latent as a seed in the soil) only to come to light at a later time. Paul was converted (Acts 9) but there was a gap in time until the church at Antioch sent him as a missionary church planter, “for the work whereunto I have called” (Acts 13:2).

Since human responsibility is connected with the development of gifts, perhaps some are called, but immediately they do not develop their spiritual gifts. Then later they respond to God, then their spiritual gifts are manifested.

4. Is the gift of faith greater in some than others? There seems to be uneven manifestation of spiritual gifts. When it comes to the gift of faith which is the topic of this paper, some people seem to trust God for greater workings of the Holy Spirit than others. Also, some seem to exercise the gift of faith more often than others. Whether this involves getting more people to pray to receive Christ, raising more money, or trusting God for greater results in church planting; the gift of faith appears to be stronger in some than others.

A spiritual gift is ministry, *diakonia* (I Cor. 12:5) and faithfulness in ministry determines greater effectiveness (Matt. 25:23; Luke 19:17). Therefore, the person who ministers his gift with the greatest faithfulness will be more effective and will have greater results.

Paul exhorts, “Covet earnestly the best gifts” (I Cor. 12:31), implying that *zeloute* (desire) results in a Christian receiving the best gifts *charismata*. At this place the word *gifts* is plural, suggesting a Christian can get more gifts.<sup>23</sup> This implies that faithfulness in seeking and

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<sup>22</sup> Some suggest that God gives his gifts without partiality and that every person has the potential of developing every spiritual gift. This is because every believer has the Holy Spirit and He is the spiritual ability. As such a believer has the responsibility to develop the gifts and he has as many gifts as he has taken the initiative to develop.

<sup>23</sup> Many interpret I Cor. 12:31 differently. They believe Paul is speaking to the Corinthian corpus (the church), not to individual believers. To prove this, they refer to the context, “Now ye are the body of Christ” (I Cor.

exercising a gift will lead to a greater number of gifts or a greater manifestation of one's gift. Whatever the interpretation of this best gift (its identification is not germane to the argument) it is achieved by human responsibility. When properly exercised toward the proper goals, the Christian will grow in his number (quantity) of gifts and in the effectiveness (quality) of his gifts.

Jesus told the parable of the man with five talents, another with three talents; and the final man had only one talent (Mt. 25:14-30). The man with five was faithful, note two actions in the text. "He that had received five talents," implying gifts are sovereignly given by God. Yet, the same servant says, "I have gained beside them five talents more." Here human responsibility is evident and he was rewarded for his achievement. The man with three talents was faithful and received the same ratio of increase (100 percent), he worked for and received three talents. The final servant had his talent taken away and given to the man with ten talents, thus making a total of eleven talents. The parable of the talents implies that the Christian who faithfully exercises his spiritual gift of faith will grow in his ability to accomplish bigger and greater things for God.<sup>24</sup> Hence, the gift of faith can become larger as it is exercised. Also, the one who exercises the spiritual gift of faith through his ministry may develop gifts hitherto unknown to him. While exercising his faith to trust God for church growth, he may discover the gift of evangelism so that people can be won to Christ. Or viewed another way, his gift of evangelism may be strengthened as he exercises the gift of faith by trusting God for more conversions. It is possible for a person to discover new spiritual gifts (discover those that appear to be latent), or strengthen his weak gifts, as he faithfully exercises his gift of faith.

5. Can one seek the gift of faith? The question of discovery and growth of spiritual gifts has no easy answer. First, the gifts are sovereignly given by the Holy Spirit (I Cor. 12:4), yet Paul claims that he had part in communicating spiritual gifts to the Christians in Rome, "For I long to see you, that I may impart unto you some spiritual gift" (Rom. 1:11). Also, Paul challenged Timothy that he "Neglect not the gift that is in thee, which was given thee by prophecy, with the laying on of hands" (I Tim. 4:14). Paul notes *edothē soi dia diaphrophetias*. The *dia* means "by means of," which is interpreted that prophecy was the instrument that communicated *charismatos*. Literally, the verse could be translated, "The in thee spiritual gift," implying Timothy's gift was embryonic; he had it before someone developed it by preaching. Also Paul notes, "*anazopurein to charisma tou theou*," "stir up the gift of God" (II Tim. 1:6) The word stir up literally means "fan the flame." The spiritual gift, like a flame, can burn more brightly, hence a gift can grow in effectiveness. The answer lies in the Holy Spirit developing a spiritual gift in one person by using another faithful person as he ministers his gift. Timothy got his gift as he sat under the influence of the preaching of Paul. This has been called the "hot poker," meaning a young minister got his vision or compassion to win souls as he was associated

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12:27) making this a reference to the church. Therefore, the interpretation is for the church to "covet earnestly" the higher gifts. In other words, the church should seek leadership gifts that will minister to the corporate life of the body. Even if this interpretation is accepted, it implies the growth of spiritual gifts, which is the author's original argument. If the church were to seek spiritually gifted men, Paul would probably not have told them to look elsewhere for leadership, but to develop it from within the body.

<sup>24</sup> This parable also implies that a person can lose the effectiveness of his spiritual gift through disuse or unfaithfulness. Some even lose their spiritual gift altogether.

with a man of God with these gifts.<sup>25</sup> As heat is transferred from the coals to the hot poker, so the young man becomes like those who influence him, because they have the power of suggestibility to his ministry. Whether the Holy Spirit uses the influence of psychology or the Holy Spirit ministers directly to the new Christians; it is a fact that both divine and human factors are evident in the communication of gifts. Ryrie reinforces this view:

Although gifts are supernaturally bestowed, Paul indicates that they may be developed by the person to whom they are given. After listing some of the gifts in their order of importance he says that believers should covet the best gifts (I Cor. 12:31). This means that an individual may be ambitious to exercise certain gifts, which ambition can only be fulfilled by study and work. Paul himself, even though he was reared on the Old Testament, needed three years in Arabia to develop his gift of teaching.

In Romans 1:11 Paul indicates that he hoped to have a part in the developing of the gifts in the churches in Rome (cf. I Tim. 4:14; II Tim. 1:6). Quite clearly others may have a part in bringing gifts to maturity and full use (cf. Eph. 4:12). Thus, gifts may be developed as one is ambitious in relation to self and attentive to others.<sup>26</sup>

6. Is the gift of faith a prominent gift? Even though Christian leaders have the potential of being multi-gifted, the Bible seems to teach that each man has a prominent gift i.e. a spiritual gift that identifies his ministry, and by which the person receives identification or self-awareness. Such was Agabus who was identified as a prophet (Acts 11:27,28, 21:10) or Philip who was called an evangelist (Acts 21:8). Paul seems to be referring to their prominent or unique gift by his own use of proper, "Every man hath his proper gift of God" (I Cor. 7:7).

Every man has his own peculiar talent, or excellence. One man excels in one thing, and another in another. One may not have this particular virtue, but he may be distinguished for another virtue quite as valuable.<sup>27</sup>

The question naturally follows, is the spiritual gift of faith a unique or prominent gift? Apparently no office in Scripture is designated uniquely by faith, or as prominently exercising faith, i.e., he is a faith man. However, there are several who teach the gift of faith is foundational to all gifts, which is different from being a unique gift. To say the gift of faith is foundational for all spiritual gifts is to say it must be involved in the exercise of all other gifts, or it must be the gift used to develop all other gifts. This is saying that faith is foundational to all gifts such as preaching, teaching, administering, showing mercy, etc. If the gift of faith is foundational, then it

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<sup>25</sup> Elmer L. Towns, *Church Aflame* (Nashville: Impact Books, 1971), Chapter 5. The phrase "hot poker" is also used in several articles on church growth by the author and is his unique term to indicate how spiritual gifts are communicated on the human level.

<sup>26</sup> Ryrie, *Biblical Theology of the New Testament*, p. 196.

<sup>27</sup> Albert Barnes, *Notes on the New Testament, I Corinthians*, (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1949), p. 267.

is not a prominent designation for those who use the gift. Everyone could be identified or called *faithful* as “Antipas was my faithful martyr” (Rev. 2:13). This is supported by designating all Christians by the verb form of faith, he is a believer (Acts 4:32, 13:39).

Donald Gee, writing from a Pentecostal perspective, maintains that the gift of faith is foundational, “It is significant that faith comes in this group (gifts of power) as being fundamental to the other gifts of power.”<sup>28</sup> By this context Gee says that healing and miracles are exercises of faith, which also is a power gift.

John of St. Thomas, writing from a Roman Catholic orientation indicates there are seven gifts, which he describes as a “plurality of gifts.”<sup>29</sup> He does not attempt to prove that a person may have more than one, but states, “Since Scripture asserts that the gifts are actually more than one, no further proof is needed.”<sup>30</sup> Then he implies that the gift of faith is foundational to the others, “For through faith, the very existence of these gifts is made known.”<sup>31</sup> He continues, “For faith attains to very many things.”<sup>32</sup> Yet, he does not say that faith is the same thing as the other gift, nor does he make faith a part of the other gifts. Faith is separate from the other gifts, but functions through and with them.

Faith can no more perform the functions of the gifts of wisdom and understanding than they could accomplish those of faith. Each operates within its own sphere. Faith believes in God revealing without involving itself in inquiry or judgment. It performs no operation other than that of believing, although it may be concerned with more objects than some of the gifts and fewer than others . . . Each gift taken separately extends to many objects but not to the exercise of the function of any other gift.<sup>33</sup>

But there are others who are convinced that the gift of faith has a separate function, other than being foundational to the other gifts. Most Pentecostals recognize Harold Horton’s *The Gifts of the Spirit*, as a classic in the field which represents their point of view. He states,

The gift of faith is erroneously regarded as the basis of all the other Gifts of the Spirit. This is to confuse the different kinds of faith. Faith (what I have above called ‘general faith’) is certainly necessary to the operation of all the Gifts, even the operation of the Gift of Faith; but the Gift of Faith is a supernatural

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<sup>28</sup> Donald Gee, *Concerning Spiritual Gifts* (Springfield: Gospel Publishing House, 1972), p. 42.

<sup>29</sup> John of St. Thomas, *The Gift of the Holy Spirit* (London: Sheed and Ward, 1951), p. 243.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

endowment quite distinct from this ‘general faith,’ and equally distinct from the other eight supernatural endowments of the Spirit.<sup>34</sup>

7. What is the relationship between an office and the gift of faith? A spiritual gift is not the same as an office in the church. Most protestant churches recognize two offices; pastors and deacons (Phil. 1:1), but other groups recognize such church offices as prophets, teachers, bishops, etc. A spiritual gift is a supernatural endowment, or ability given by the Holy Spirit, yet a man can desire more gifts (I Cor. 12:31). Also a man can desire an office in the church, “If any man desires the office of a bishop” (I Tim. 3:1). This section reveals that men who seek the office must have certain qualifications, presumably so the congregation can recognize those who should be placed in the office.

There is a relationship between gift and office, or between ability and position. The person who has the office of bishop/elder, (I Tim. 3:1-10) should have the gift of pastor (Eph. 4:11). The one who holds the office of deacon (I Tim. 3:11-14), should also possess the gift of serving or ministering (*diakonia*, we get the title deacon from the word for serving). In the same manner, those who believe in the office of the prophet (I Cor. 12:10) and those who advocate the office of evangelist (Eph. 4:11) should require that the person who fills them have the gift of prophecy and evangelism. Flynn has summarized this view,

Naturally, a person with an office should have the gift corresponding to that office; otherwise his office will be in name only . . . summing up, a believer would not hold a divinely appointed office without possessing the corresponding gift.<sup>35</sup>

However, the opposite may not be true, that is a person may have the gift without the office related to it. Flynn also holds this view, “many Christians possess a gift without appointment to that office.”<sup>36</sup> This might be a person who has the gift of serving *diakinos*, without serving in the office of deacon. Also, a person may have the gift of shepherding without being a pastor. The author teaches that, “A Sunday school teacher is the extension of the pastor’s responsibilities into the Sunday school class . . . Everything a pastor is to his flock, the teacher is to his/her class.”<sup>37</sup> Therefore, those who shepherd a Sunday school class are exercising a similar gift as those who shepherd a congregation.

The spiritual gift of faith does not seem to have a corresponding office. There seems to be no one who is called to uniquely exercise faith in the church. Apparently, because there is no such office identified in Scripture. Also, no such office has arisen in the church over the years,

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<sup>34</sup> Harold Horton, *The Gifts of the Spirit*, (Nottingham, England: Assembly of God Publishing House, 1934), p. 131.

<sup>35</sup> Flynn, *19 Gifts of the Spirit*, p. 24.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

<sup>37</sup> Elmer Towns, *The Successful Sunday School and Teachers Guidebook* (Carol Stream, Illinois: Creation House, 1980), pp. 177-178.



nor is there a unique identifiable ministry of exercising faith, as there is a unique ministry of preaching, teaching or evangelizing.

8. What is the relationship between ministries and the gift of faith? Flynn suggests that “gifts are not ministries.”<sup>38</sup> As such he identified a ministry as “an outlet for employment of a gift.”<sup>39</sup> A ministry may be to an age group such as adults or youth; it may be through media such as radio, television or Bible college; or it may be at home or on the foreign mission field. Flynn also identifies ministries as music, writing, or linguistics.<sup>40</sup> Ryrie explains that spiritual gifts are not ministries.

Neither does Paul suggest that there are special gifts for specific age groups. There is no gift of young people’s work, for all ages need teachers, pastors, helpers, etc. (cf. Titus 2:1-8). The gift is the ability, according to Paul’s thinking, and not the place or age group in which that ability is used.<sup>41</sup>

There is apparently no unique ministry attached to exercising faith. As a result, there seems to be no point in time when a church would call for a person, specifically to employ the spiritual gift of faith. In times of need a church would call for a revivalist, and at other times a church would call for a Bible teacher. After the same manner, but to meet a different need, a church would call for someone to train them in Sunday school education or lead them in evangelism. But the need of faith seems to not have a unique outlet, rather it meets a general need, or is involved in meeting all needs. When the Bible teacher, evangelist or foreign missionary comes to meet a unique need at a church, he must exercise the gift of faith (as said before this gift is separate, yet exercised in connection with other gifts), while he exercises his dominant gift. Also, the church in calling for a unique ministry is exercising faith (perhaps not the gift of faith). In summary, Flynn has observed, “The specialty, sphere, or area in which a gift is exercised constitutes a ministry. There a ministry is not a gift.”<sup>42</sup>

9. What is the relationship between the fruit of the Spirit and the gift of faith? “The word faith is listed both as a spiritual gift (Rom. 2:3, 6; I Cor. 12:9), and fruit of the Spirit.”<sup>43</sup> A spiritual gift is an ability, to be used in service, where spiritual fruit relates to a Christian’s character. It is possible to have spiritual gifts to serve God, but be lacking in spiritual character. (The Corinthian church had several gifts but were guilty of envy, divisions and fleshly sins.) Also, it is possible to have spirituality, yet not have many or all spiritual gifts. “Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Are all workers of miracles?” (I Cor. 12:29).

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<sup>38</sup> Flynn, 19 Gifts of the Spirit, p. 24.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., p. 25.

<sup>41</sup> Ryrie, Biblical Theology of the New Testament, p. 196.

<sup>42</sup> Flynn, 19 Gifts of the Spirit, p. 24.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., p. 25.

When considering the gift of faith, it is possible to have the gift of faith to move mountains, yet lack love (I Cor. 13:2). Flynn describes this person, “Possession of gifts does not indicate godliness of life.”<sup>44</sup> This probably does not mean the person is ungodly, nor is he void of love; it means the gift of faith that moves mountains is not tied to the fruit of love. Three possible conclusions may be drawn. First, the person has not grown in love as he has grown in exercising his gift of faith. Second, the exercise of the two has different objects; faith is toward God, while love is toward others. Third, love is manifestation of the Holy Spirit (I Cor. 12:7).

But what about the relationship between the spiritual gift of faith and the spiritual fruit of faith? They are not the same, even though they both probably came with the baptism of the Spirit (I Cor. 12:13) and have their source from the Holy Spirit. They are related as the gift of faith and the fruit of love was seen in the previous paragraph. The fruit of faith is the believer’s attitude of living daily by faith, “For we walk by faith not by sight” (II Cor. 5:7). Therefore, all believers can have the fruit of faith to live the Christian life, whereas the spiritual gift of faith is sovereignly bestowed upon recipients to serve Christ through the church.

But, obviously there is congruence to gifts and fruit, even if there is no cause and effect relationship. Those who have a godly life (spiritual fruit) will be closer to God so they may trust Him more fully for answers to prayer. Those who are godly will probably have a greater desire to exercise their spiritual gift of faith, also they will have a clearer vision of what God wants to perform in a certain situation. (Since sin will blind or dull the vision of the saint, those who are godly will see a greater potential that can be accomplished for God.)<sup>45</sup> Then because of the spiritual fruit in their life, they can better exercise the spiritual gift of faith in conjunction with other spiritual gifts.

To summarize spiritual fruit; it is, (1) given to all believers, (2) produces spiritual character, (3) is singular (fruit is singular, meaning one’s character is a unit), (4) permanent (I Cor. 13:8-10), and (5) grows internally. To summarize spiritual gifts, note the contrast to the previous five points. Spiritual gifts: (1) are given to specific believers, (2) produce spiritual service, (3) are plural (Flynn lists 19, Wagner 27), (4) will cease, and (5) operate externally.

10. What is the relationship between daily faith and the gift of faith? The spiritual gift of faith is not the same as living by faith,<sup>46</sup> as Kinghorn observes, “while all Christians possess the grace of faith, not all Christians possess the gift of faith.”<sup>47</sup> Koch severs the gift of faith from

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<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

<sup>45</sup> Later the author will define insight or vision as one aspect of the gift of faith.

<sup>46</sup> The author has designated six expressions of faith in the devotional book, *Say-It-Faith*, (Wheaton: Tyndale House Publishers, 1983). (1) Doctrinal faith, (2) Saving faith, (3) Justifying (imputed) faith, (4) Indwelling faith, (5) Daily faith, and (6) the gift of faith. A chapter is given to explain the meaning and use of each expression of faith.

<sup>47</sup> Kenneth Cain Kinghorn, *Gifts of the Spirit* (Nashville: Abington Press, 1976), p. 65.

justifying faith, “When faith is mentioned in the list of gifts of the Spirit, this does not mean the justifying faith that everyone must have who believes for eternal life. The faith that comes as a gift of the Spirit is the daring and conquering faith that “removes mountains.”<sup>48</sup> Harold Carter distinguished, “The gift of faith is a wonderful gift that has not been fully understood, we fear, because it is generally confused with ordinary faith, or serving faith.”<sup>49</sup> B. E. Underwood notes of the spiritual gift of faith “is not the ordinary faith of the believer.”<sup>50</sup> Therefore, Gee concludes, “The spiritual gift of faith must be distinguished from ordinary faith.”<sup>51</sup> Flynn makes the observation, “The gift of faith, listed by Paul in I Corinthians 12:9, is more than saving faith.”<sup>52</sup> Therefore, the conclusion is that the spiritual gift of faith is; (1) not synonymous with saving faith, (2) even though it is generally confused with saving faith, but (3) is more than saving faith.

The spiritual gift of faith has been generally described as “faith of miracles”<sup>53</sup> by Gee who quotes older theologians, “special faith”<sup>54</sup> in *The Living Bible*’s paraphrase of I Corinthians 12:9, “Wonder working faith”<sup>55</sup> by Underwood, “daring faith”<sup>56</sup> by Koch, and “the gift of prayer”<sup>57</sup> by John MacArthur. All of these titles indicate that the gift of faith is special, as Friesen describes it, “The gift of faith is rather a special God given ability . . .”<sup>58</sup>

But even when the authors who write about the gift of faith recognize that it is special, they do not generally agree on a definition. Perhaps their disagreement arises from the fact that, (1) little is said of the gift of faith in Scripture, (2) the church has largely ignored the gift of faith and its practice, and (3) Christian writers have not researched the topic thoroughly.

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<sup>48</sup> Kurt E. Koch, *Charismatic Gifts* (Montreal: The Association for Christian Evangelicals, 1975), pp. 90-91.

<sup>49</sup> Howard Carter, *Spiritual Gifts and Their Operation* (Springfield: Gospel Publishing House, 1968), p. 37.

<sup>50</sup> B. E. Underwood, *The Gifts of the Spirit* (Franklin Springs, Georgia: Advocate Press, 1967), p. 31.

<sup>51</sup> Gee, *Concerning Spiritual Gifts*, p. 42.

<sup>52</sup> Flynn, *19 Gifts of the Spirit*, p. 140.

<sup>53</sup> Gee, *Concerning Spiritual Gifts*, p. 43.

<sup>54</sup> *The Living Bible* (Wheaton: Tyndale House Publishers, 1971), p. 924.

<sup>55</sup> Underwood, *The Gifts of the Spirit*, p. 30.

<sup>56</sup> Koch, *Charismatic Gifts*, p. 91.

<sup>57</sup> John MacArthur Jr., *The Church, The Body of Christ* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing, 1973), p. 144.

<sup>58</sup> Harold Friesen, “A Model for a Church in Ministry by Employing Spiritual Gifts Resulting in Spiritual and Numerical Growth” (D. Min. dissertation, Fuller Theological Seminary, 1979), p. 138.

### III. THREE VIEWS OF THE GIFT OF FAITH

There seems to be three different approaches to understanding and interpreting the gift of faith, yet no one has classified these differences to the author's knowledge. Those who have written on the gift of faith have interpreted it from their own perspective. Most writers apparently have not differentiated their interpretation of faith from others who have written on the subject. The three approaches have not been identified by any one, nor have those who write on the gift of faith usually attempted to gather and quote more than their definition.

A person's view of God's role in the affairs of life have led to the differences in interpreting the gift of faith. First, there are those who interpret the gift of faith as an instrument that can be used in Christian service, as one would use the Bible, prayer or the gift of preaching to accomplish the work of God. This is called the *Instrumental* view, which appears to be the traditional or historical view. It is listed first because of its historical priority. Second, the gift of faith is interpreted as the ability to see or perceive what God desires to accomplish. The person with the gift of faith sees what God wants accomplished, then uses every resource available to accomplish the project. This is called the *Insight* or *vision* view, because the gift of faith is seeing what God can do in a situation. This seems to be the recent interpretation and is held by most evangelical Christians who are now writing on Spiritual gifts. Third, the gift of faith is the ability to move God to divinely intervene in a crisis that faces the work of God, or to supernaturally intervene in the work of God so that He accomplishes what the person with the gift believes will happen. This view is called the *Interventional* interpretation. It is held mostly by pentecostals, who believe that miracles are occurring in the work of God, and by some pastors identified with large churches (plus other leaders with dynamically growing works) who believe the day of miracles have passed, but still they have experienced the intervention of God in their Christian service.

Perhaps the three interpretations of the gift of faith are three progressive steps in expressing faith in God. The three views are different points on a continuum. Those who believe the first step, instrumental faith, have used faith as an instrument (Eph. 6:16), but they do not necessarily deny the work of God in the next two steps. They just have not grown or continued to a higher level of usefulness. The same can be said of the second interpretation of the gift of faith, for they have used faith as a vision to see what God can accomplish. The third position does not interpret the gift of faith differently, but includes the first two aspects in his definition, then adds the interventional factor.

1. *The gift of faith as an instrument.* The gift of faith is interpreted to be the ability of the Christian to use the instruments of Christianity to carry out the work of God in a person or in a church. In Ephesians, Paul describes the Christian who fights the enemy. He uses truth (v.14), righteousness (the knowledge of imputed perfection, v.14), the gospel (v.15), the helmet of salvation (v.17) and the sword which is the Word of God (v.17). He defends himself with the shield of faith (v.16), an instrument.

Howard Carter, a pentecostal, interprets, "The gift of faith can be defined as faith imparted by the Spirit of God for protection in times of danger, or for divine provision, or it may

include the ability to impart blessing.”<sup>59</sup> This definition does not include insight nor the intervention of God. The gift of faith includes the ministries that God has already promised, such as protection, provision and blessing. Later, Carter describes the gift of faith with more intentionality. “This remarkable gift brings into operation the powers of the world to come; it causes God to work for you.”<sup>60</sup>

St. Thomas, the Roman Catholic, suggested a traditional view in his discussion of the gift of faith, “Faith believes in God . . . without involving itself in inquiry or judgment concerning matters of faith. It performs no operation other than that of believing.”<sup>61</sup>

Instrumental faith would be available to all believers, not just a few gifted individuals as held by the other two interpretations.

Also, the instrumental view would make faith a response to or an ability to use the Word of God. This says nothing about the gift of faith uniquely giving a vision of service or solving a crisis or unique problems. The instrumental view is more conformable to a historic protestant view, i.e., that the day of miracles has passed. Since miracles are viewed as a demonstration of authority to validate the message from God, there is no longer need for miracles because the content of revelation is complete (Jude 3). That also implies that God does not supernaturally intervene in the work of God, but He works through the means of grace (the instruments, including faith), that He has already supplied. Therefore, the interventional gift of faith is viewed as having similar properties as a -miracle, hence not applicable to this age of grace.

The instrumental view takes a passive view of the person with the gift of faith. As such, both the person and his gift is a channel or a vehicle used by God. God has placed power within the Scriptures (Heb. 4: 12; Ja. 1:17; II Pet. 1:4), and the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:8). Power, (including the instrumental gift of faith), is not resident within the human, for he is an earthen vessel (II Tim. 2:21), but power is of God, not man. Then the Christian accomplishes the work of God through the Word of God by the Holy Spirit who indwells him. Only in this manner is the person an instrument to accomplish what God has promised.

Perhaps those who hold the instrumental view, see God controlling the destiny of this world (their extreme predestination has led to fatalism), therefore, they reject the interventional view because they believe man cannot change the order of events by his faith. To them faith is only instrumental, and they yield the results to the will of God. As such, they have not been aggressive (interventional) in changing the natural course or the general affairs of men, but they surrender their initiative in the Work of God.

Others might view the gift of faith as passive because they relate the gift of faith to other ministries. They feel spiritual gifts are given to men, i.e. preachers, teachers, evangelists, etc.

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<sup>59</sup> Carter, *Spiritual Gifts and Their Operation*, p. 37.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid., p. 42.

<sup>61</sup> St. Thomas, *The Gifts of the Holy Spirit*, p. 243.

(Eph. 4:11). God works through men who are identified by their gift, i.e., prophets have the gift of prophecy, teachers have the gift of teaching, etc. But there is no ministry identified with the gift of faith, such as a “faither.” Therefore, they see God working in the world through secondary sources; such as through His laws, through the influence of His Word, through the Holy Spirit, and through the affairs of life. They do not see the gift of faith as an intervention by God in an active or direct role, but the gift of faith is an instrumental role or indirect (secondary) role.

2. *The gift of faith as insight.* The gift of faith is the Holy Spirit giving the Christian the ability to see (vision) what God desires to perform, or is able to perform regarding a project. After the Christian perceives what can be accomplished, he dedicates himself to its accomplishment. Perhaps the best known definition is suggested by Peter Wagner who states, “The gift of faith is the special ability that God gives to some members of the Body of Christ to discern with extraordinary confidence the will and purposes of God for the future of His work.”<sup>62</sup>

The strength of this definition is in the Christian’s ability to see what God can do in a given situation, hence it is implied that the Christian must see God’s nature and purpose, and that is understood only through His Word. Kinghorn supports this second insight approach by stating, “The gift of faith is given to some Christians as a special ability to see the adequacy of God and to tap it for particular situations.”<sup>63</sup> To this definition, Flynn adds that the gift of faith not only sees potentials but overcomes obstacles. “The gift of faith is a Spirit given ability to see something that God wants done and to sustain unwavering confidence that God will do it regardless of seemingly, insurmountable obstacles.”<sup>64</sup>

The insight view recognizes that God is the source of all Christian work, but the person who exercises faith senses his responsibility to carry out the project. This view places a high degree of responsibility and accountability on man. God is active in giving vision, but man is passive in receiving the vision; then he allows God to work through him to accomplish the project. This view implies that the work of God is accomplishing the project. This view also implies that the work of God is accomplished in relationship to the ability of the worker; including man’s knowledge, wisdom, motivational powers, leadership ability, etc. Of course, God gave these abilities to man, but God gave them through secondary means (training, reading, Hot Poker, etc.) and God works through him by secondary means.

Wagner describes Robert Schuller, pastor, Crystal Cathedral, Garden Grove, California as a man with the gift of faith. He describes Schuller’s vision of a building of 10,000 pieces of glass shaped like diamonds larger than Notre Dame Cathedral of Paris, and fountains of water down the center aisle. Then Wagner concludes, “Before I heard about his vision, I had already come to the conclusion that God had given him the gift of faith.”<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>62</sup> C. Peter Wagner, *Your Spiritual Gifts Can Help Your Church Grow* (Glendale: Regal Books, p. 158.

<sup>63</sup> Kinghorn, *Gifts of the Spirit*, p. 65.

<sup>64</sup> Flynn; *19 Gifts of the Spirit*, p. 141.

<sup>65</sup> Wagner, *Your Spiritual Gifts Can Help Your Church Grow*, p. 159.

The gift of faith may be the supernatural ability by a person to determine what God will do in a church in the next ten years, or any future date. As a result, those who have the gift of faith are, (1) growth oriented, (2) goal oriented, (3) optimistic, and (4) confident.<sup>66</sup> Some people with natural faith may display the above four aspects and build a chain-store empire or a multi-million dollar business. These characteristics result in the power of positive thinking. The cause is the spiritual gift of faith or vision, the result is a confident attitude that usually produces results in the work of God. Because this gift has become such a strong conviction with the pastor and he can communicate his vision to the congregation, then they will work and sacrifice to accomplish the project.

Perhaps a problem with limiting the Insight view is that it makes it synonymous with vision, which might imply that faith is a passive gift. But faith seems to be active and is used by God to change circumstances. Yet, no one could honestly deny that vision is inherent in faith. In saving faith, a person must see his sin, see God, and see the remedy that God has provided in the gospel. In serving faith, a person must incorporate the role of the seer/prophet (I Sam. 9:9) which is seeing the need first, seeing farthest into the future, and seeing the greatest thing that God could accomplish in any situation.<sup>67</sup> Perhaps the gift of faith not only incorporates vision, but goes to the next aspect where the man of God intervenes in the circumstances of life.

3. *The gift of faith as intervention.* The gift of faith is the ability to move God to divinely intervene in a crisis that is facing a project, or change the expected order of events so that the work of God goes forward. This view holds that the gift of faith is active, the person is responsible, but God is the source of the gift and the source of accomplishment. Traditionally called the gift of miracles,<sup>68</sup> it features divine intervention in a miraculous way.

The leader usually had divine certainty that God will intervene (perhaps because of insight), hence, he makes an expression of faith.

Gee explains,

The spiritual gift of faith is a special quality of faith, sometimes called by our older theologians the “faith of miracles”. It would seem to come upon certain of God’s servants in times of special crisis or opportunity in such mighty power that they are lifted right out of the realm of even natural and ordinary faith in God - and have a divine certainty put within their soul that triumphs over everything. It is a magnificent gift and is probably exercised frequently with far reaching results.<sup>69</sup>

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<sup>66</sup> Towns, *The Ten Largest Sunday Schools*. The author made this observation in chapter 13 after interviewing the pastors who were the leaders of the largest Sunday School in America.

<sup>67</sup> Elmer Towns and Jerry Falwell, *Church Aflame* (Nashville: Impact Books, 1971), pp. 44-45.

<sup>68</sup> Gee, *Concerning Spiritual Gifts*, p. 43.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid.

Underwood's definition is not as long, but implies the same elements, "This is extraordinary wonder-working faith for a particular occasion."<sup>70</sup>

Harold Horton clearly indicates that the initiation of moving the mountain begins with man exercising the gift of faith. "The Gift of Faith is a supernatural endowment by the Spirit whereby that which is offered or desired by man, or spoken by God, shall eventually come to pass."<sup>71</sup> The verse often quoted in connection with the interventional view is the one linking speaking and exercising faith. "Whosoever shall say unto this mountain, Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea; and shall not doubt in his heart, but shall believe that those things which thou saith, shall come to pass; He shall have whatsoever he saith" (Mark 11:23, 24). Three times Jesus admonished His disciples to say exactly what they want to happen and they will get the results they seek.<sup>72</sup> The gift of faith is an active faith that changes the circumstances of a person's ministry.

Earlier the objection was raised that the interventional view made the gift of faith similar to the gift of miracles, tongues, healings; which are called the power gifts or a manifestation of supernatural phenomenon in today's world. Horton answers the objection,

The operation of miracles is more an act, as when the waters were opened by Moses and Elijah; while the operation of the gift of faith is more a process. . . . Faith the gift is equally miraculous with all the other Gifts, but we might say that its power or manifestation is of greater duration than those of the Gifts of Healing or Miracles.<sup>73</sup>

So, the third view is interventional faith, which is an ability given by the Holy Spirit whereby a person changes the events in a normal ministry, so that the work of God goes forward.

#### IV. OBSERVATIONS OF INTERVENTIONAL FAITH

1. *Interventional faith goes beyond the normal instrument of faith that is available for Christian work in the present world.* Interventional faith is involved in intercessory prayers, but is "abundantly more" than God answering prayers. Those who exercise interventional faith, pray; but the gift of faith is more than a prayer of faith (James 5:14), or to "ask in faith" (James 1:6). God seems to give them unexpected results because they exercise faith whether or not they pray. Sometimes interventional faith is exercised through prayer, at other times, the Christian will accomplish results by "saying to a mountain, be thou removed" (Mk. 11:23).

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<sup>70</sup> Underwood, *The Gifts of the Spirit*, p. 31.

<sup>71</sup> Horton, *The Gifts of the Spirit*, p. 31.

<sup>72</sup> The author has coined the phrase Say-It-Faith to express this aspect of the gift of faith. The book Say-It-Faith, chapter one, gives several illustrations in the ministry of Jerry Falwell where he says publicly that a crisis will be solved or that an unbelievable project will be attempted and completed.

<sup>73</sup> Horton, *The Gifts of the Spirit*, p. 131.



2. *Interventional faith is more than living by faith* (Hab. 2:4; Rom. 1:17; Gal. 3:11; Heb. 11:38; II Cor. 5:7). When a Christian is living by faith, he is applying the principles of the Word of God to his life with the result that he lives a godly life that is pleasing to the Lord. Living by faith involves the personal life of the believer as he exercises trust in the Lord. But in contrast, interventional faith involves Christian service in ministry for Christ. The Christian exercises faith to change the circumstances (solve a problem, supply a need, stop a force, or provide protection) so that the work of God goes forward.

3. *Interventional faith goes beyond the normal biblical methods and principles available to the church.* God has provided that certain principles should be followed in Christian work, such as; (a) going to people (Mk. 16:15), (b) being a witness (Acts 1:8), (c) gathering people together (Deut. 31:12), and (d) praying for God's blessing on the work (Acts 4:31). These and other principles are available for Christian work, but there are times and circumstances when the work of God is halted. The normal principles of Christianity are applied, but the barriers or problems (called mountains, Mk. 11:23) continue to face the work of God. At this time, a person with the spiritual gift of faith can exercise it to remove the problem or to change circumstances. At times, the gift of faith is exercised simultaneously with other ministries and the outside observer may mistakenly think something other than faith has solved the problem. As an illustration, a person may exercise faith to cause a church to grow. To do this, the person uses advertisement and displays powerful preaching to motivate people to invite their neighbors to attend church. The attendance problem is solved and the primary solution came through the exercise of faith. The secondary solution came through motivational preaching and proper use of advertising.

4. *Interventional faith is related to circumstances that lead to a solution of a problem or changing circumstances.* A pastor may exercise faith to build a new auditorium, yet the congregation has no apparent finances available. God could give the church a large gift or someone could die and leave the church enough in the bequest for construction of new facilities. There are many illustrations whereby God used ordinary circumstances in response to the exercise of faith, so that unexpected timing or unexpected sources provided solutions to the problems in a church. As such, it was an unusual intervention by God, even though He used secondary sources.

5. *Interventional faith may solve a problem or alter circumstances apart from the expected flow of circumstances.* God may solve a church's problem through such an outstanding display of events that observers may interpret the solution to be supernatural or miraculous. However, the miraculous is only perceptual. This could be the out-pouring of money from such a large number of people including those not expected to give; that the supply is labeled "a divine supply."

6. *Interventional faith goes beyond the normal tools that Christians use in Christian service.* These tools, also called "means of grace" by sacramental churches, are the influence of the Bible, the Holy Spirit's work, (conviction, illumination, guiding, filling or empowering), the influence of a godly life, the ministry gifts (preaching, teaching, counseling, etc.), the use of the church office (pastor and deacons), the use of baptism and the Lord's Table, or involvement in the church by attendance, service and fellowship. When a person exercises the gift of faith, he does more than obey the Lord in the employment of the above named "tools" of "means of

grace.” The exercise of the gift of faith is an intentional effort on the part of the person who desires to change the circumstances of the work of God or solve a perplexing problem. At times, the person may do two or more things at one time, such as motivate people to be baptized, yet his exercise of faith is evident in that people are scripturally baptized. His faith and preaching may bring revival to the church, or be evident when many people carry out the Great Commission in their neighborhood. To one it may be an evident display of faith, to the next it is a primary desire to get people to obey God (because he has great confidence that God will move hearts to be baptized) and yet the person may not be aware that he is exercising the gift of faith.

*7. Interventional faith is not always dependent upon exact doctrine or mature knowledge of doctrine.* The author has interviewed the pastors of the 10 largest churches in America, and the 10 largest in the world.<sup>74</sup> He has reported the conversion with Dr. Yonggi Cho, pastor of the Full Gospel Church, Seoul, Korea and with Dr. Jack Hyles, pastor of First Baptist Church, Hammond, IN. Dr. Cho told the author the primary reason for the spectacular growth of his church was the baptism of the Holy Ghost, resulting in an enduement of power, eradication of the old man and speaking in tongues. Dr. Jack Hyles denies the biblical interpretation of the pentecostal experience and does not believe to the author or this dispensation. Obviously, one or both men have painted the other (or themselves) into a theological corner. Who is right? The answer to this question, along with the correct view of other controversial issues, does not seem to be a factor in the exercise of the gift of faith.<sup>75</sup> Those who have the gift of faith transcend doctrinal boundaries. As a matter of fact, the basis of God’s blessing is not based on being doctrinally literate, doctrinally correct, or doctrinally complete. The new babe in Christ can exercise faith and “move mountains,” all he needs is “faith as a grain of mustard seed” (Matt. 17:20).

But on the other side of the issue, the greatest display of faith is by those who have grown in their exercise of faith, so that they are more mature in Christ. Of course, maturity is dependent upon growth in doctrine and understanding.

Then too, there probably is a limit to the tolerance by God of false doctrine. Perhaps God condescends to those who hold differing doctrines until a person accumulates too much doctrinal static or interference for him to be identified as a Bible Christian and hence, his doctrinal weakness limits his effectiveness for service. Probably, God has his “point of counter productivity” so that when a person crosses an invisible point of no return, God no longer responds to the person’s exercise of faith. Considered in God’s denial of this person’s faith is his yieldedness to truth, pursuit of truth, and attitude to those of another doctrinal persuasion.

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<sup>74</sup> The two interviews are found in two books by Elmer Towns, John Vaughan, and David Seifert, *The Complete Book of Church Growth* (Wheaton: Tyndale House Publishers, 1981). This book reports that the Full Gospel Church has the largest membership in the world in 1981. *The World’s Largest Sunday School* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, Inc., 1974) reports First Baptist Church has the largest Sunday School in the world in 1974.

<sup>75</sup> The author believes both Dr. Cho and Dr. Hyles are filled with the power of the Holy Spirit and that God is blessing both churches in spite of the fact they radically disagree in their approach to the Holy Spirit. But both men believe in the fundamentals of Christianity. To justify the apparent conflict in the author’s mind, he has used the term “blessability.” God blesses those who place themselves in a positive position to God’s formula that brings success in church work. God does not punish his workers, nor annul their usefulness for wrong doctrine until their variance negates their positive influence.

8. *Interventional faith should not be confused with holiness of life, nor separation from sin.* Those who feel the blessing of God is dependent upon the separation of the person from sin are perplexed when they hear that another person they thought was a Christian, engaged in something they called sin. From God's perspective, no person is ever completely separated from sin. As soon as a yielded Christian deals with a sin in his life, God seems to reveal another issue for him to deal with. The Christian life is continual sanctification, which leads to continual victory over sin. Since the Christian life is a continuum, the question could be asked, "At what point in the continuum does the person become pure enough to exercise interventional faith?" Obviously, there is no point where the gift of faith begins its operation. When the person begins his ministry, faith may be exercised in a small capacity. A person may grow in the gift of faith as old habits and sins are pruned by the Holy Spirit. Even though the two actions are separate, they have a correlation through maturity and total experiences.

God does not bless a person's ministry because of legalism, nor does a person have the gift of faith because of cleaning up his life. Some may claim that repentance of a particular sin is a criterion for God's interventional activity in their church work. They are wrong, it is faith that motivates God to intervene in the circumstances of a church. However, some have repented of certain sins, hoping that by that exercise of "cleaning up their life" that God would intervene in their church work. Obviously, repentance can lead to greater faith, but repentance is not the thing that moves God to work in a church. God is pleased by faith (sometimes expressed in repentance) and blesses the church because of faith. God has recognized the act of faith and solves problems, so that the work of God goes forward. But their repentance was not the causal factor that brought about the result, the intervention of God, it was their faith.

9. *Interventional faith seems to be related to Christian service in the church, rather than available for the Christian to intervene in the general affairs of life.* The spiritual gifts are for spiritual ministry, as such they are the manifestation of the Holy Spirit (I Cor. 12:7). Some believers have taken a step of faith in their business, then prayed for God's blessing on their company. Perhaps some have taken a loan as a step of faith, nevertheless, due to circumstances outside their control, they went bankrupt. We cannot examine the integrity of the person nor his business. But good Christians have worked hard and their businesses have failed. What is the relationship of a Christian's personal life or business life to the gift of faith. Obviously, if he lives by daily faith, he is obeying the Bible. That obedience gives him added help in his business life. But, when viewing the gift of faith, it does not seem related to business life but to Christian ministry: God gives gifts to Christians (I Cor. 7:7, 1 Pet. 4:10) and then states in the chapter on spiritual gifts, "Now ye are the body of Christ and members in particular. And God hath set some in the churches, first apostles . . . " (1 Cor. 12:27, 28). Since these gifts are mentioned within the context of the church, it seems they are related to its ministry. Also, Paul advised the Ephesians that some gifts are given "For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ" (Eph. 4:12).

It is questionable if the gift of faith can or should be exercised in relationship to secular activities. If it is interventional faith, we might question if God would intervene in the secular business, even if it is owned by a Christian. However, the relationship between sacred and secular business is sometimes a gray area. Also, since gifts build Christians up, God might use the exercise of a gift in business to edify a Christian. As such a Christian may exercise faith in

his business and as a result his gift would grow in usefulness and he would be more effective in his church or Christian service.

10. *Interventional faith is based on and grows out of using faith as a vision and using faith as an instrument.* Although interventional faith is similar to the two previous positions, interventional faith is initiated by those who have the unique gift of faith. The three views of the spiritual gift of faith indicate there are differences in interpreting the biblical data. But in all three, power comes from God and the accomplishments come from God.

Three Views of the Gift of Faith					
Name	Initiation	Vision	Power	Accomplishment	Available
1. Instrumental	God	God	God	By God	To all
2. Insight	God	Person**	God	By God	To chosen
3. Interventional	Person*	Person**	God	By God	To chosen

\*God is the source of all Christian work but by exercising the gift of faith, the man of God senses his responsibility for church growth and uses faith to carry it out.

\*\* God gives a vision through His Word for all Christian work, but in the exercise of the gift of faith, the man of God perceives a particular project in time and place.

Next, the question must be asked, “What can this study accomplish?” Many practical questions have been raised and possible solutions have been presented. So that none may view this study as academic with no relationship to the ministry, therefore, the next section deals with the application of doctrine to ministry.

## V. APPLICATION OF THE GIFT OF FAITH

The gift of faith must now be analyzed for its practical implication, especially its influence on church growth. The following observations are made on the basis established previously that the gift of faith is ministry oriented, can grow in usefulness, and is exercised in relationship to human responsibility.

1. *Announce a solution to problems facing the ministry.* Jesus advised his disciples to “Say unto this mountain, Be thou removed” (Mk. 11: 23). Since a mountain was a barrier or obstacle to the work of God, a first step in removing problems in the Lord’s work is to say what is desired. Paul described this process, “and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains” (I Cor. 13:2). This seems to be an illustration that the early church understood, i.e. that they were to remove problems by a statement that reflected their faith that God would solve the problems.

Paul made statements that God would solve problems that faced him. Paul announced that the boat should not leave Crete, “Ye should have harkened unto me, and not have loosed from Crete” (Acts 27:21). He further publicly announced the results that he expected from God, “I exhort you to be of good cheer: for there shall be no loss of any man’s life among you” (Acts 27:22). Finally, Paul attaches a statement of faith to his public announcement, “For I believe

God, that it shall be even as it was told me” (Acts 27:25). This illustration is not clearly an exercise of the gift of faith in ministry, but it surely is an expression of faith. Some might explain that Paul spoke in faith because the angel appeared to him the previous night (Acts 27:23). But the angel confirmed what Paul had previously communicated as a statement of faith in solution to the problem. Hence, the situation has all the characteristics of one who exercises faith to announce a solution to the problem.

2. *Setting goals or announcing specific plans for the ministry.* The gift of faith involves a continuum with three points. First, relying on the instruments of God to accomplish the ministry; second, having vision to see what God could accomplish; and third, to motivate God to intervene so the work will prosper. These three aspects are practically applied by setting goals for church growth or making specific plans that will prosper the ministry and produce growth. Paul planned to visit the churches in Greece to receive an offering and take it to Jerusalem. “Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given order to the churches of Galatia, even so do ye” (I Cor. 16:1). There was no qualification in the plan such as, “if you have the money,” nor did Paul have a contingency plan, “if the money comes in.” Paul makes a confident statement that the money would be received, and “then will I send to bring your liberality to Jerusalem” (I Cor. 16:3).

In church growth, the leader must believe that his goal is biblical, then publicly announce with confidence what can be expected. Stevens has noted in *The Theology of the New Testament*, “Now faith is a firm confidence with respect to the objects of hope (an assured conviction of the existence of invisible realities.”<sup>76</sup>

The illustration of faith in Hebrews 11 reflect those who made plans and acted upon them. Noah built an ark (v.7), Abraham went into an unknown country (v.8), the parents of Moses preserved his life (v.23), and Moses rejected Egypt to choose life with Israel (vs. 24-27). Stevens identifies these illustrations with intervening faith:

For our author, faith is no mere intellectual faith. It is a living and intense conviction of the supernatural which evidences in conduct. Its most characteristic effort is heroism. It is faith which “moves mountains” of difficulties and improbability.<sup>77</sup>

Of course, the ministry has prospered where people did not set goals, nor did they make specific plans, nor did the people exercise faith. Such was the case when God delivered Peter from prison. Apparently, the people were not praying in faith because the church seemed surprised and even doubted Peter was released (Acts 12:15). In many such cases, God seems to work in spite of the lack of faith of Christians.<sup>78</sup>

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<sup>76</sup> George Barker Stevens, *The Theology of the New Testament* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1899), p. 515.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 518.

<sup>78</sup> This thesis has not dealt with the unbelief of Christians, which apparently causes the disuse of faith. See Elmer Towns, *Say-It-Faith*, seven cassette C-60 tapes, (Wheaton: Domain Communication Ltd., 1982). Tape two, *The Pathologies of Faith*, deals with the six New Testament words that are ranked in various steps of unbelief. (1) *Vain Faith*, I Cor. 15: 14-17, faith in the wrong doctrine. (2) *Dead Faith*, James 2:19, 20, faith in orthodox doctrine

Also, Paul announced at least one goal that was not apparently accomplished. “Whosoever I take my journey into Spain” (Rom. 15:24). Later, this study will analyze men who announced attendance goals that were not made. Therefore, there are several cautions a leader should note when exercising the gift of faith to announce goals or solutions to property. Paul may have spoken in self desire, and some who set goals for church growth may do so for human motives, not divine guidance. But on the other hand, perhaps the gift of faith works through the leader’s desire concerning church growth goals. He is simply articulating what God desires to accomplish. Perhaps the goals are accomplished by someone else, or are accomplished later in life, or after the leader dies. As an illustration, Paul apparently did not go to Spain, but the gospel was carried there by others. In any case, the leader must never assume omniscience. Everything he says, may not be said by faith, and what he says may not be the will of God. James warns the Christian, “Go to now, ye that say, Today or tomorrow we will go into such a city, and continue there a year and buy and sell and get gain” (Jas. 4:13.1. James cautions: “Ye ought to say, If the Lord will, we shall live, and do this, or that” (Jas. 4:15). Whenever a leader exercises the gift of faith and states a goal or announces specific plans, he ought to do so with the attitude that everything is qualified by the will of God. Since the will of God is reflected in the Word of God, the goals and plans that are closest to Scripture are closest to the will of God.

3. *A positive attitude in the ministry.* If the leader exercises faith in the proper way, then he will have confidence in God. The writer of Hebrews observed, “Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see” (Heb. 11:1, NIV). When this attitude is carried into Christian service, the leader will minister with confidence. Paul announced, “I can do all things through Christ who strengtheneth me” (Phil. 4:13). This confidence was based on the power of Christ, and is not explicitly related to the gift of faith. At another place, he confidently notes, “Thanks be unto-God, which always causeth us to triumph in Christ” (II Cor. 2:14). In both of the above references, there is not a direct traceable cause and effect relationship between the gift of faith and confidence. But, when one exercises the gift of faith by stating a goal or solution, he cannot doubt. For doubt is the opposite of confidence or the opposite of faith. Jesus tied faith and confidence together, “shall not doubt in his heart, but shall believe those things which he saith shall come to pass; he shall have whatsoever he saith” (Mk. 11:23).

4. *Recognize the human factor in exercising the gift of faith.* The gift of faith is not the same as the gift of miracles. In an evident miracle, God is the source and channel that produces a supernatural intervention or transcending of the natural laws of the universe. In the gift of faith, God works through the human instrument and God limits Himself to the human expression of faith. Whereas God is the source of the Christian work, the human is the channel through which He works.

Earlier, the illustration of Paul’s statement in relationship to the shipwreck was noted as a possible exercise of the gift of faith. Paul said what should be done (remain in Crete, v.21). Then Paul made a statement to remain with the ship (v.31), and eat (v.33). With the statement of faith

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without personal belief in Christ. These expressions of faith will not save a person. The next four refer to believers. (3) *Unbelief*, Epistis, Mark 16:11-14; John 21, believers in Christ who will not accept His work. (4) *Little Faith*, Oligopistis, Mark 17:20, 3:26, faith and unbelief mixed. (5) *Weak Faith*, Romans 14:1, believers who have a legalistic expression of faith. (6) *Strong faith*, Romans 4:20, faith in the promise of God.

and God's providential care, the people were responsible for certain duties. They ate, rowed, swam and were generally responsible to carry out the deliverance that was provided by God.

In the area of church growth, the pastor may set attendance goals or make a statement of faith that he will establish a church. But then accomplishment of the results is also the responsibility of the leader. He must follow proven principles to accomplish his goal.

Robert Schuller uses the phrase "possibility thinking," that some would equate with faith. Yet in his book, *Your Church Has Real Possibilities*, he suggests seven principles of successful retailing (Chapter three) that should be followed to successfully administer a church.<sup>79</sup> As such he ties together the biblical foundation of faith to contemporary business and management principles. The gift of faith is then tied to human responsibility.

## SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

The gift of faith is a special ability to see and understand what God can do in a certain project, to trust God to bless the work so that a project is accomplished and on some occasions, to move God to intervene in the natural flow of circumstances so that problems are solved, goals are reached and protection is given to those needing it. The gift of faith is more than living by faith and is not the fruit of the Spirit called faith. Whereas the fruit of the Spirit involves Christian character, the gift of faith involves ministry such as preaching, teaching or evangelism; the gift of faith is an ability that is available to those in ministry. Finally, the gift of faith does not seem to be a prominent ability so that a person has the title faith, as in pastor or evangelist. The gift of faith is not just foundational to all Christian service. Certain individuals have the ability to use faith in their ministry in an unusual and unique way.

Most of the qualities possessed by men relate to themselves or their relationship to others, such as love, joy, peace or patience. But of all the qualities available to men, faith is that one asset that pleases God and moves God to intervene in the affairs of man in an unusual or unexpected way. And these who have the gift of faith seem to personify that ability to the greatest degree. "If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto you" (Matt. 17:20).

## CHAPTER 2

### The Measurement Of Attitude Toward Faith

This chapter attempts to examine the expression of faith in the life and ministry of ten church planters by analyzing their assessment of faith, then comparing it to the statistical measurements of their church. The ten are chosen because they were influenced by Dr. Jerry Falwell, pastor of Thomas Road Baptist Church, and they have used similar techniques and attitudes in building their church. The ten pastors have the largest Decadal Growth Rate (DGR)

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<sup>79</sup> Schuller, *Your Church Has Real Possibilities*, chapter 3.

when compared to the other graduates of Liberty Baptist College, Liberty Baptist Seminary and Liberty Bible Institute, who are pastoring churches. An attempt will be to analyze the expression of faith in Dr. Jerry Falwell as it relates to church planting, and its correlation with the ministerial students at the Liberty Schools.

## I. JERRY FALWELL EXPRESSES FAITH THROUGH CHURCH PLANTING

In the last chapter, it was observed that the gift of faith can be expressed by stating goals that a person expects to achieve in Christian ministry. There are many ways that Jerry Falwell has expressed the gift of faith, i.e., by attendance goals, financial goals, building projects, missionary projects and expansion goals for the television ministry of the Old Time Gospel Hour. However, this study has chosen to examine the expression of faith in relationship to church planting in the United States. On many occasions, Falwell stated a goal of planting 5,000 new churches in this country.<sup>80</sup> There is a general support among the employees at Liberty Baptist College for the institution's goals and usually the goals are reached. However, not every one accepts these goals and the possibility of reaching them. The chairman of the department of religion presented a paper to a special committee studying the aims of ministerial preparation that indicated the goal of 5,000 new churches by 2000 A.D. was not a possibility.<sup>81</sup>

By October 19, 1982, graduates of the three different Liberty schools had planted a total of 211 new churches since 1973 when the first church was begun.<sup>82</sup> In 1982, the year this study was done, a total of 27 new churches were planted.<sup>83</sup>

Mathematically, the goal of 5,000 new churches, by the year 2000 A.D. seems impossible if the present size of the college is considered and the present rate of church planting continues. But this is where the gift of faith is reflective of the ability of God's man to see what can be accomplished (insight faith), then trusting God to accomplish what is impossible (interventional faith). The goal of 5,000 new churches can be reached because the college will grow and will graduate an increasing number of church planters. Also, the multiplication of new churches by the existing church (apart from Liberty graduates) will cause spiraling growth. As an illustration, Al Henson (LBS, 81), pastor of Lighthouse Baptist Church, Nashville, TN has planted 15 churches, which are not yet counted toward the goal of 5,000 churches.

In 1981, the author and Dr. Jerry Falwell organized the Liberty Baptist Fellowship for Church Planting Inc. (LBF) to assist in carrying out the goal of planting 5,000 new churches.<sup>84</sup>

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<sup>80</sup> Jerry Falwell, "We Will Plant 5,000 Churches," *Liberty Journal 1*, (September, 1981) :1.

<sup>81</sup> Woodrow Kroll, Former Chairman, Division of Religion, Unpublished study, paper presented to the Presidential Cabinet, "The Future of Graduate Work at Liberty."

<sup>82</sup> Second Annual Report, *Liberty Baptist Fellowship*, Lynchburg, VA, Oct. 19, 1982.

<sup>83</sup> "Church Update", *Fundamentalist Journal*, (Lynchburg, VA, February, 1983).

<sup>84</sup> Editorial, "Who Is Liberty Baptist Fellowship?", *Liberty Journal 1*, (September, 1981) :2



The Liberty Baptist Fellowship for Church Planting Inc. is an organization with a three fold object: (1) to motivate church planting, (2) to assist church planting with finances, and (3) to gather and disseminate information on church planting by Liberty graduates with a view of motivating the planting of new churches everywhere by all Christian organizations.<sup>85</sup>

The membership is comprised of: a) graduates from Liberty Baptist Seminary, Liberty Bible Institute and Liberty Baptist College; b) former students (not graduates) from the three institutions; c) former staff members from Thomas Road Baptist Church, The Old Time Gospel Hour, or one of the Liberty Schools; d) church planters helped financially by Thomas Road Baptist Church; e) young men who were members of the church but not on staff, or a student at one of the schools; f) church planters who have been influenced by Jerry Falwell and have a “Liberty type” church.<sup>86</sup>

In September of 1982, a survey was mailed to all 211 church planters who are on the mailing list of the LBF. A second mailing was sent in October. A total of 87 responses were received by October 15, 1982 for a 41 percent return. The data are drawn from similar type churches, hence, there is a basis for correlation among the churches. By joining LBF, the church planters have indicated that both they and their churches are similar in polity and doctrine to the Liberty type church. Whether they are “exactly” similar or whether they only have some similarities because the church planter perceives himself and his church as a “Liberty type,” is sufficient enough of a comparison to arrive at some tentative conclusions. A church planter would probably not join LBF unless he is in basic agreement with its objectives, polity and doctrine, because of the stigma and criticism that Falwell has evoked as President of Moral Majority Inc., or because of his visible stand on certain issues that are questionable to certain Christians.

The survey revealed that in 1982, the average church pastored by a Liberty graduate had an average attendance of 138 in Sunday School and 162 in the morning worship. There was an average of 33 baptisms per year in each church and an average membership of 151. The average

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<sup>85</sup> Ibid, “New Fellowship Will Plant Churches,” p. 1.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid, A “Liberty type” church is characterized by the following seven points. (1) *Super aggressive evangelism*, which means their purpose is to “capture their Jerusalem for Christ” by preaching, teaching, soul-winning and discipling as many people as possible. (2) *Growing churches*, which is the biblical mandate and outcome of the ministry of these churches, so much so that they believe in large churches (however, large is measured in relationship to the “Jerusalem” in which they minister, so that a large church in one town may be measured by 100’s while in another town it may be measure by 1,000’s). (3) *Independent*, which means each church receives its authority from God and is responsible only to God. They are not, nor ever shall be, bound by tradition, denomination or the vote of any fellowship, including Liberty Baptist Fellowship. (4) *Biblical separation*, which means they are committed to preach, teach and practice both personal and corporate separation from sin. (5) *Fundamentalism*, which means that they are committed to believe in and aggressively defend the biblical fundamentals of the faith. (6) *Biblical separation*, they will have no fellowship with individuals, churches or groups that deny the fundamentals of the faith. (7) *Two offices*, these churches recognize pastors and deacons (Phil. 1:1). The pastor is a ruling office, which means he is called, gifted for the office of leader of the flock (I Tim. 5:17; Heb. 13:7, 17; I Tim. 3:4; I Peter 5:1-4; I Thes. 5:12; 1 Cor. 16:16; Acts 20:28). The deacons are a serving office of the church, but the church congregation is the final authority in all matters.

Liberty church has a yearly income of \$69,013, or a per capita income of \$8.19 per attender each week.

PROFILE OF A CHURCH PLANTED BY A LIBERTY GRADUATE	
Average Sunday School attendance	132
Average church attendance	162
Average membership	151
Average yearly income	\$69,013
Total reported income in 1982 of churches planted by Liberty men	\$14,561,776.00
Per capita income	\$8.19
Average number of baptisms per church	33
Total number of baptisms in 1982 in churches planted by Liberty men	7,137

## II. FAITH AND CHURCH PLANTING

Falwell challenges the ministerial candidates at Liberty, "Go out and start a church, just as I did here in Lynchburg."<sup>87</sup> If a spiritual gift is transferred by the hot poker philosophy of identification and role modeling, then this becomes one of the primary sources of church planting activity among Liberty men.

Falwell challenges the men that if they are called of God, they can do the same thing in their "Jerusalem"<sup>88</sup> that he accomplished in Lynchburg. By this statement, Falwell is implying that the gift of faith can grow in the Liberty men<sup>89</sup> to accomplish what he did if they apply the same principle that he used. In essence, Falwell believes that men can catch the vision of church planting and the gift of faith as they, "desire earnestly the best gifts" (I Cor. 12:31).

Falwell challenges the ministerial candidate to go and "Capture a town for Christ."<sup>90</sup> He gives illustrations of how he went to every home in Lynchburg and tried to get the occupants into Thomas Road Baptist Church. He exhorts the ministerial students to do likewise.

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<sup>87</sup> The quotations in this section are not documented to a written source because they have not been committed to paper. For several years, Dr. Falwell met with all ministerial candidates every other Wednesday after chapel. During this time, he did not speak from prepared notes, but shared his heart with those who were going into the ministry. Most of the principles shared with the young men involved planting new churches, based on the principles that worked for him in Lynchburg. Statements from these "talks with my preacher boys" are quoted in this section.

<sup>88</sup> The term *Jerusalem* means a geographical parish location.

<sup>89</sup> A phrase used to describe a graduate of one of the Liberty schools who is pastoring a "Liberty type" church (see footnote 90).

<sup>90</sup> A phrase used by Falwell to challenge a ministerial student. The phrase became the name of a book by Elmer Towns and Jerry Falwell, *Capturing a Town for Christ* (Old Tappan, N. J.: Fleming H. Revell Co., 1973). Falwell tells the students they should "have a consciousness of an unlimited ministry."

Next, Falwell elates how he immediately began a radio broadcast to evangelize Lynchburg, and within the year was preaching on local TV. He tells the ministerial candidates how the Thomas Road Baptist Church reached 864 in attendance on the first anniversary of the church. He motivates the young ministers to “go and do it better and do it bigger.” If a ministerial candidate accepts this challenge, his faith is stretched. In essence, the above challenge by Falwell is given to motivate a young man to take a “step of faith” to begin a church. But also, the young man must grow in faith because most of them realize the weakness of their faith. If they accept the challenge to build a church (desire), they also realize their weak faith (reality); hence, they are placed in a crisis where they must trust the power of God (interventional faith). As they exercise the first step of faith; if they are successful, they will grow in their ability to trust God for bigger projects.

Faith must be exercised toward God but is expressed in Christian service. There are four areas where Falwell challenges ministerial candidates to trust God in church planting. These four areas are: (1) trusting God to lead to the correct location, (2) trusting God to use the message in peoples’ lives (doctrine), (3) trusting God to bless the unique objectives in planting a church, and (4) trusting God to bless specific principles to build a church.

*A. Faith and Location.* The exercise of faith in church planting involves the identification of a city by the church planter, then acting on their faith to go to that city and begin a church. Falwell encourages them to: (1) pray over a location or city, (2) visit it to determine its social and religious conditions, (3) research the area so they are informed on its special needs and prospects, and (4) then if the conditions are right and God has given a spiritual burden or leading to the city, announce their goals publicly (insight faith). This expression of faith first takes reality when a church planter gives his future church a name before he goes to the location. Then he usually distributes prayer cards, announcing the church’s name and location to help raise financial support. He may request financial support by presenting an application to Liberty Baptist Fellowship. To get financial support from LBF, the student must be specific in plans and purpose. According to Falwell, every step the church planter takes from the initial burden, until he arrives on location; is a step of faith.

*B. Faith and Doctrine.* Falwell challenges the young minister to be loyal to the fundamentals of the faith. Also, he challenges them to begin a Baptist church, “not a community church or a Bible church.” He explains that the title Baptist will usually identify the church with correct doctrine and correct polity.<sup>91</sup> Falwell tells the young men that correct doctrine is the Biblical foundations for evangelizing a community and building up believers in to spiritual maturity. It is hoped that the ministerial candidate will identify his potential for success with doctrinal faith. Whether the doctrine is correct is not the issue of this study. The assessment by the church planter is the issue. This study examines whether they are unreservedly committed to fundamental doctrine as an expression of their faith in God. This thesis is not attempting to prove they have success because their doctrine is correct, but they have success because they have unswerving faith in the application and preaching of doctrine. Will God recognize their

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<sup>91</sup> Elmer Towns, *Getting a Church Started* (Lynchburg: Liberty Baptist Fellowship Press, 1982), p. 55ff. Four reasons are given to name the church Baptist, and Falwell is quoted frequently in this chapter.

expression of faith by granting them their request and in the process, build their faith for greater accomplishments?

*C. Faith and Objectives.* Falwell teaches the ministerial candidate that the Great Commission is the objective of the church (Matt. 28: 19,20).<sup>92</sup> In his view, the Great Commission is a command to: 1) make disciples or win souls, 2) baptize converts and identify them with a local church, and 3) teach Christians so they can be built up to spiritual maturity. Falwell tells the young men that the church is God's only organization for evangelism and that a pastor is the highest calling of God. He promises that the more carefully a minister carries out the Great Commission, the more God will bless both him and the new church. Falwell also exhorts the young men not to become involved in renewal groups or other types of ministries that are not associated with a local church. In summary, Falwell makes a correlation between success in church planting and carrying out the explicit objectives of the Great Commission. When a young man exercises faith in God by applying the exact steps of the Great Commission (1. winning souls, 2. baptizing them into a church, and 3. teaching them the Bible); they are fulfilling what they have been taught, i.e., that their new church will prosper. Some might argue that other churches have prospered without applying these explicit steps, but that is not the point. Liberty men express their faith in God by their obedience to what they perceive as literal objectives for church growth.<sup>93</sup>

*D. Faith and Principles.* Falwell has challenged young ministers to apply the principles of saturation evangelism to build a church. By this he means, "to preach the gospel by every available means to every available person at every available time."<sup>94</sup> He quotes the example of the Jerusalem church<sup>95</sup> and the Antioch church<sup>96</sup> to illustrate the success of the application of these principles. The credibility of his challenge to young students is verified by the growth and size of Thomas Road Baptist Church. As the students become involved in Christian Service in the church, they "catch the spirit" of church growth. Usually, they see a weekly application of growth as they serve God in a Christian service assignment. Most students after graduation are convinced that the principles they were taught at one of the Liberty schools will produce growth in their new church. Once again, the biblical accuracy of interpreting these principles is not in question. Some have expressed their faith in God by the application of church growth principles that are different from those taught at Liberty. Since, growth occurs in both instances, perhaps it

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<sup>92</sup> Towns, *Church Aflame*, p. 43ff. The chapter is an exposition of the Great Commission applying it to church objectives.

<sup>93</sup> One of the characteristics of fundamentalists is "literal obedience to primitive church ideas" summarized from Ernest Troeltsch, *The Social Teachings of the Christian Church*, trans. by Olive Wyan (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1931), 2 Vols. The author equates fundamentalists (Falwell's position) and sects in *America's Fastest Growing Churches* (Nashville: Impact Books, 1972), p. 156-168.

<sup>94</sup> Towns, *Church Aflame*, p. 70-96. Two chapters explain the principles of saturation evangelism. At times, Falwell interchanges the term *super aggressive* (referring more to enthusiasm and zeal) with the term *saturation* (referring to principles).

<sup>95</sup> Towns, *Church Aflame*, p. 34.

<sup>96</sup> Towns, *Capturing a Town For Christ*, p. 111.

is faith that has produced church growth, not the correctness of the principles. That cannot be demonstrated here with others, but it is the testimony of Liberty men.

The members of the Liberty Baptist Fellowship were surveyed to find the ten churches with fastest DGR. Only churches that had been in existence for five years and had constructed or purchased a building were selected to determine the fastest growth. These churches had evidenced some maturity, had constructed a building and had been in existence long enough for the pastor to face and solve some normal problems connected with growth. Also, most charts determine DGR on church membership. However, the average Liberty man puts the most emphasis on attendance, not membership. Many churches did not have membership figures. Peter Wagner has indicated that there is an unusually high DGR if the first two years of a church's existence is used to determine its DGR. At first, it was thought that these would be eliminated in formulating their rate of growth. But if the first two years were eliminated in the growth charts, there would only be three years to measure on growth charts, which is inadequate to diagnosis or make observations regarding growth. Therefore, all five years are used to determine the DGR, but the reader should remember not to compare these rates with churches that have been in existence for a longer period of time.

THE TEN FASTEST DECADAL GROWTH RATE AMONG LIBERTY GRADUATES	
<u>Pastor &amp; Church</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
1. Al Henson, Lighthouse Baptist Church	9695%
2. Rod Kidd, Heritage Baptist Church	5906%
3. Dan Harley, Lancaster Baptist Church	5203%
4. Steve Ray, Holy Mountain Baptist Church	4582%
5. John Martelli, Wachusett Valley Baptist Church	3808%
6. Marvin Wood, Harvest Baptist Church	3039%
7. David Rhodenhizer, Calvary Road Baptist Church	2453%
8. Kurt Strong, Freeport Baptist Church	1992%
9. Ronnie Riggins, New Life Baptist Church	1128%
10. Gary Byers, Fredericktowne Baptist Church	570%

### III. MEASURING THE GIFT OF FAITH

This section attempts to measure what many think cannot be measured--the gift of faith. At one place, Jesus seems to imply that either a person has faith, or he does not. When Jesus likened faith to a grain of mustard seed, he seemed to be comparing it to what those in that day considered to be one of the smallest perceptible objects in life. "If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove" (Matt. 17:20). Apparently, this is a reference to the serving gift of faith, for Paul uses the same metaphor in relationship to spiritual gifts, "And though I have the gift of prophecy . . . and all faith, so that I could remove mountains" (I Cor. 13:2). Some might interpret this to mean all a person needs is faith, no matter how small, and he could move mountains. If small faith can

move a mountain, why should it grow? Some might take another step and say that if small faith is all that is necessary, then it does not need to grow, or it cannot grow.

But since other spiritual gifts can grow (see chapter 1, III.), then it is not unusual to expect the gift of faith to grow. Also, since Christ made a correlation between faith as a seed and a seed can grow, perhaps he was implying that faith could grow. But to suggest a balance between the two positions, faith in God remains constant, but when the person steps out in faith, he strengthens himself for a future step of faith.. Then it is not faith that has grown, but the person has grown in his experience, or he has learned how to exercise his faith in God. The spiritual gift of faith retains the same capacity, but the person grows in his ability to apply his gift in Christian service.

Jerry Falwell and the pastors having the ten largest DGR were asked to fill out a survey that assessed their faith on a scale of one to ten, from weak faith to strong faith. This survey asked them to measure their faith at the time they planted the church and again in the fall of 1982. Then the survey asked them to measure their faith on a scale of one to ten in relationship to four areas; location, doctrine, church objectives and principles.

#### THE ASSESSMENT OF FAITH BY

##### CHURCH PLANTERS

	Faith at time of planting	Faith in 1982	Faith and Location	Faith and Doctrine	Faith and church objective	Faith and principle
Falwell	5	8	10	9	8	7.5
Average of all Liberty men responding	8.1	8.1	6.7	6.3	6.6	6.0

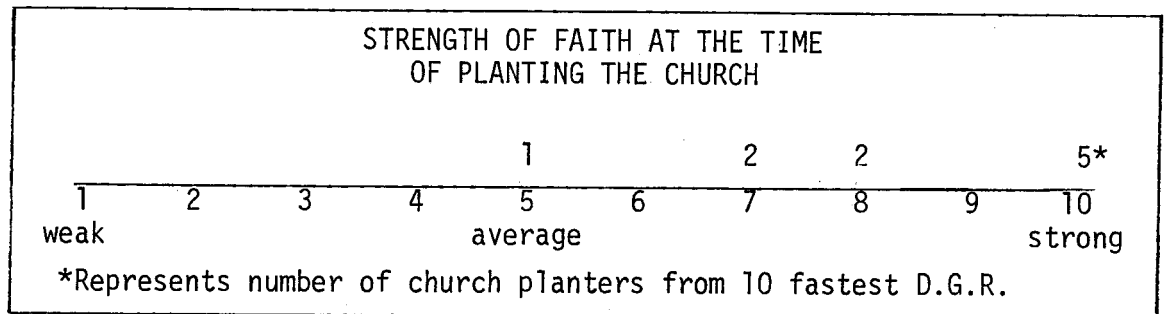
# ASSESSMENT OF FAITH BY CHURCH PLANTERS:

## TEN FASTEST D.G.R.

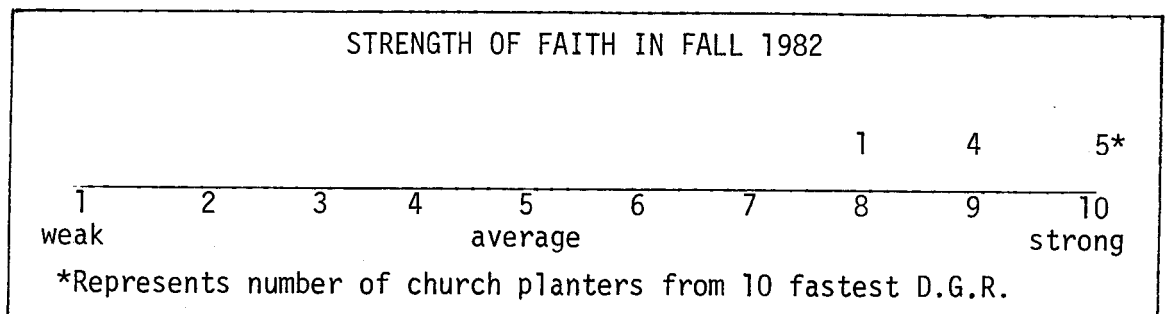
	<i>Faith at time of planting</i>	<i>Faith in 1982</i>	<i>Faith and Location</i>	<i>Faith and Doctrine</i>	<i>Faith and church objective</i>	<i>Faith and principle</i>
HENSON	8	9	9	6.5	6	6.5
KIDD	5	9	9	7	9	7.5
HARLEY	10	10	9	9	8.5	8.5
RAY	10	10	9.5	8.5	8.5	7.5
MARTELLI	7	9	8.5	7.5	8	7.5
WOOD	10	10	10	10	10	10
RHODENHIZER	10	10	8.5	7	9	7
STRONG	8	9	8.5	8.5	9	7.5
RIGGINS	7	8	8.5	8	8.5	9
BYERS	10	10	9	9	9	9
AVERAGE OF TEN FASTEST D.G.R.	8.7	9.3	8.9	8.2	8.8	8.1

The ten Liberty graduates differ in the perception of their faith and how they express their faith. The question does not deal with an actual or correct assessment of their faith, but how they perceived it at a point in time.

CHURCH PLANTERS LISTED IN ORDER OF GROWTH		
Name	Strength of faith when church planted	Strength of faith now
a. Henson	8	9
b. Kidd	5	9
c. Harley	10	10
d. Ray	10	10
e. Martelli	7	9
f. Wood	10	10
g. Rhodenhizer	10	10
h. Strong	7	8
i. Riggins	8	9
j. Byers	10	10



It is interesting that five church planters did not rank their faith "Strong/10" when they planted the church, but all of them assessed their faith equal to, or stronger in 1982. Also, note that three of the fastest DGR pastors ranked their faith weaker than the average Liberty man when they planted the church, but in 1982, they were all stronger or equal to the average Liberty graduate. Apparently they were growing in the perception of faith (either their growing church strengthened their faith, or the reverse happened).



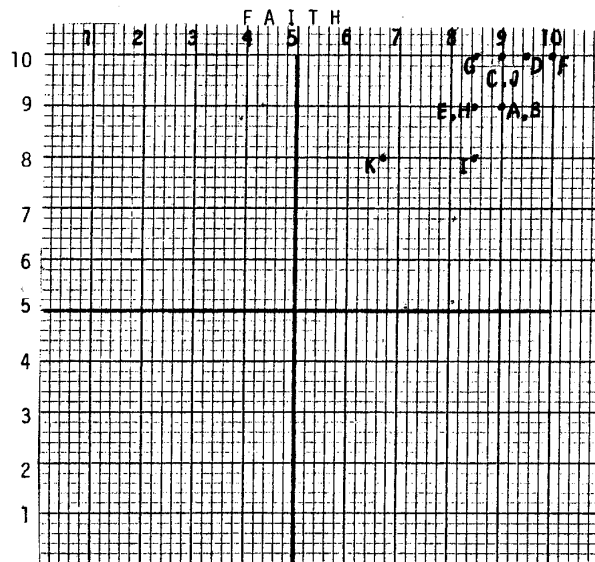
After the assessment of the strength of the faith by the ten church planters was made on a scale of one to ten in relationship to four factors: (a) location, (b) doctrinal statement,



(c) expressed church objectives, and (d) the application of proper church planting principles; four quartiles were constructed to compare the results. Then the ten church planters were placed on the quartiles and compared with the average Liberty Baptist Fellowship church planter.

A. *A Quartile Comparison of Faith and Location.* The following quartile was constructed to determine a comparison of the assessed faith of the church planter to his location. The church planter was asked to assess the strength of his perception of God's leading him to the city where he ministered (horizontal). This was compared to the assessment of his faith (vertical). All Liberty church planters scored in the upper right hand quartile.

There is a corrective factor in the questions. When the church planter was asked to assess the strength of his commitment to a geographical location, the author assumed the church planter would rank himself high in his commitment to a location because the environment at Liberty motivates a church planter to find a location for a church to which God is leading him or allow God to burden his heart for a city. For a Liberty man to affirm anything less than a high score, is to question his training. Therefore, the corrective question was asked, "If you had left this location to go elsewhere for ministry, how much could God bless your ministry in another place?" He was then asked to rank the question on a scale from one to ten. It was assumed if the Liberty man were committed to his present location, he would score another location low. The result of the corrective answer was reversed on the scale and averaged with the first question to produce a composite or corrective score.



a. Henson	9/9	g. Rhodenhizer	10/8.5
b. Kidd	9/9	h. Strong	9/8.5
c. Harley	10/9	i. Riggins	8/8.5
d. Ray	10/9.5	j. Byers	10/9
e. Martelli	9/8.5	k. Average Liberty	
f. Wood	10/10	response	8/6.7

*10/10 Strong Faith - Strong Location.* Note the obvious relationship of the ten Liberty men in the 10/10 quartile. Those who scored in the upper right hand box would be expected to have a strong feeling of faith that God was directing them to the location where they are ministering. There are at least two possible conclusions for their success. If they knew they were in the correct geographical location, then they would expect God to bless them in the church. On the other hand, if they felt strong faith in God, they would expect His direction to the correct location where they would have a successful ministry. Only one church planter, Ronnie Riggins, had stronger faith identified with his location than with his personal faith. Also, he was the only one invited by someone to come to the location and begin a church.

Note the response of the average Liberty church planter. He was stronger in faith than in his commitment to the location. But, both his expressed commitment to location and faith was weaker than the ten church planters with the fastest churches.

*10/1 Strong Faith - Weak Location.* Those who scored in this quartile would probably have a strong perception of their faith, but they are probably not completely convinced that the present location is the will of God. This person could be successful in his present location, or he could be successful in another place, because he has not tied faith to a location. His commitment to God is the primary consideration. Place is probably not a consideration unless he felt it was the wrong place. Then, a negative location would affect his faith, hence it would affect the success of his work.

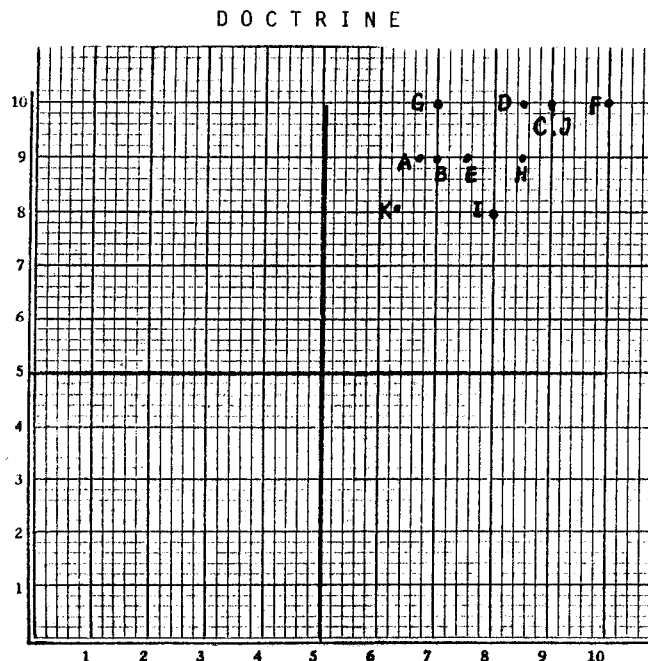
*1/10 Strong Location - Weak Faith.* This person may have a strong commitment to a geographical location for many reasons. He may be committed to the area because of a burden to help the needy people or the lack of a church in the area. Or, he may have lived in the area or his home was there. Yet, this same church planter may have weak faith for a number of reasons (see 1/1). In some cases, the church planter has faith that God will work in the area; but perhaps not through his ministry but through someone else. In any case, the predictability of success is lower because the church planter has low belief/confidence that God will work in his ministry, even though he is in an area where he feels God would have him minister.

*1/1 Weak Faith - Weak Location.* Some may wonder how a church planter could ever end up in this situation. But sometimes a denomination has sent or assigned a man to a needy area, but the minister has no confidence that it is God's will for him to be in the location. As a result, he has little faith that God will use him there. Perhaps his low faith erodes any commitment he might have to the area. On the other hand, he may dislike the area or he has some other negative feeling for the location that may erode his faith that God will use him in that place. Some may continue to minister in a 1/1 situation because it is a temporary assignment. Perhaps some continue to minister in a 1/1 situation because they wrongly interpret faith and yieldedness. They mistakenly think they are not to quit, i.e., they are to minister where situations are difficult, inhuman or not likely to produce success. Perhaps others are not successful because of their interpretation of the Scriptures, or they are unduly influenced by the anti-success attitudes of excessive humanism. In any case, some remain in a 1/1 location.

*Summary.* All Liberty men score themselves high in their assessment of faith and location. Those who have the highest DGR, score higher than the average Liberty graduate.

Apparently, the ten Liberty men have strong faith that God led them to their location. Since the test only measures their perception of faith, the possibility exists that their faith is not the cause of church growth, but some other factor(s) is the cause of growth. This is not denying the possible growth of their faith. Their gift of faith could have grown as a result of their ministry. However, what is apparent is that these ten men testified that faith is the source of their church growth, so it must be accepted as the possible hypothesis.

B. *A Quartile Comparison of Faith and Doctrine.* The doctrinal quartile reflects the relationship between the assessment of the faith and commitment to doctrine of the church planter. The vertical line is the church planter's assessment of his faith, when he planted the church. The horizontal line is the church planter's assessment of faith, in relationship to applying his doctrinal statement.



a. Henson	9/6.5	g. Rhodenhizer	10/7
b. Kidd	9/7	h. Strong	9/8.5
c. Harley	10/9	i. Riggins	8/8
d. Ray	10/8.5	j. Byers	10/9
e. Martelli	9/7.5	k. Average Liberty	
f. Wood	10/10	response	8.1/6.3

As in the measurement of location, a corrective question was used to more accurately measure the church planter's assessment of doctrine. (See Appendix B for actual question).

*10/10 Strong Faith - Strong Doctrine.* Those who scored in the upper right hand quartile have a strong sense of personal faith in relationship to the doctrinal foundation of their Christianity. The ten Liberty men scored in the 10/10 quartile which is reflective of their strong

faith and commitment to doctrine. They would conclude that their church has prospered because of their strong doctrine. This study does not attempt to demonstrate that their doctrine is biblical or that their doctrine is the correct foundation for church growth. The fact that others have had success in building a church, but were different from the Liberty men in doctrinal backgrounds, demonstrates some latitude in what doctrine is apparently blessed by God. This study examines the commitment the church planter makes to use doctrine to plant his church. God blesses the exercise of faith by the church planter in the doctrine he assesses to be correct, not just the doctrinal content of a church planter. Also, an assumption is made (but not proven) that the average Liberty man holds similar doctrinal content as these ten church planters, but their church did not prosper to the same degree as those in the study.

The ten fastest DGR scored higher than the average Liberty man, suggesting faith has a higher correlation to their church growth than doctrine. Also, nine of the Liberty men scored personal faith higher than commitment to doctrine. Riggins assessed faith and doctrine equal. Does this mean he has a more objective basis of faith than others? This raises several questions that will not be examined in this study, but questions that should be answered. Why do Liberty men generally have a higher assessment of faith than of doctrine (one would assume since faith comes from doctrine that doctrine would be assessed higher)? Do Liberty men tend toward mysticism because personal faith is assessed higher than doctrinal (objective) faith? Is there a connection between the higher assessment of personal faith and a tendency on their part to interventional faith?

*10/1 Strong Faith - Weak Doctrine.* This quartile reflects those who perceive their personal faith as strong, yet score themselves weak in relationship to doctrine. This may be weak knowledge of doctrine, or a ministerial candidate may not be sure of his ability to apply it to people's lives. He may be committed to God but have some question of interpretation, not knowing if he is more Calvinist or more Armenian in persuasion. As a result, he may have scored his doctrinal commitment low. It is possible for such a minister to build a church if his sense of divine leadership to the location is high, or his confidence in church growth principles or church objectives can compensate for weak doctrine. Obviously, others have planted and built churches with low or little emphasis on doctrine.

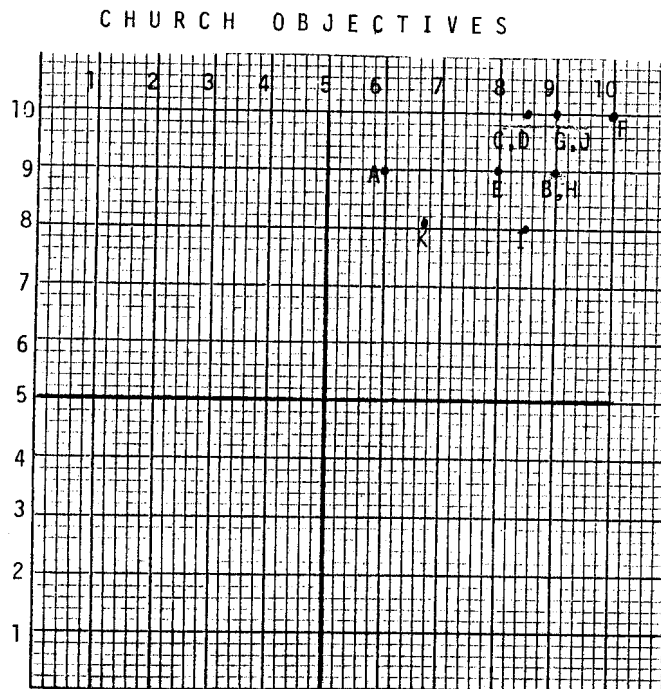
*1/10 Strong Doctrine - Weak Faith.* This quartile represents those who have a strong commitment to doctrine, yet weak perception of their faith in God. The one with strong doctrinal commitment usually has more than a naive acceptance of God, he usually knows the person and works of God and His creation. Therefore, a 1/10 may not be weak in faith because he does not know about God. Perhaps he is not living consistently with his knowledge, hence a weak perception of faith. If he perceives faith as mystical or emotional oriented; then he could perceive his faith as weak because he is an intellectual not an emotional oriented person. In any case, his low faith would cause him to work without confidence or enthusiasm in his project. His ability to lead the church in growth would be affected. Those who score in the 1/10 could plant and build a church, but the predictability of success would be low and the rate of growth slow.

*1/1 Weak Faith - Weak Doctrine.* Those who score in this quartile would have the lowest predictability of outward growth in ministry. They would perceive their faith as weak, while also having a weak commitment to doctrine. Some may wonder if this person should be in full-time

ministry. If he is not sure of his doctrine (the source of his message) and he is not sure of his personal commitment to God (the source of his ministry), then perhaps he should examine his calling and qualifications for church planting or church growth.

*Summary.* The Liberty men score themselves high in their assessment of faith and doctrine. The ten whose churches have the highest DGR score higher than the average Liberty man. Apparently, they have stronger faith in relationship to doctrine which has a correlation to church growth. But, the possibility exists that they assess their faith stronger than it is in reality (perceptual). Also, their faith may not be the cause of growth, but because their work has succeeded, their faith is the result of church growth. Faith, could be the outgrowth, not the cause of their growth. But that is speculation, what is obvious is that they testify to a correlation of faith and doctrine as a source of their church growth. Perhaps the answer is not a single cause and effect relationship, but a correlation of many diffused factors.

*C. A Quartile Comparison of Faith and Objectives.* The following quartile determines the relationship between the assessment of a minister's faith and the assessment of his commitment to church objectives. The vertical line reflects the assessment of his faith while the horizontal line reflects his assessment of his commitment to the church objectives taught at Liberty. Liberty church planters scored in the 10/10 quartile, Strong Faith Strong Church Objectives. A corrective question was used as in the previous chart, see Appendix B for the actual question.



a. Henson	9/6	g. Rhodenhizer	10/9
b. Kidd	9/9	h. Strong	9/9
c. Harley	10/8.5	i. Riggins	8/8.5
d. Ray	10/8.5	j. Byers	10/9
e. Martelli	9/8	k. Average Liberty	
f. Wood	10/10	response	8.1/6.6

*10/10 Strong Faith - Strong Objectives.* Those who score in this quartile have a strong sense of faith and a strong commitment to the objectives of the church. The ten Liberty graduates with the highest DGR all scored in this quartile. Inasmuch as a clear perception of objectives is usually considered a basic criterion that leads to success in most projects, a church planter with clear objectives has a greater likelihood of success than those whose objectives are not clear, nor those who are not committed to their objectives. Liberty men are generally committed to the church objectives learned at Liberty, i.e., the Great Commission is the purpose of church planting and church growth.

The question concerning church objectives does not involve itself whether they are biblically correct, or pragmatically workable. The question involves an assessment of the strength of the church planter to his church objectives. As in the other measurements, those who have a differing set of church objectives have demonstrated they can plant and build a local church.<sup>97</sup>

The position of Liberty's doctrinal statement and the constitution of L.B.F. is that the Great Commission is the articulated objective of the church. Liberty men are exhorted to: (1) win souls, (2) baptize converts, and, (3) teach the Word of God. There are other articulated church objectives at Liberty, but the accomplishment of these objectives are the ones which are prized by the L.B.F., because statistics are gathered and distributed among the church planters regarding these areas. Hence, continual reinforcement of these objectives to the present student body and those who are pastoring Liberty churches, have contributed to their success.

*10/1 Strong Faith - Weak Objectives.* Not all Liberty graduates take Baptist churches, some graduates end up in other denominations. Some who take churches that are non-Baptist in name, carry out the Liberty objectives and make them "Liberty-type churches." Others take churches with objectives that are different from those taught at Liberty. These were not measured because there is no list available outside of the L.B.F. mailing list.

The commitment of the faith of any church planter, no matter what his orientation, would make some success in church growth predictable, even if he had weak commitment to objectives. Surely many who have been committed to God, have applied the Bible to their parishioners resulting in God's blessing on the church. Some of these were not clear in church goals, nor were they committed to church growth. But their commitment to, "preach the Word" (II Tim. 4:2) caused the church to prosper. However, it is the author's contention that if such a person understood church objectives and was committed to apply them to his church, he probably would have enjoyed greater blessing of God than he now enjoys.

*1/10 Weak Faith - Strong Objectives.* Obviously, those who are not committed to their project (by ignorance or not being committed to the goals) and those who personally do not express their faith in God for their church (interpreted to mean no strength of faith in God regarding church planting), will probably not be able to build a growing church. There may be

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<sup>97</sup> Elmer Towns, John Vaughan and David Seifert, *The Complete Book of Church Growth* (Wheaton: Tyndale House Publishers, 1981), p. 89. This chart compares seven philosophies of church growth. To some extent, there are different priorities and expressions of church growth objectives in each area. Yet there is numerical growth represented in each of the seven philosophies.

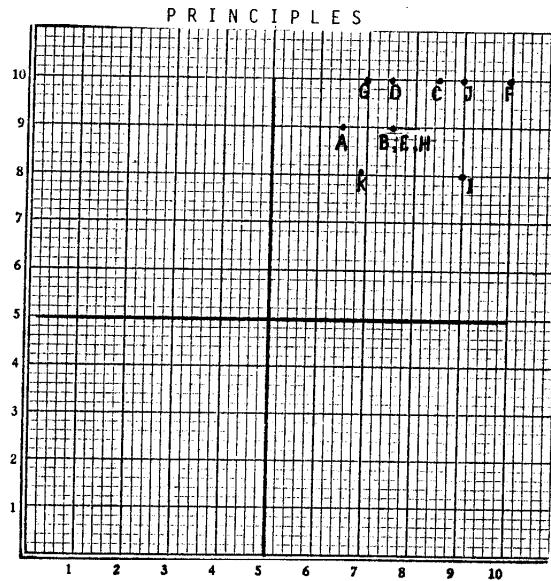
social conditions where a laissez-faire leader is needed to pastor a group with low growth expectation and weak direction. A 1/1 pastor may do well in such a situation, and if social conditions are right, the group may prosper. But the predictability of growth would be low.

*1/1 Weak Faith - Weak Objectives.* Those who score in this quartile would have a low predictability of success in church growth. They would perceive their faith as weak, while having a weak commitment to the objectives of the church. They may be weak in objectives because: (1) their ignorance of church objectives, (2) they believe the Bible teaches a high commitment to individual objectives or para-church objectives, rather than local church objectives, or (3) they have knowledge of church objectives but for some personal reason they are not committed to them.

*Summary.* The Liberty men score themselves high in their assessment of faith as related to church objectives. The ten highest DGR score higher than the average Liberty pastor. Apparently, the strength of their faith in God as reflected in their church objectives is a factor in their growth. In view of the three types of faith, this section seems to be instrumental in nature. As in the last section, the Liberty men (except Riggins) rated their faith higher than church objectives. When church objectives are rated higher than faith, it would have implied their faith would have been instrumental (using faith as a tool for growth). But faith is ranked higher by Liberty men, suggesting an interventional approach to faith in church ministry and growth.

Also, the possibility exists that these men wrongly perceived their faith stronger than it is in reality. If faith were ranked lower, then the instrumental conclusion could be suggested. But, these men all testified to a strong correlation between faith and church objectives, suggesting faith is one hypothesis that leads to church growth.

*D. A Quartile Comparison of Faith and Principles.* The following quartile measures the relationship between the assessment of faith by the church planter and his commitment to the principles and practices he applies in church growth. The vertical line is the church planter's assessment of his faith. The horizontal line is his assessment of his commitment to principles. A corrective question was used to determine the church planter's belief that God was blessing the principles used in his church as opposed to God blessing different principles found in other growing churches (see Appendix B for the actual question).



a. Henson	9/6.5	g. Rhodenhizer	10/7
b. Kidd	9/7.5	h. Strong	9/7.5
c. Harley	10/8.5	i. Riggins	8/9
d. Ray	10/7.5	j. Byers	10/9
e. Martelli	9/7.5	k. Average Liberty	
f. Wood	10/10	response	8.1/6.9

*10/10 Strong Faith - Strong Principles.* Those who scored in this quartile have a strong sense of faith and a strong commitment to church growth principles. There are at least two possible conclusions for their growth; first, their growth is the result of interventional faith, or second, their growth was the result of the application of church planting and church growth principles. (The priority of the Word of God in the principles makes this second option instrumental faith.) The ten Liberty men scored in this quartile. Note, both groups (the ten church planters with the highest DGR [except Riggins] and the average Liberty man) scored themselves stronger in faith than in principles. Even though their assessment of principles is high (8.1), it is lower in comparison to the assessment of location (8.9), doctrine (8.2), and church objectives (8.8). Therefore, the Liberty men felt the correct principles to build a church was important, but not as important as other factors. Also, the interviews revealed several Liberty men were no longer committed to saturation evangelism as a means of church growth.

*10/1 Strong Faith - Weak Principles.* Those who score in this quartile are strong in their assessment of faith, but weak in their commitment to principles. Those who score themselves weak may do so because: (1) ignorance of church principles, (2) no confidence that they are inducted from the Scripture, or (3) they are not committed to church growth principles for some personal reason. This minister could be successful in church growth depending on the choice of



principles that he used (without being committed to them), or he could exercise his faith so that God intervenes to cause the church to grow.

*1/10 Strong Principle - Weak Faith.* The minister scoring in this quartile would assess his faith weak, but have a strong commitment to the principle he is employing. The correlation of church growth principles to the Bible is not the issue, for obviously more than one set of principles are used in church growth. The minister's assessment of these principles is the factor that is being measured. In certain circumstances, the success of a church can be predictable, based on the application of principles that are adaptable to the social context. However, faith (the intervention by God in marginal or adverse circumstances to build a church) will be a small factor in the 1/10 quartile.

*1/1 Weak Faith - Weak Principles.* Some might ask if a person could score in this quartile and remain in the ministry. But, there are probably a large number of ministers who assess themselves low in faith and low in commitment to church growth principles. There are several sources of a minister scoring in a 1/1 quartile: (1) he may be discouraged because of personal reasons, hence he exercises little faith in his ministry, (2) he has failed in some or many church ministry projects, (3) he does not minister from principles, (4) he is not committed to the principles he understands, (5) he has accepted the position that there are no principles of church growth taught in Scripture, or (6) he is ignorant of church growth principles.

*Summary.* The Liberty men score themselves high in their assessment of faith and church growth principles. The ten church planters with the highest DGR, assess themselves higher (8.1) than the average Liberty pastor (6.9). Apparently, the correlation of faith with church growth principles is a factor that influences church growth. Inasmuch as the ten church planters scored faith higher than their commitment to principles (except Riggins), this would seem to imply that faith is an intervention factor to cause churches to grow. If they had rated principles stronger, then it might be implied that principles were the primary cause of growth and faith the tool to apply the principles (instrumental faith).

The Liberty men scored principles lowest in a comparison of the four factors: (1) location, (2) doctrine, (3) church objectives, and (4) principles. The average observer might have assumed that the unique principles of "Saturation Evangelism," (as communicated in books, tapes, and conferences) to be the strongest factor scored by Liberty men. However, they are aware of some graduates who have conscientiously applied Saturation Evangelism and their church has not grown. Also, Jerry Falwell said that the heyday of Saturation Evangelism is passed (the principle remains but vast public acceptance is gone).<sup>98</sup> He explained that Saturation Evangelism was extremely successful when "cheap money" was available, but has been limited because of inflation. He sees a problem with Saturation Evangelism because of the rising cost of advertisement, Sunday school bus operation, building cost, salaries for expansion, and the prohibitive cost of purchasing television, radio and other media. Falwell admonished his graduates "back to basics," which involves visitation, preaching, teaching and soul winning. It is

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<sup>98</sup> Chapel Message, (April 1982) to ministerial students. Falwell has not committed this statement or explanation to print.

no wonder when the voice of Falwell lacks a strong commitment to his principles, that the Liberty men would measure their assessment lower to principles than to other areas.

Some might argue that their measurement is only perceived, i.e., the Liberty men are building churches but it is some other factor that is the causal agent. This may have some consideration, however, the combined testimony cannot be ignored, they perceive that their faith and their principles have caused the church to grow, (even though it is lowest of four areas, it still is in the 10/10 quartile). Hence, the correlation of faith and principles is a hypothesis for church growth.

#### IV. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

The most apparent observation is that those surveyed testified that they perceived their faith stronger now than when they planted their church. The largest growth is reflected in Falwell who went from five to eight. If this reflects a real rate of growth in faith (rather than just perception of growth), then it proves that faith can grow. The total response to the survey reflect that they perceived their faith had grown, and whether it grew or not, their stronger perception has a correlation to church growth. Whether their faith causes church growth or is the result of church growth; the perception of growth in faith seems to correlate to growth in the church.

### CHAPTER 3

#### Lighthouse Baptist Church

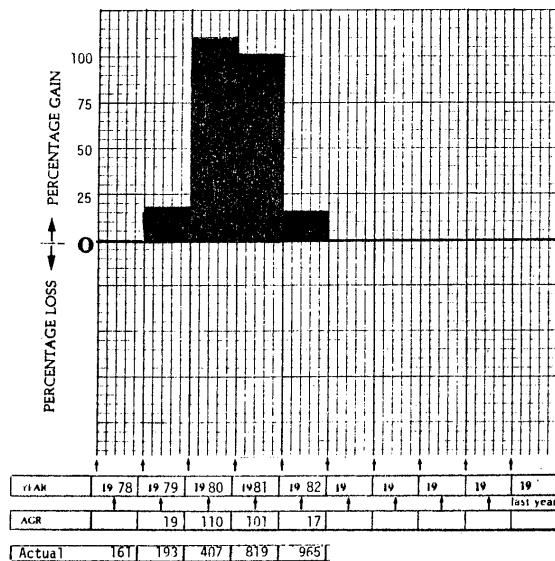
Nashville, Tennessee

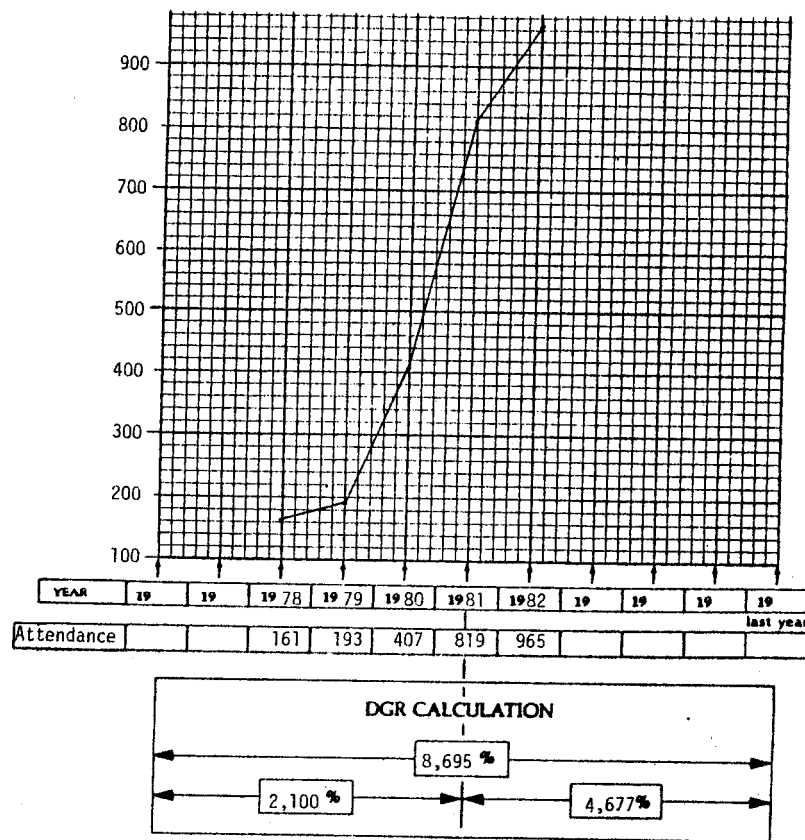
Alfred Henson, Pastor

The largest and fastest growing church planted by a Liberty graduate is also considered the strongest in many other ways. Al Henson finished Liberty Baptist Seminary in 1978 and immediately began Lighthouse Baptist Church in the recreation room of an apartment complex. Because he believes faith can intervene in the problems that face the work of God, he fasted and prayed for 25 acres of ground on I-24. The provision of the ground was miraculous. The church has constructed four buildings for a total worth of two million dollars in assets, received an annual income of \$963,000 in 1982, has 425 students in a Christian school, averages almost one thousand in attendance, has planted 15 new churches in five states and over 50 Liberty graduates now work for the church or they are evangelists and/or church planters who minister from the church. By numerical considerations, plus a reflection of the same view of faith; Lighthouse reflects the impetus of Thomas Road Baptist Church and the outreach of Jerry Falwell.

#### I. COMMUNITY AND CONTEXTUAL FACTORS

Nashville, Tennessee has a metropolitan population of 500,000 and has a broad spectrum of businesses. The primary commercial industries are printing, entertainment and tourism. Nashville is the capital of Tennessee and has the general assets and liabilities of a major American city. The city has a strong educational base with a variety of schools and colleges.





### III. HISTORY OF THE CHURCH

Isaiah said, "Like priest, like people," implying that the attitude of the pastor influences the outlook of the people who follow him. As such, the Lighthouse Baptist Church seems to experience continual revival, reflective of the leadership Al Henson gives to the church. For over a year, the pastor and many of the people met every evening at the church altar for prayer. Al Henson has been described as godly and extremely pious by his classmates at Liberty Baptist Seminary. They remember his sensitive nature and subjective introspection. As such he was respected, so much so that many have gone to work with him.

Al Henson graduated from the University of Tennessee. He was living in Gallatin when he felt God calling him into full-time Christian service. He remembers walking to the back porch of his house and looking out over a section of the city. "God gave me a burden for the city and I know He has called me to reach all of Nashville for Christ."

Henson testifies that his first step of faith was selling everything and moving to Lynchburg, Virginia, and enrolling in Liberty Baptist Seminary. "God was beginning to teach me daily faith." When his wife Susan went to apply for a job, the person read someone else's application by mistake and gave the job to Susan. Henson sees this as the provision of God.

When Henson was a student at Liberty, he wanted to put God to the test, "I wanted to see a miracle so I would know that God was calling me to start a church." He had \$1,057. He paid a \$17 water bill, \$40 for groceries, and gave \$1,000 to the church. Henson did not tell his wife or anyone else. God moved a couple at Thomas Road Baptist Church, close friends he now calls "Mom and Pop Morris" who felt led to help a student through school. They invited the Hensons to move into their home, giving them a place to live without rent, plus helping them purchase food. He figures that the Morris' gave him over \$7,000 worth of rent and groceries, seven times the amount he had given to God.

After finishing his class work at the seminary in 1977, Henson moved to Nashville. He had prayed for this church for three years while in seminary. He testified, "I did not have a problem with what to do after graduation. I knew God was leading me to Nashville." He rented an apartment in Bavaria Apartments with the stipulation that he could use the recreation room to start a church. He knocked on 3,000 doors the first month and on the first Sunday, 41 showed up. Nila Miller professed Christ that day and is still a member of the church. That evening, 19 people came back for the evening service. Inasmuch as many relatives were there for the first Sunday, Al figured there were about 20 people interested in starting a church at the first service. Because of their hard work, there were 38 people there the second Sunday and 43 the third.

When the church was only two months old, Henson passed 25 acres on Interstate 24, not far from the apartment building, "As I drove past and saw the tenement house, I knew the property could be purchased." When first contacted, the owner refused because he was going to will the property to his daughter. When Henson called on the owner a second time, he was told "no" emphatically. Henson walked the property line and prayed for the tract of land. On several occasions he returned with his wife, knelt on the property and asked God to give it to him. He believed by interventional faith God would give the land to the church.

Finally, for three days, Henson fasted and prayed that God would touch the owner's heart. He got the church to pray for the property. Then he visited the man and shared his burden for reaching the city of Nashville. As he left, he asked the owner, "Will you pray about selling the property to us?" The man's wife said, "I'll see that he prays about it."

The next day the man phoned Henson, "The Lord spoke to me as I have never had Him speak to me before, and I know that God wants you to have this property." Then the owner went on, "If you will come up with \$29,000, I will loan you the other \$71,000 to buy the property." The church was given 90 days to raise the down payment on the mortgage that was pegged at 9 percent interest.

Slowly some money came in. Only six days before the deadline, the church had only raised \$5,000. A Christian friend, but not a member of the church, Malcom Barrett told Henson, "I have been listening to you on the radio." He invited Henson, "Let's get on our knees and pray about this money." After praying he said, "Come by tomorrow-and I will get \$24,000 for the property." He loaned the church the money at no interest for an indefinite period. The church raised the rest of the money. According to Henson, this was one of the greatest miracles in the life of the church.

Henson says that a wife also has to help in the building of a church. When they were constructing their first building, the ladies of the church gave \$38,000. Actually, his wife gave her engagement ring and because of her example, many ladies in the congregation followed. Out of that sense of sacrifice, God prospered the church and gave them their first building.

The church began construction on a metal building 30 x 75, that would seat 225 in the church. There was an old home on the property that was used for Sunday school. On October 27, 1978, they moved into the metal building and averaged 160 that first year.

The growth of Lighthouse Baptist Church is even more significant when according to Henson, "Our crowd is a drive-in crowd, we do not have a bus ministry." The church has 50 to 60 men who are trained soul winners. The church does not have a regular weekly visitation program, but they win souls throughout the week.

When Henson went to Nashville, he did not pray for hundreds, "I prayed for one family a week." During that first year, fifty-three families joined the church. As a matter of fact, everyone prayed for a family a week to join the church. Sometimes when a family visited the church, someone said to them, "You're the family we have been praying for."

In talking of his leadership, Henson testifies, "I am a man of sacrifice and I have led my people to sacrifice." Then he went on to state, "I believe there are over 25 men who would sell their houses for their Lord."

He testifies that the church has grown because I have led the people in the church to sacrifice.

#### IV. ANALYSIS OF FAITH

Al Henson defined, "Faith is bringing God supernaturally into a situation." From that definition he explained, "Faith is determining what is God's will, then trusting Him to carry out His will in a situation."

When Henson was faced with the three possibilities of faith, (1) instrumental, (2) insightful, and (3) interventional; he said, "Faith is interventional because that means it is miraculous or supernatural." In a letter to the students at Liberty, Henson explains, "I consider living by faith . . . as a necessary way of life whether it be personally or in a ministry. Faith is not a passive thing but rather faith is operating under circumstances in which without God's intervention, we shall fail."

When Henson was asked to explain what he meant by "intervention" he explained, "What God orders, He supplies. If it is God's will for the church to go forward, we can trust Him to overcome any barriers or to supply any need."

Henson said, "When I accept Jesus Christ by faith, He becomes real to me. When I accept the Holy Spirit by faith, He fills me. When I obey the Lord Jesus Christ by faith, He becomes glorified in me." To explain this Henson said, "Faith is the supernatural manifestation of Jesus Christ in a life."

When Henson was asked where he got his faith, he said that it comes from God, "I do not pray for faith, it is the gift of God,"

Henson believes that as the church has grown, so his faith has grown. Henson testifies that there are several means by which faith grows.

First, I daily ask God to pour His faith into my life. Second, the more I know about Jesus Christ and the Bible; the more I can trust Him. Hence, I have more faith by fellowshiping with Jesus Christ and drawing upon the principles of the Bible. In the third place, my faith grows as I take a step of faith. God does not give people faith just because they ask for it. Faith grows when it is exercised.

Henson illustrates the growth of faith with the verse, "From faith to faith" (Rom. 1:17). He interprets this verse to mean a person could grow from weak faith to strong faith.

*A. Faith and Location.* When Henson was asked to relate how faith led him to Nashville, he indicated there was never a question in his mind that he was to minister there.

From the moment I went on to the back porch and saw Nashville, I knew that God wanted me to come to this city. I knew that God wanted me to do more than just build one church, God wanted us to plant hundreds of churches in Nashville and make an impact on this city for God.

*B. Faith and Doctrine.* Henson noted, "Obviously a person has no faith if he does not believe in the cardinal or the basic doctrines of the Bible." Then he went on to say that, "If a person believes in the cardinal doctrines, and he attempted to live by faith; the minor doctrinal faults would not affect him." Henson went on to indicate that God will always work in a person's life to purify his doctrine. He believes that the gift of faith comes before pure doctrine, rather than the reverse. But he was quick to add, saving faith was based on biblical doctrine. In relating the two, he said they run full-cycle, doctrine is first which produces saving faith; then a Christian's faith purifies his doctrine. "If a person seeks God with all of his heart, God will purify his faith, and his faith will purify his doctrine."

Henson believes one of the problems among independent Baptists is that they do not see the necessity to grow in faith. He sees many who understand the cardinal doctrines, but have not grown beyond that understanding. He feels many Christians, "Do not know how to walk in faith."

*C. Faith and Objectives.* Henson believes that the purpose of the church is to bring glory to God. He sees the purpose of the church to be "Conformed to the image of Jesus Christ" (Rom. 8:29). The purpose grows out of the objective which is found in Matthew 28:19,20. The objective of the church is; (1) evangelism, (2) discipleship, and (3) fellowship. He believes the Great Commission is given to the church but is not carried out until people are made into disciples and are walking in conformity to the image of Jesus Christ.

When I came to Nashville I did not think we would grow, although I was concerned about growth, I determined that I would disciple people and cause them to grow in Jesus Christ. I found many people in the city who were hungry

for the Word of God. People came to the church because of the message and the fellowship of the service. This has been the predominant cause of our church growth.

To explain this Henson indicated that 25 percent is new convert growth, 50 percent of the growth is from Christians who are not from a church, and 25 percent is transfer growth.

*D. Faith and Principles.* Henson believes faith comes before the fullness and power of the Holy Spirit. Then when a person is filled with the Spirit, he can build a church which produces church growth. Henson testifies that he determined in seminary, "I will accomplish more by becoming a man of God than I will by just learning principles and methodology." He noted, "The blessing of God is not upon a place or principles, but rather upon a man."

He challenges students at Liberty, "When you are properly positioned in relationship with God, He will bless you. You shall prosper and your ministry shall be a success no matter what part of the world you are in."

Henson determined to walk with God, but he also determined that he would not neglect principles and promotion. He feels that many have emphasized principles and techniques, but have neglected the spiritual walk with God.

When it comes to understanding principles of saturation evangelism or any other principles; Henson believes that certain methods will work only in certain cities. "The man of God must have faith to apply methods to the situation." Henson indicates that church busing will work in some cities, but he did not use it in Nashville. At times in his ministry he has used Sunday school campaigns, but he has also grown without using campaigns.

He indicated that certain techniques reach a certain kind of people, while other techniques reach a different kind of people. He went on to indicate that when he emphasized preaching the Word and helping people to experience the fullness of the Spirit, he attracted a different type of person to his church.

When asked to explain the gift of faith, Henson indicated that "Every Christian can manifest some aspect of the gift of faith because every Christian has Jesus Christ in his heart." Then he went on to specify, "The gift of faith is the ability to teach other people to live by the same kind of faith." Then in keeping with that explanation he stated, "I have the gift of faith because God has used me to motivate others to live by faith, but my greatest gift is exhortation." Henson believes that "If a man has the gift of faith, others will catch it from him." To illustrate this principle, several months ago Al Henson stopped taking a salary from the church. He announced on one occasion to the congregation that he was going to live by faith. He did this because of the criticism he heard in Nashville that many ministers were preaching for money. He did not want his salary to be a reproach to the gospel.

Two weeks after he went off salary, one of the members placed an offering box near the rear door where people could place gifts for their pastor. Henson testified, "I could not have live on the money that was put in the box. Most of the money was given directly to me." Henson does not take money from the box, another man receives it and places it into an account, along with the gifts that are given directly to Henson. If there is anything extra in the account, it is



given to the needy in the church. Recently, the excess was used as a down payment on a house for one of the staff members. Henson has been criticized because people will not get a receipt for income tax credit. However, the person who oversees the account issues receipts. This way, it is accountable to IRS examination.

When asked what is the biggest step of faith he has taken in his life Henson indicated receiving \$29,000 in ninety days. But as soon as he said this, Henson explained, “The early steps of faith that I took are not as big by today’s perspective, but they were big then.”

## V. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

Of all the church planters in this study, Al Henson is closest in his view of faith to Jerry Falwell. Both say that faith is interventional and have demonstrated that God can intervene in a crisis situation to solve problems that have blocked church growth. Al Henson seems to have brought his attitude toward faith with him to Liberty where it was amplified.

It is obvious that success in trusting God to solve one problem leads to a greater trust when succeeding problems face the ministry. One wonders if Henson had failed to sufficiently trust God in the past if he would have regressed in his faith, or if it would not be as strong as it is at present.

When interviewing Henson, it seems that when he first planted the church, he gave more attention to applying the principles of super aggressive evangelism (he visited 3,000 homes to start the church). Now Henson seems to give more attention to nurturing his people and emphasizing the spirit filled life. Figures are not available, but he seems to say that most of the original growth was conversion growth, while lately he has made an attempt to minister to those in main-line churches looking for spiritual reality (transfer growth). Apparently as he trusted God to intervene for evangelistic growth, he centered on a ministry of communicating faith and the spirit-filled life. Some of his former professors are concerned that Al Henson may be drifting into mystical Christianity, others see this as a “preaching tangent” which influences many preachers.

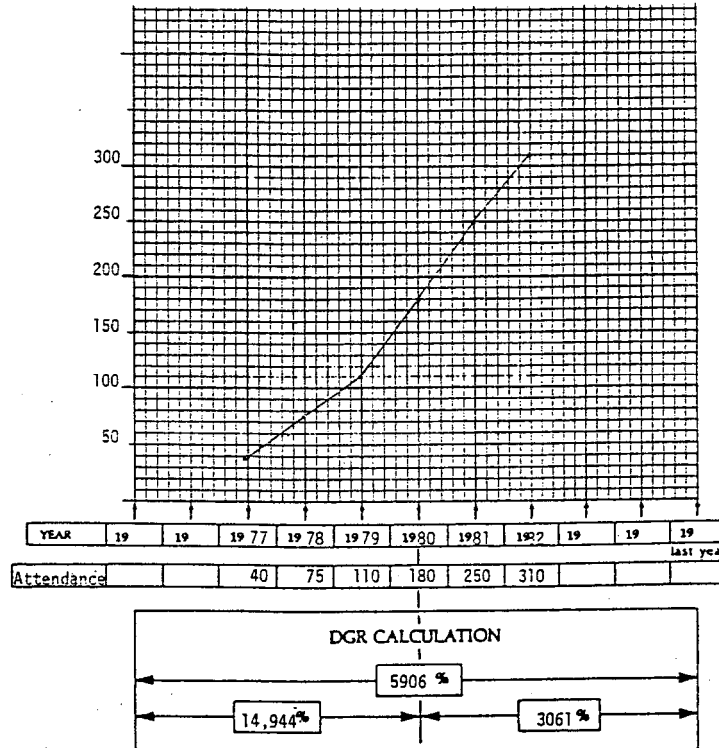
## CHAPTER 4

### Heritage Baptist Church

### Lynchburg, Virginia

### Rod Kidd, Pastor

Most Liberty graduates think that Lynchburg would be one of the most difficult places to begin a church. Due to the widespread influence of Dr. Jerry Falwell and the Thomas Road Baptist Church, they have felt a high level of competition would exist, or that they would have few opportunities or lack distinctiveness in their ministries. Yet Rod Kidd, a graduate of Liberty Baptist Seminary, has led Heritage Baptist Church from a humble start in the basement of home to the construction of a large building with approximately 400 in attendance. Located less than five miles from Thomas Road Baptist Church, the church is identified as a Fundamentalist congregation (as is Thomas Road), yet Heritage has developed its unique identity with emphasis on Bible-teaching and a warm family spirit.



Heritage Baptist Church began when several families left another church in Lynchburg, Virginia, because they felt it had departed from some biblical principles. They did not want to split the church, yet they wanted to deal with the matter scripturally, therefore, they went to the pastor and church officials with the problem. When nothing was done, the families left quietly. When they met one another while shopping or on other business, they found out that none of them had joined another church, so they met together in the basement of one of their homes. Most of them agreed to meet again within thirty days to determine if they would join a church or if they should begin a church. That was November 1976. The church began meeting in December, and Dr. Robert Hughes, then dean of Liberty Baptist Seminary, served as interim pastor. He gave the young congregation a solid doctrinal foundation, and Dr. Frank Schmitt, professor of Christian Education at Liberty Baptist Seminary, helped the church write a constitution.

When Dr. Hughes went out of town on a preaching mission, he invited Rod Kidd, a freshman at the seminary, to preach to the infant congregation. The small church liked Rod Kidd and asked him to come back as a candidate. When he did, they called him as their pastor. The question has been asked whether Rod is the founder of the church. Dr. Hughes had said, "I do not want to be your pastor; I just want to help you get started." Technically, Rod Kidd is the first pastor. Some see him as the founder, since the church was in the same condition when he came in June 1977 as when they began meeting.

According to Kidd, the first step of faith was to get the church to move out of the basement. The occasion was a church fellowship meeting to which Rod Kidd refers to as the "swimming pool meeting." While the ladies were inside, Rod Kidd came outside and saw the men sitting around the swimming pool. He could tell from their conversation that it was serious.

They were discussing whether or not the church should continue. Kidd was apprehensive about joining the conversation. The men expressed concern that the church did not have deacons, plus several other matters. Their greatest concern was the lack of a building. Out of that meeting, the men took greater responsibility for the church and Kidd realized that they had to move out of the basement. In a great step of faith, the church rented an abandoned convenience-store building on Lakeside Drive. It was a great financial commitment, but God honored and the church went forward.

Kidd testified, “Just continuing the church from week to week was a step of faith.” In the infant church, only one person made a profession of faith (during six months) and Rod felt this was “terrible ... just terrible, because we needed conversions as an affirmation of our purpose.”

While in the convenience store, the church took its next major step of faith. The people voted to enter a bond program to raise money for its present building. The step of faith involved selling \$125,000 in bonds. Rod admitted, “I was scared to death.” He had seen other churches go into a bond program and fail to sell their bonds. Kidd knew that if the church did not sell its bonds, the consequences would be so dire they might endanger the church’s existence.

He also indicated that they did several things against the advice of professional bond salesmen. First, they gave low interest rates; they did not want people to buy the bonds simply for the sake of profit. Also, they sold the bonds before they had them in hand. Finally, they were told not to buy the property because it was a dead-end street. However, the church has visibility from the expressway and the property has become an outstanding location. The bonds were sold on time and the church constructed its new facilities. God honored their commitment, and the church jumped 70 a week in attendance when it moved into the new facilities. Again the next year, the church grew by another 70 in average weekly attendance.

When the church constructed its new facilities, they had wisely provided a basement under their facility. When they first occupied the facilities, the basement was not completed, so was not usable. The first expansion involved renovating the basement. Next, the auditorium was expanded by taking out classrooms.

Soon after they occupied the building, the church planned an attendance campaign called “Friend Day.” When they were averaging 84 in attendance, an attendance goal of 100 was twice missed while still meeting in the convenience store. In the new facilities, the Friend Day campaign challenged everyone to bring a friend, without setting a goal of 100. However, attendance jumped from an average 84 to 237 on that day. Even though not a large number of people professed salvation that day, Friend Day did something to the corporate attitude of the church. They lost their “store-front mentality” and became “successful” in their own eyes.

They realized they could attract their friends to their church. Subsequently, many have professed salvation, and other Christians moved their membership into the church. Since then, the church sponsors annual fall and spring campaigns to reach the lost for salvation and to bring unchurched people into the church.

## FAITH IS VISION OF WHAT GOD CAN DO THROUGH YOU

Rod Kidd was asked with which of the three concepts of faith he agreed; (1) instrumental, (2) insightful, or (3) interventional. He replied that “Faith is having a vision of what God can do

and trusting Him to do it through you.” Kidd indicates that when he had a vision of a church on Breezewood Drive, by faith he saw what could be accomplished. Then he trusted God to give him the ability to sell the bonds and lead the church to construct the building. Kidd expresses his faith through the Word of God (instrumental) and by having a vision of what God can do (insight). Rod Kidd does not define faith as great interventions.

When asked if he has the gift of faith, Kidd did not think he has the gift of faith, especially compared to a giant like Dr. Falwell.

Asked how his faith has grown, Kidd said, “I do not think I can grow faith by myself; faith is both a gift of God and something to be nurtured by obedience.” He added, “Faith is a miraculous mixture of both.” He said if he is faithful in trusting God for little things, God will open greater things for him. He explained that he would not take credit for cultivating his faith, but he realizes it is his responsibility to carry out the duties that God has for him. “When I am faithful, God increases my faith to trust Him for greater things.”

*A. Faith and Location.* Pastoring in Lynchburg was a big step of faith to Rod Kidd. “I had to answer two questions,” he noted. “First, I had to determine if Lynchburg needed another church.” Kidd knew there were many lost in the area. Also, through his witnessing, he knew there were some who would not be reached by Thomas Road Baptist Church (his church before his call to Heritage). That question answered, he faced a second one. “Does God want me in Lynchburg?” He answered that after he preached, he knew God was calling him to Lynchburg and the Lord would bless him there.

*B. Faith and Doctrine.* When Rod Kidd was asked to relate his faith to doctrine, he stated, “I know that God honors His Word and that those who preach biblical doctrine are blessed of God.” Yet when viewing those who have different doctrine, Kidd noted, “I think that Presbyterians, Church of God and others can have faith and be blessed of God. I know of men who disagree with me in doctrine yet they are my heroes in the faith. They defend the faith and they are men of God.

Rod feels that God blesses faith, even when a person has wrong expressions of the personal faith. But Kidd is quick to maintain that a man must not deny the essentials of Christianity. “I feel that many times God blesses us despite ourselves. “We may hold to some small item that is wrong, but when God wants to do something and our heart is basically right, then God blesses our faith and causes his church to prosper.”

*C. Faith and Objectives.* The purpose of the church is to carry out the Great Commission. Kidd says he will win souls, baptize them and teach them the Word of God. Because he is located in Lynchburg, many people ask how large they will become. He answers, “My goal is not to be a second Thomas Road. I have a goal to reach 1,000 in attendance.” When he looks at the multiple ministry of Thomas Road, Kidd says he will not try to begin a Christian school or a camp. “We can use what they make available to us.” By faith, Kidd sees a family church with emphasis on a teaching ministry. In keeping with his view of faith, he is trusting God to help him carry out that vision.

*D. Faith and Principles.* Kidd is committed to the principles that were taught to him at Liberty. He notes a distinction between principles and application. As an illustration; the principle is reaching people for Christ, the application is using the bus ministry. He says he will not use an application that is ineffective. He sees Thomas Road doing an excellent task of saturating Lynchburg, so, "We are having a difficult time in the bus ministry." Since Kidd believes faith is vision, he has faith/vision that Heritage can reach families. So in the fall of 1982, they sponsored "Discovery Day" and contacted 13,000 homes. Although the attendance was not as great as expected, on each succeeding Sunday new families visited the church.

Kidd is concerned about students who go out of Liberty with great vision that is not realistic. By this he compared that Dr. Falwell had 864 on his first anniversary, so most Liberty students expect to do the same thing. Then he notes, "When a student does not have 864 on his first anniversary, he thinks he is a failure." Kidd noted, "I had to adjust to reality." Kidd went on to indicate that he has to minister by faith through his "dry season" when people are not being saved, as well as through the times when God "opens the windows of heaven and many are saved." He remembers the example of the fall Sunday School campaign and Rally Day. He trusted God for a great number of people to make professions of faith. He had trained counselors to be ready to pray with those who came forward for salvation. Follow-up material was printed and the entire church was ready for a great harvest of souls. But no one professed salvation that day. "I was discouraged," said Kidd. "But, if I had the long look, I would have seen what God is doing. For several weeks after Rally Day, we had three to five people profess salvation each week."

Rod Kidd noted,

Every once in awhile I have taken giant steps of faith that have absolutely engulfed me. I was terrified and I never wanted to do it again. But because of the burden to serve Jesus Christ, I took the risk, and God answered prayer. Now I am stronger. As I look back on those terrifying experiences, I do not want to take them again. But because of my call to the ministry, I know that I will step out in faith many times in the future.

## CONCLUSION

Rod Kidd believes faith is vision (insight) that motivates a minister to make correct decision based on the Word of God (instrumental) to build the church. He has led the church to take two steps of faith (larger than usual) that resulted in growth (obviously, other steps of faith were taken, but these two are correlated to empirical results). The steps of faith were the move into the convenience store building and construction new facilities. Kidd has a faith/vision of what he wants to accomplish in Lynchburg. His faith is tied to Scripture (fulfilling the Great Commission) and to the contextual factors of the community. He knows that Thomas Road is a factor that affects his church, yet his faith/vision involves a type of church that will adapt to a family and teaching ministry that will appeal to the section of Lynchburg he wants to reach for Christ.

# CHAPTER 5

## Lancaster Baptist Temple

### Lancaster, Pennsylvania

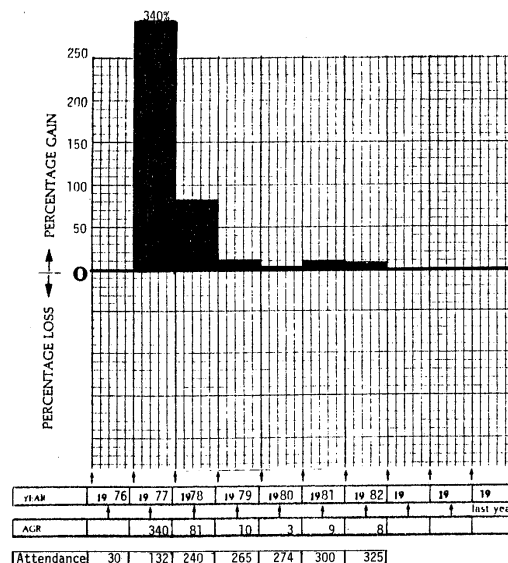
#### Dan Harley, Pastor

Dan Harley attended the Liberty Bible Institute to prepare for the ministry, but had no guidance to a specific location where he would minister. He and his family would spread a map of the United States out on the dining room table and pray for God's guidance to a specific place for ministry. Harley gradually felt God was leading him to southeast Pennsylvania, perhaps York or Philadelphia. John Weaver, an Institute graduate returned to the school and spoke in one of the classes. He told of starting a Bible study in Lancaster, Pennsylvania (southeast part of the state). Weaver was leading the group to become a church. Harley was invited to the embryonic church and was called to become its pastor. John Weaver remained because he felt he was called to only be a staff member. When Harley became pastor, they purchased a large but old facilities of a church that had built a new sanctuary. In the next six years, Lancaster Baptist Temple reached an average of over 300 in attendance, built additional facilities, saw its budget go over \$200,000 a year and a Christian day school.

### I. COMMUNITY AND CONTEXTUAL FACTORS

Lancaster County, Pennsylvania is known for its concentration of Amish and Mennonite influence, which also represents the predominate number of churches. Also, there are a large number of mainline denominational churches in the county. There are not many fundamental or evangelical churches in the county. Dan Harley felt there was a need for an aggressive evangelistic church that emphasized enthusiastic preaching, separatist living and Bible teaching. He felt there were many in the mainline churches that would be drawn to his church because their services were "formal".

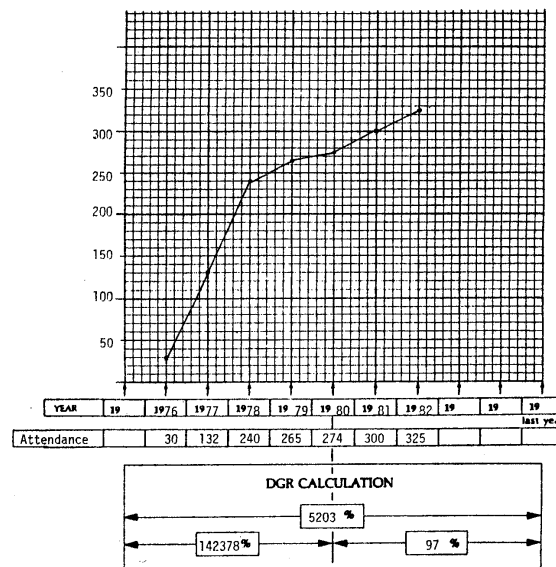
Lancaster county has diverse light industry, in the past most of it was family owned, but major industries are locating there because of the desirable work force (the strong work ethic among Mennonite and Amish). The county is growing with a number of new subdivisions.



## II. DIAGNOSIS OF CHURCH GROWTH

Obviously, the church had its largest numerical and percentage growth in its first two years (1976-78). This is partly accountable to its newness (the halo effect), the large facilities that allowed growth, an aggressive Sunday School bus ministry, an abundance of church advertisement to the community and the soul winning outreach of the pastor and the members.

The largest DGR was in 1977 when the church grew by 340 percent over the previous year. The church moved into a newly acquired facility. The lowest growth rate was in 1980, perhaps because the church began a Christian school which usually diverts energy, finances and advertisement from outreach to internal concerns. Whereas most churches that begin a Christian school usually stop growing, Lancaster Baptist Temple continued to grow but only at 3 percent over the previous year. In 1982, the church doubled its educational floor space. It will be interesting to see if additional space will allow it to continue to grow and at what rate it will grow.



## III. HISTORY OF THE CHURCH

Dan Harley testifies that while in Lynchburg, "I came to believe that if Jerry Falwell could capture Lynchburg for Jesus Christ, I could do the same in my county."

Actually, Dan Harley did not begin Lancaster Baptist Temple. John Weaver grew up in Lancaster County and when he was over 50 years old, went to Thomas Road Bible Institute and graduated in 1975. At age 55, he returned home and began a Bible study in his living room with a view of planting a church. Almost from the beginning, the offerings were sufficient to support Weaver full-time. Originally, they met in Lititz-Rec Center and grew to approximately fifty-five in attendance. Later, they bought an old Mennonite church in East Petersburg (just a few miles from Lancaster) for \$89,000. This auditorium seated over 300, plus Sunday School facilities, a parsonage and a parking lot. This seemed like a massive building to a small handful of people.

Some were not in favor of buying an old building, so only about thirty people moved into the facilities in January 1977. John Weaver went back to Lynchburg looking for a pastor for the flock. Weaver felt he was called to be the second man and wanted God's man for the church. When Weaver gave the challenge of Lancaster to Liberty Bible Institute, Harley testified, "I knew that this was the place for me."

Harley preached a candidate sermon to thirty people in April 1977 and became pastor two months later. Harley indicated that first he began knocking on doors two days out of every week. Almost immediately the church jumped to fifty-five in Sunday School. Today Harley said, "Those fifty-five people were the greatest answer to prayer that I ever had in my life."

Both Dan and Betty Harley walked the streets of Lancaster knocking on doors for Jesus Christ. When they reached ninety in attendance, Betty said, "I cried with joy." By September, they had reached 110 in attendance and the church in East Petersburg was letting people know that they intended to reach the entire county.

By January 1978, they had reached a high attendance of 300 in Sunday School, 200 on the buses. Harley had begun the bus ministry by purchasing a bus. Now, they are able to rent a bus for \$30 a week including gas and insurance.

In 1978, the old building was remodeled, the church paying \$12,000 cash. In one offering over \$7,000 was received. According to Harley, "This was another of the greatest miracles of faith I have ever witnessed in my life."

Lancaster Baptist Temple began its Christian day school in September 1979 with thirty-five pupils. Today, they have over 100 pupils in the Accelerated Christian Education program. Each step of the way, God has provided for the needs and the school has paid its own way.

#### IV. ANALYSIS OF FAITH

Dan Harley defines faith as "the absence of things seen," taking his definition from Hebrews 11:1, "Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." Referring to the Old Testament, Harley ties faith to Psalm 27:13, "Unless I had believed to see the goodness of the Lord." Explaining his definition, Harley stated, "Faith is seeing God's plan for the church in spite of surrounding circumstances and believing that God can accomplish what He has shown." Therefore, when viewing faith as (1) instrumental, (2) insight and (3) interventional, Harley obviously believes faith begins with insight and ends with the intervention of God.

Because of his vision and what he wants to accomplish in Lancaster County, Dan Harley testified, "I have the spiritual gift of faith," then he notes, "Every pastor ought to have the gift of faith."

When asked how his faith has grown, Harley gave five steps. First, Harley believes the gift of faith comes from the Holy Spirit. "I did not get it from man, I get it directly from God. But the gift of faith is my responsibility and as I exercise faith, it becomes stronger faith." In the second place, Harley indicated that praying expanded his faith. He noted, "You cannot pray without exercising faith. And you cannot exercise faith, without praying." The third step



involved getting help from gifted people. When he quoted the verse, “Covet earnestly the best gifts” (I Corinthians 12:31), he indicated that verse was an exhortation to the church at Corinth, not to individual Christians. The church is to desire gifted people to help carry out their task. As God has provided gifted people to the Lancaster Baptist Temple, they motivated Harley to more faith and his gift has increased. In the fourth step, Harley indicates that the spiritual gift of faith comes from the influence of great men of faith. He indicated Dr. Falwell was the greatest example to him of a man with the gift of faith. “I caught a vision from Dr. Falwell to build a great church.”

*A. Faith and Location.* Dan Harley indicated, “I could have gone elsewhere and had a ministry, but only in Lancaster would I have been in the perfect will of God.” He has no doubts that God put a burden upon his heart for Lancaster, or that God led him to Lancaster. Then he stated, “To minister in Lancaster is to be in the perfect will of God, to minister elsewhere is only to minister in the permissive will of God.”

To Dan Harley, his original call to full-time Christian service and his call to Lancaster cannot be separated. His obedience to one led him to obedience of the other. He was led to Christ by a pastor after his wife had made a profession of salvation. They became active in the church, especially making evangelistic calls to present salvation. Harley realized God was calling him into full-time Christian service. He talked with his pastor who gave him a study course. Then the pastor told Dan,

When three things line up, you know God is leading you into the ministry. First, when the Spirit of God is talking to you about becoming a preacher. Second, when the Word of God is confirming that you should preach. And third, when circumstances are leading you into the ministry . . . then God is calling you to preach.

As a result of that conversation, Dan knew that those three factors lined up in his life, he was called to preach. He has never had a doubt about serving Christ since that day, and his assurance includes Lancaster, Pennsylvania.

*B. Faith and Doctrine.* Harley said that a person does not need to have perfect doctrine to have the perfect blessing of God upon his ministry. “The only person who has perfect doctrine is Jesus Christ. Every man has some flaws in his doctrine. And the closer a man gets to Jesus Christ, the closer he gets to perfect doctrine. And the closer a man gets to perfect doctrine the more God will bless him and his ministry.” Harley recognizes that some people are growing more than him, yet their doctrine is not the same as his. He implies that his doctrine is closer to the perfection of Jesus Christ than others, yet he recognizes others are growing faster. To this he concludes, “Doctrine is just one aspect of growing, growth is the result of many aspects of the ministry.” In explaining this point, he said, “The ministry of faith is following a shining light, and the closer one gets to the light, the more he can see.” To Harley, the example of the shining light illustrates faith. Because faith is seeing what God wants you to accomplish, and working to accomplish it.”

*C. Faith and Objectives.* Harley believes that the objectives of church growth come from the Word of God and it takes faith to accept them and apply them. When pointed out that many

churches do not believe in aggressive soul winning as he does, yet are growing; Harley says that it is because there is a general hunger for the Word of God in America. Even though some churches do not accept the same church growth objectives as he used, Harley recognizes that many churches believe in the absolutes of Christianity, but disagree on their application. He believes people attend these churches because they preach the absolutes of Christianity, while there is disagreement on how the church is administered. Then he notes, "Even though pastors disagree about the objectives of the church, God still uses these churches. The difference is the faith that the leader uses in putting them into operation."

*D. Faith and Principles.* Harley notes that not all growth in churches is a result of the blessing of God. He indicated that many churches are growing, but faith is not part of that growth. "When a church is applying biblical faith, they are basing their ministry upon the scriptures. Not everything that is called growth is the result of the blessing of God." Yet, Harley does not mean that those who disagree in some minor point are not blessed of God. He points out that John Wesley truly had the blessing of God upon his ministry, even though Harley disagrees with Wesley in areas of sanctification and eternal security.

Harley believes that by faith a minister simply applies the biblical principles that he knows are correct. He believes that soul winning is a principle and states, "I would be foolish if I did not believe God would use his principles of soul winning as He commanded. Therefore, when I go out and win souls I am exercising faith."

When examining his doubts or "little faith", Harley indicates that every man of God has his moments when he has difficulty trusting God. Harley indicates that this may have come because he is physically tired, or has not prayed sufficiently. "I have doubts because I am not like Jesus Christ." When facing doubts, he finds that he must "surrender and let God have His way." Harley indicated his greatest problem was trusting God for money. Then he went on to indicate that the banks or lack of money were not really the problem. "I must recognize that the enemy is an angel of light and that I wrestle with principalities and powers of Satan" (Ephesians 6:12).

When asked what is the biggest step of faith that he has ever taken, Harley answered, "Every step is big at the time, until the next step of faith that I thought was big, but they are not so large in light of my present circumstances." To Harley, "Walking by faith is similar to climbing a set of spiral stairs that are enclosed. A person cannot see the top; they can only see a few steps in front of them. By faith, the person has to continue climbing knowing that he will get to the top."

## SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

Dan Harley believes faith is seeing the things that God wants to accomplish, then working to accomplish them. As such, Harley believes faith is insight or vision. He then applies the Word of God (instrumental) to carry out his vision. He seems to say that faith is instrumental but it does not seem as though he has led the church to take any blind "steps of faith". He seems reasonable and measured in his faith and growth. The one occasion of receiving \$7,000 in one offering does not seem to be a crisis intervention. However, to Harley at the time, it may have been a great answer to prayer.

The greatest growth of Lancaster Baptist Temple came after his first year of ministry (340 percent), perhaps because the church purchased enough facilities to carry out the new pastor's vision. Also, the application of saturation evangelism seems to have attracted many new people to the church. The religious influence in Lancaster County was fertile soil for a church that emphasized "front door evangelism." Harley says faith motivated all of his activities to cause the church to grow. As such, he has a balanced view of faith, apparently moving from (1) insight, to (2) instrument, to (3) interventional.

## CHAPTER 6

### Holy Mountain Baptist Church

#### Kingsport, Tennessee

#### Steve Ray, Pastor

Steve Ray was 23 years old when he graduated from the Liberty Bible Institute and returned home to Kingsport, Tennessee to plant Holy Mountain Baptist Church, June 27, 1976. He is currently the youngest of the Liberty graduates to be studied in this dissertation, yet he has led his church to the third largest attendance of the Liberty graduates. After six years, the church has assets of \$500,000 and an annual income of \$264,000 with per capita income of \$6.64.

### I. COMMUNITY AND CONTEXTUAL FACTORS

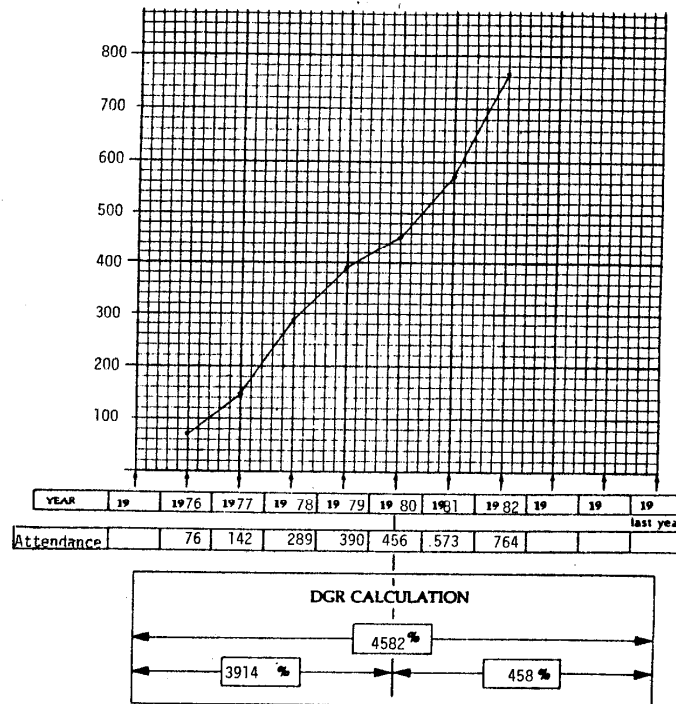
Kingsport, Tennessee is located in the tri-city area (Johnson City, Tennessee, Kingsport, Tennessee, and Bristol, Virginia) characterized as the Piedmont area. The area has both light and heavy industry that represents small companies and large factories. As a result, people have gravitated to employment in the area, especially from areas characterized as Appalachian, hill country people and unemployed coal mine workers. These people who might be characterized as in (1) geographical mobility, (2) upward socialization, and (3) cultural shock from relocation in mid-size cities. Hence, the area has people who could be effectively evangelized by someone from this background who could minister to them at their own level of need.

Steve Ray has an emotional and spontaneous ministry that might be characterized as revivalistic and enthusiastic. He has a deep faith in God that is reflected in piety and a godly walk. The aggressive faith of Steve Ray has intervened to solve the problems that might keep other churches from growing.

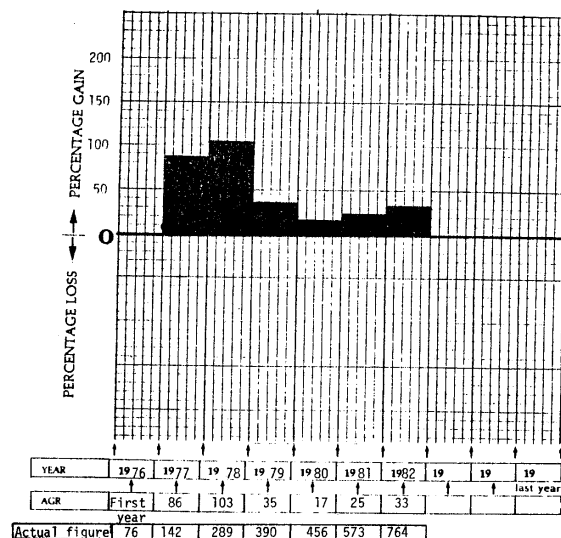
Among evangelists who travel in fundamental circles, they testify to a larger number of fundamental churches in the tri-cities area than in most areas. Also, the area has several large churches over 1,000 in attendance, these are found in several denominations. The population was growing and ripe for the type of church that Steve Ray planted in 1976. Others have testified that the unusual growth of the church was due to timing. The tri-city area has several large independent fundamental churches. All of these churches had been aggressive in soul winning before he began his church, but immediately prior to 1976, when Steve Ray returned to plant the church, many of these churches were having internal difficulties. Most of these churches were not aggressive in soul winning outreach when Steve Ray returned to Kingsport. He was a "breath of fresh air" to the church scene. Steve Ray believes the church has grown because he is absolutely committed to the Kingsport area knowing God has led him there.

## II. DIAGNOSIS OF CHURCH GROWTH

The Holy Mountain Baptist Church has had balanced or even yearly growth since its founding in 1976. The line showing growth is almost straight up, but the percentage decreases each year. The addition of buildings, staff and programs have contributed to growth. It might be added that Steve Ray did not add these factors for numerical growth but for an increased ministry. The by-product was numerical growth.



The Holy Mountain Baptist Church had its greatest percentage growth in its second and third year. In the second year, they were constructing its first building and in the third year, they occupied it, perhaps accounting for their largest percentage growth. Steve Ray can not account for the lower percentage growth in 1980.



### III. HISTORY OF THE CHURCH

While a student at Liberty Bible Institute, Steve Ray knew he was going to start a church, but the question was where. He confessed, "I was willing to go anywhere and start a church," and had even contemplated going to New England. He testified, "My wife had promised to be a missionary, so I knew that she would go with me anywhere."

Each time he returned home to the tri-state area, he confessed that he got a burden between Bristol and Kingsport, primarily because he did not know of an aggressive soul winning church reaching the entire area. When confronted with the possibility that his feeling was homesickness or nostalgia, he replied, "I know the difference between God's voice and homesickness." Then one night in bed, he got a distinct burden that God wanted him to start a church in Kingsport, his home town. "It was not an audible voice but I knew God wanted me in Kingsport." He had been memorizing and meditating on the verse, "Trust in the Lord with all thine heart and lean not to thine own understanding, in all they ways acknowledge him and He shall direct thy path" (Proverbs 3:5,6). Immediately, he put all of his trust in God, and knew that God would guide him to the exact place he should go.

Two weeks later, he visited Kingsport and decided to minister to the entire city (not just one section of the area), therefore, he chose to start in the middle of the city. With that in mind, he went to a middle school (grades six to eight) on Ross and Randlett Streets in the middle of the city and asked the principal to rent the facilities. The principal replied, "No! We do not rent the building."

"God told me to start a church in this school," Steve told the principal. He just laughed.

The principal did promise to check into renting the building but gave Steve no assurance that they could rent the building. The next time that he came to Kingsport, the principal had talked with the janitor who was willing to open the building up on Sunday. So, they agreed on \$300 rent per month.

Steve Ray set the budget for the new church at \$1,150 per month, \$200 a week for a salary and \$300 for rent of the facilities. When he arrived at Kingsport, he knew God would provide for his finances, so he did not go to work nor to ask other churches to underwrite him.

The first great step of faith for the church revolved around the first service. He publicly told everyone that he was praying for 100 people to attend the first service. Several told him not to get his hopes up too high.

He got the school building ready and planned to begin at 10:30 a.m. on Sunday, June 27, 1976. The service was planned to meet in the gymnasium and young Steve Ray stood in the balcony overlooking the empty chairs at 10:25. He counted only eighteen people there. He went into a private room and prayed -- no more than five minutes. He testified, "I prayed like I lived, 'total belief'." He prayed, "I asked and claimed that you would send in 100 people, then I have gone out and worked for them, now send them in." He testified, "When I went to the front door, it was like a mountain stream of people pouring in the front door, 119 were present for that first service."

According to Ray, getting the people there was a great step of faith, but trusting God for the money was not a great step of faith. "I was not worried about money and it was not even a challenge to my faith to pray for money. I knew that God had led me to Kingsport and I knew that He would provide the money. For the two weeks prior to starting the church, he went visiting door to door, inviting people to come to the church. Many people gave him money to start the church. One lady who later became a member of the church gave him \$1,000, another \$300. A total of over \$2,500 was received for the church from free will gifts, even before the church began. "God has always taken care of my need before I asked," testified Steve Ray.

The next great step of faith involved the purchase of ground. During the first six months of the church, attendance averaged approximately seventy-six. He told the church after finding eight acres of ground, "This is the place where God wants us." He tramped through the bush looking at the ground until he came to a graceful weeping willow tree. Kneeling at its base, Steve Ray claimed the land for Holy Mountain Baptist Church.

"That tree," he told the people, "is the very place where the church's front steps will be."

He shared the vision of the willow tree with his people. The price of the property was \$48,000 and the church was given four weeks to raise \$10,750 for a down payment. He remembers someone telling him, "You are getting ready to destroy your church by this step of faith." But Steve Ray challenged the people to believe in "The God of the impossible." He placed a large thermometer in front of the school gymnasium at the end of two weeks only \$900 came in. Steve Ray confessed to discouragement and decided to go door to door and ask for money. He canvassed the area asking for money for the down payment on the property. By the end of the week, he had raised \$6,950. (When someone told him it was not biblical to ask unsaved for money, he replied, "It is biblical to ask people to give for God and I did it"). Then he went to the church and reported that they had approximately \$7,800 (\$6,950 plus \$900). He took an offering and \$10,754 was received. This was \$4.88 over their goal.

The church met for the next two years in the school gym before moving into their permanent location. To build on the new property, the church borrowed \$100,000 and the men of the church began working on the new location. Ray felt the men who volunteered to donate their labor were not as zealous as they had been in promising. This produced a great crisis in his faith. He testified, "One Saturday, I had to make a hospital visit and I left the men working. When I got back they had not done a thing-- they were just sitting there waiting for me." This discouraged him. He took a one-week missionary trip to Costa Rica and when he returned he found that the men had made absolutely no progress on the building. This was despite their good promise to him.

"I am going to quit," he told his wife. He felt that the job was too big for him and he wanted to go some place else to start a church. That night while trying to go to sleep, he said God spoke to him. "I did not hear a voice, but I knew God said, 'No!'" Steve Ray went on to say, "I could not run, God had put me there and I had to finish the church." The church finished the building in 1978; two years after Ray began the church.

When he speaks about taking a step of faith, he says, "Do not look at your bank account but at the command of God." The church wanted to purchase two busses for \$2,800. Steve

prayed and the following Sunday morning between Sunday school and church, a man gave him a check for \$1,000 (to make up for tithes that he had not been giving to the church). Another person handed a check for \$2,100, a total of \$3,100. Steve testified that the church bought the busses for \$2,800 and had them painted for \$300, the exact cost of \$3,100. The buses represented a way to win souls and he testified that, “we should never worry about God meeting our needs if we are winning souls.” As the author was interviewing him for this chapter, Ray showed him a check for \$500. “I just won a man to the Lord thirty minutes ago and he gave me this \$500 check for the church.”

Another step of faith was when the church added salaried employees. In 1978, the church was spending the same amount of money that it received. Steve estimated that an additional \$1,100 per month was needed to hire a music director. The money was not available but he knew God wanted him to expand the staff. When he found the right man, he hired him and automatically the church giving jumped \$1,100 per month. “It was not a fund raising program or a vote to expand the budget. We stepped out on faith and God brought the money in.” Steve Ray was asked, “Suppose the money did not come in after you hired the staff member?” He responded, “I never thought that way, I knew the money would come in.” He was then asked, “Suppose the people would have opposed the expansion?” He responded, “It was God’s will and that is what they wanted.” It is impossible to get Steve Ray to admit failure when he believes God is leading him in a step of faith.

Each year, the church gives a birthday offering to the Lord. On the night after Thanksgiving, the church has a banquet and takes a cash gift for missions. In 1976, they set a goal of \$6,000 and \$7,500 was received. The following year, they set a goal of \$7,500 and over \$10,000 was received. Another year, they set a goal of \$20,000 and \$21,327 came in on one evening.

In October 1982, he was burdened to begin an orphanage through the church. After looking at different pieces of property in the area, he decided on 7.2 acres where the orphanage could be built. Knowing that God wanted him to begin the orphanage, he signed a contract for the church and his own name. The owner of the land wanted \$70,000 but when he heard that it was for an orphanage, he came down to \$55,000. The owner also agreed to carry the mortgage for the orphanage for \$5,000 down payment and a yearly payment of \$5,000. Almost immediately, a lady gave him a \$2,000 check testifying, “Children ought to have a place to go when they have no home.

#### IV. ANALYSIS OF FAITH

When asked to define faith, Steve Ray said, “faith is mountain-moving ability.” When facing the three alternatives, i.e., that faith is (1) instrumental, (2) insight, and (3) interventional, Steve Ray said faith is definitely interventional. He testifies that mountain-moving faith is the basis of the rapid growth of Holy Mountain Baptist Church. To Steve Ray, the gift of faith is believing God for an answer that you cannot see, then praying to remove the barriers to the work of God. He went on to say, “There is a fine line between little faith and great faith.” By that he means, “All Christians have little faith, but a few people have the gift of faith which is mountain-moving faith.” When asked how he got his gift of faith, he testified, “I ask and pray for faith beyond my years.” When asked what was the biggest thing he is going to trust God for in the future, Steve Ray refused to be drawn into speculations that were not presently possible. He did

not want to talk in terms of four or five thousand in church attendance. He said, "The biggest step of faith in the future will be to build an auditorium to seat 1,800." When asked why he did not take a step of faith for a 5,000-seat auditorium, he testified, "I do not need an auditorium that will seat 5,000, but I need an auditorium that will seat 1,800." Then with the maturity of a saint he said, "God only give us faith to trust Him for what we need, not for our empty speculation."

When asked about the source of his faith, Steve indicated that at Thomas Road Baptist Church he took notes on everything, not just in classes. "I watched Jerry Falwell do everything with a view of following his example." Then Steve Ray testified 90 percent of his faith had been caught from the vision and faith of Jerry Falwell. He also mentioned others at Liberty such as Ken Chapman, associate director of the Liberty Bible Institute and Grant Rice, a church planter from Chicago, whose faith had motivated him to start Holy Mountain Baptist Church.

He also traces the growth of his faith back to his call into full-time Christian service. He had been working in Kingsport, Tennessee in the General Shale Brick and Block plant when he felt that God was calling him to preach. Several people counseled him against going to school, indicating that he would lose his burden and zeal. Many in the church he attended were against ministerial education. Someone told him, "If God has called you to preach, you do not need to go to school--just preach." He stated that going against the advice of friends was a fearful step of faith. "I knew God wanted me to go to Liberty, but I did not want to go against my friends."

*A. Faith and Location.* Steve Ray says that faith is involved in everything that builds a church, even finding the right location. He believes faith is interventional. God intervened to call him back to Kingsport and God has intervened to keep him at Kingsport (when he tried to leave but could not).

Steve Ray did not identify his faith with vision or insight. When the history of the church is examined, Ray does not speak of a large range vision of large numbers or a complete church campus complex. When asked about an auditorium of 5,000, he stated that he could only trust God for his present needs. His need at present is for an 1,800-seat auditorium.

*B. Faith and Doctrine.* When asked to correlate faith to doctrine, Ray answers that he is absolutely sure that what he preaches is correct. He testified, "I agree with what I read in the Bible, and that is what I preach." The correlation between his faith and doctrine is reflected in the sincerity of his approach to doctrine. "I am absolutely accurate when it comes to doctrine." In conversion, Ray scored his faith ten on a scale of ten to one. Yet the corrective factor of his assessment gave him a score of 8.5. When asked to rank the role of faith in the growth of churches, especially when they disagree with his doctrine, (which he believes is absolutely accurate), Steve Ray answered, "Every time a man preaches the Bible, there will be some growth." Then he went on to explain, "The church that is closer to the Word of God will have more growth."

*C. Faith and Objectives.* To Steve Ray, the purpose of the church is to reach and win souls, which is carrying out the Great Commission. To Steve Ray, the purpose of the church and faith go hand in hand. A person carries out the Great Commission by faith.



*D. Faith and Principles.* Ray testified that he had to learn how to apply the principles of evangelism to faith so that he could attract a crowd. Ray testified, “I had to go out and knock on doors and apply the principles of reaching people, then pray that God would touch their hearts and motivate them to come to church.” He understands and applies the correlation between faith and principles. The application of super aggressive evangelism is just as imperative as the application of faith in God. “To apply the right principles and to apply faith is the same thing,” he said. Yet Ray assessed his faith and principles, (10/7.5). When measuring his faith he said it was strong (ten on a scale of ten to one), but his application of principles was (7.5), the weakest of all his response to the application of faith.

To most people taking a step of faith, there is always a threat of failure. Therefore, when a person puts his faith in God, it is more than a passive action. It is active, which involves the total person, intellect, emotion and will. The act of faith has a certain amount of ambivalence. The person is frightened of failure, hence, fear is a primary motivation that drives him to trust God. Yet, the act of faith takes over fear, because the person has confidence that God will not fail. Steve Ray testifies that trusting God for money did not give him a fear of failure. He knew the need would be met. But applying the principles of church growth exercised his faith to the stretching point.

When talking about the growth of faith, Steve Ray says that, “Things that used to be big steps are no longer big steps of faith.” He mentioned that when he trusted God for \$48,000 for property, that was a staggering step of faith, but it would not be a big step of faith today. “Massive steps of the past are small now, and steps that are massive today, will one day in the future be small.”

## SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

Steve Ray has exercised his faith to intervene in the crises and barriers that attempted to stop the growth of his church. The “Say-it Faith” demonstrated by Jerry Falwell was also used by Steve Ray to plant and build Holy Mountain Baptist Church. Whereas some Liberty graduates are measured and rational in expressing their faith, Steve Ray seems to forsake caution and take risks that he interprets “steps of faith.”

While Steve Ray is not strong in vision, no one can say he ministers without knowing what he wants or having the desire to get there. It is just that he does not relate his faith to his vision. Faith seems to be more related to principles and problem solving.

## CHAPTER 7

Wachusett Valley Baptist Church

Holden, Massachusetts

John Martelli, Pastor

John Martelli almost lost his life in Vietnam and came home in a wheelchair, paralyzed from his waist down. He was not bitter at God because of his incapacity but was grateful to be

alive. He came to know Christ and trained at Liberty Baptist College. He was not sure of what he could do for God until he preached at the funeral of his brother. Twelve persons made professions of faith at the funeral from among members of his family and friends who were Roman Catholic. More people made decisions for Christ at the grave side service. This convinced Martelli to return to his home town, Holden, Massachusetts, to plant Wachusett Valley Baptist Church. After five years, the church owns 50 acres of ground and is worth \$350,000. Weekly attendance averages 130 persons and the church has a vision of reaching the entire valley.

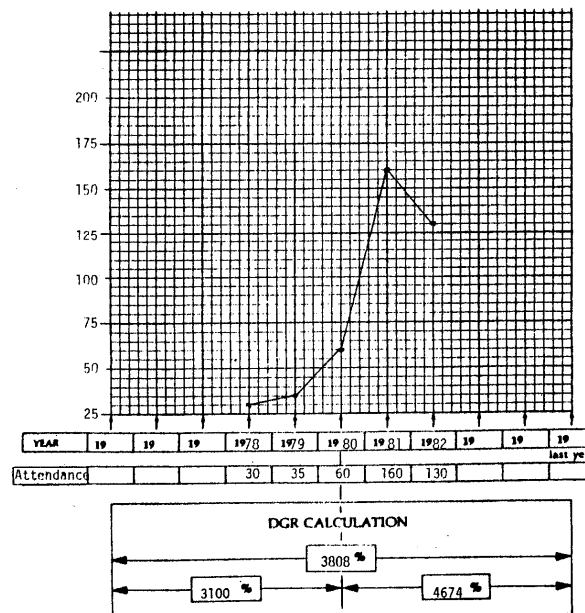
## I. COMMUNITY AND CONTEXTUAL FACTORS

The church is located in Holden, Massachusetts, an industrial town of 16,000 people, located next to Worcester, with a population of 200,000. Holden is located in the region known as Wachusett Valley, approximately 50 miles west of Boston. The area has pockets characterized as inner city or ghettos, but there are also upper middle class areas with elite homes. Holden is a growing town, whereas Worcester is congested and is not growing.

The religious population of the area is predominately Roman Catholic. Before John Martelli began the church, he took a religious survey and found no gospel preaching church in Holden, the closest Christian school was 30 miles away. He found 6,000 families in Holden, 6,000 families in surrounding towns, plus 200,000 in Worcester. Someone in the town hall told Martelli, “Put your church in the area where the town is growing and you will grow.” Two years later, he located the church on 50 acres on a main street where the town was growing. However, this is only a geographical explanation of the growth.

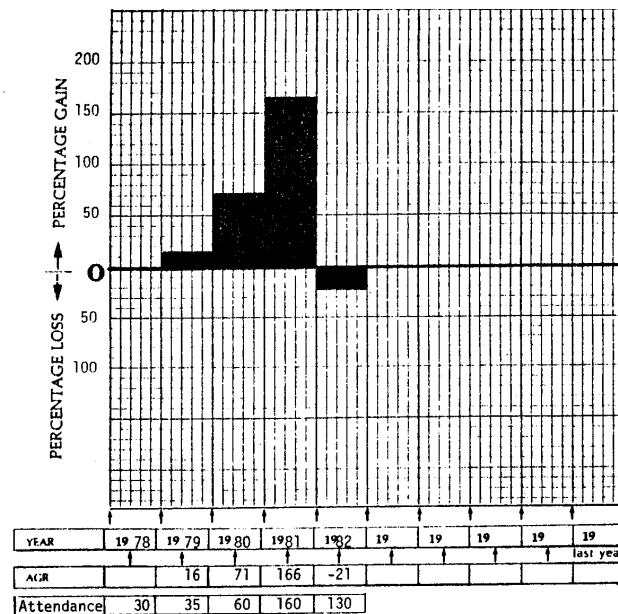
## II. DIAGNOSIS OF CHURCH GROWTH

The church grew from 30 to 60 in two years while it was located in a lodge building. When the city took over the building, the church was forced to take a step of faith and relocated on 50 acres of ground, using the facilities of a former bakery for its services. The building provided adequate space for growth and church attendance jumped from 60 to 160 in one



year. Also, the church started a Christian school which gave it outreach into many families it was not previously reaching.

The church decreased in attendance in 1982 from 160 to 130. Martelli indicates a number of people left to attend a charismatic church. Actually, he testifies that twice as many left as are indicated in the figures (60 left), but approximately 30 new people were added to the church after they left. The decrease: is -21 percent AGR.



### III. HISTORY OF THE CHURCH

Since the history of many new churches is wrapped up in the history of the church planter, an analysis of the life and conversion of John Martelli is needed to understand the development of the church. He grew up in a Roman Catholic home and as a young man married his childhood sweetheart. He seemed to have everything going for him, yet his life seemed to come apart in Vietnam. He was in an army building that was shelled by enemy rockets that left his body with shrapnel wounds. The building caught fire. He testified that his first reaction was anger and he wanted to kill the enemy. Approximately five seconds later, a second rocket hit the building and he was again wounded, this time critically. He felt that he was going to die. He was able to crawl out of the building and lay on the ground where his unit was pinned down with small arms fire. Another soldier picked him up and carried him through a second burning building to a medical area. He testified that, "After the second rocket, I was never angry at the enemy for being paralyzed, I was simply grateful to God for being alive. The God I had known as a Roman Catholic had protected me and I was grateful."

He came home from Vietnam in a wheelchair, paralyzed from the waist down. One day, he saw his toes moving, but he could not feel it because he had no feeling in his legs. Based on that optimism, he applied for physical therapy and limited sensitivity and mobility returned to his legs. Today, he walks on braces and has to wear special shoes provided by the government.

Back in Holden, Massachusetts, he bought his own auto repair garage and tried to reestablish his life with his wife and family. She began attending a gospel preaching church where she made a profession of faith in Christ as her personal Saviour. He testified, "Her godly walk was a testimony to me." He knew that she was right and his life was empty. His drinking and minor drug addiction (as a by product of his hospitalization) proved to him that his religion had nothing to offer him. He went to church with his wife and the first time he heard the gospel, he knew that the message was true. "I had never had anyone tell me that Jesus saves, and I immediately wanted him to save me."

After conversion, John Martelli attended Liberty Baptist College, studying in the pastoral major program. He did not know where God wanted him to spend his life in ministry. During his last year in college, his older brother was killed in a construction accident and he phoned to his father suggesting, "Do not have a Catholic funeral, let me come home and preach the funeral." The fact that they allowed him to perform the funeral was an evidence that God was beginning to work in Holden. When he went to college, his family had called him a "turn coat." He testified that "God supported me as I preached my brother's funeral. During the invitation twelve people professed salvation. Later at the grave side, more people came to know Jesus Christ." At the funeral he had simply given his testimony and told people that, "Jesus Saves." Up until now, he had not wanted to come back to Holden and start a church because his reputation was so poor in the community. However, the experience at the funeral indicated that he was called of God to Holden, Massachusetts, "Like a neon sign, calling me home."

The first day he returned to Holden, he led Jimmy Santanaw, a boyhood friend to pray to receive Jesus Christ.

John Martelli testified he knew very little on how to start a church, although he was greatly motivated by Jerry Falwell. He began by taking a religious survey of the area. The results of the survey indicated that he should begin in Holden.

Not knowing how to begin a church, he testified, "I prayed and stumbled." By that, he explained that he started a Bible study in his home on Wednesday evenings. After two weeks, he realized this was not the way to start a church. He felt the people who came to Bible study were only interested in Christian fellowship. Martelli realized that he needed to start a church with a soul winning emphasis, not just a Bible study. So he found a club building that had been used by a lodge. He agreed upon a price and began in September, 1978. There were twelve present for the first service. At the end of the sermon, he gave an invitation to come forward for salvation and/or join the church. All twelve people came forward and joined the church. Those who had not made professions of faith became Christians. The church grew through soul winning during that first year. On the first anniversary, there were forty-five in attendance.

At the end of the second year, the town took over the lodge from owners on an "imminent domain" basis. Martelli testified, "I knew that if the church did not have a building, I could not hold the people." He had been praying seriously for a permanent building before they had to move out of the club. The man who delivered mail on Bullard Street had made a profession of faith and joined the church. He told Martelli about fifty acres with an old farm house and bakery that was available. The asking price was \$190,000. At the time, the church only had \$500 in the bank. No one had told Martelli to begin a building fund account. Martelli began praying about

the ground. When he went to see the owner, she testified that her mother, an officer in the Salvation Army, had prayed that God would someday use the property for the work of God. The owner agreed to sell the property for \$130,000. But Martelli could find no one to finance the purchase of the ground. Five hundred dollars was not sufficient. As he prayed with the church, the mailman agreed to sell his house, for which he received \$30,000. He gave the \$30,000 to the church, with the understanding that he would live in the farm house. Another man in the church gave \$35,000 which was enough to finance a 50 percent down payment. In addition to that, the church raised \$5,000 that allowed them to renovate the bakery facilities for the church. Martelli sees this step of faith as rewarded by God through financial provision.

There was a second aspect to this step of faith. Martelli knew that God wanted him to start a Christian school. He announced this to the church after they had lost their lodge building and did not at the time have the bakery. They started the Christian school in the fall of 1980 with 24 students. The only problem is there was no building. Martelli indicated that he was not fearful, nor did he have doubts about the venture. The men of the church (the church did not have deacons), did not understand and did not back him in the step of faith. He began the Christian school in his own home, using his living room, den, basement and dining room. He testified, "There was no Christian school within thirty miles and I could not travel that far daily. I would not allow my children to go back to public schools because of the ungodly influence." Martelli testified, "By the eyes of faith I could see what we were suppose to do, but I could not see how it could be accomplished. So I simply obeyed God and began the school in my home." The men of the church did not oppose it, nor did they fight the idea, they just did not support it financially.

The school met for two months in his house, while God was providing fifty acres of ground and the bakery. Martelli says, "If I had not stepped out in faith and began the school, I am not sure that God would have provided \$65,000 for the property." Then he went on to say, "If a man will do the will of God by faith, God will reward his obedience."

When asked if he had doubts about getting the building, Martelli answered, "I had no doubts that God wanted me to do it. I had doubts about my ability to raise the money and to find the location."

#### IV. ANALYSIS OF FAITH

When John Martelli was asked to define faith he said, "Faith has eyes on both sides of its head. It looks backwards to see what God has done, then looks within to see what God is saying, and finally looks forward to see the future." Martelli went on to describe, "Faith sees what God would have a man do, then the man steps out in faith (not blind faith) based on what God has done in the past." When faced with the three alternatives of faith (1) instrumental, (2) insight, and (3) interventional, Martelli says that faith is vision or insight. He testifies, "All I have to do is to see what God wants to do, and I will try to do it." On one occasion, Martelli sold his car and gave the money to the church because he felt that is what God wanted him to do. He does not take a salary from the church because he gets a 100 percent disability from the government. To explain faith, he gave the illustration of needing a full-time assistant. He asked a Liberty graduate to become his minister of music, "Because I knew that the church needed the help and I could see what music would do for the church. I offered to pay \$50 a week out of my own pocket, but the church offered the person \$100 a week. In response to this step of faith, the

offerings jumped \$100 per week. Martelli testified, “We never suffered a financial need even when we took on the additional cost of a minister of music.”

A year later, the church did the same thing. A youth director was needed. A Liberty graduate was added to the staff and within a short period of time, he had gathered a Bible study of approximately sixty young people on Wednesday night. Martelli noted, “We had been receiving very little in the Wednesday night offering, but because the youth director was doing such a good job, our offerings on Wednesday nights jumped \$225 which took care of the needs for the additional worker.”

When asked to define the gift of faith, Martelli said, “It is the ability to motivate others to live by faith.” He believes a person shares what he has been given and those who have the gift of faith are able by their total ministry to build up faith in other believers. He goes on to say, “I have the gift of faith and by showing what God has done in my life, I exhort other people to a life of faith.” He defined it with a negative emphasis, “The gift of faith is not the gift to do the miraculous, it is not having a handle on God.” By this negation, Martelli rules out the third interpretation of the gift of faith (interventional).

When asked if his faith had grown, Martelli says, “Yes, my faith has grown as I have exercised it.” When asked how others can grow their faith, he answered that faith grows when several steps are taken. First, faith begins in retrospect, a person must know what God has done in his life and must see how the present fits into the past. Second, a person must become a clean vessel. The person must realize that faith is letting God do things through him; the person living by faith does not do anything by himself. In the third step, faith must take the future look. “A person is never a failure if he is walking in faith. The immediate result may seem like a failure, but the person must take the eternal look and see things as God sees them.” In the fourth place, others can motivate a person to greater faith. Martelli feels that he can help people grow in faith when they have sorrows, because God helped him overcome his problems. When he identifies those who have motivated him to more faith, he thinks of Jerry Falwell. To this he testifies, “I learned from Jerry Falwell to think big, and I learned to trust God. If God is in the church, God will do a big job.”

*A. Faith and Location.* When Martelli was asked to relate faith to location, he notes, “There is absolutely no doubt in my mind that God called me to Holden, Massachusetts.” He said most of his family were Catholic when he made a profession of faith.

They called me a fanatic and a traitor to Catholicism. Yet when I announced that I was coming to Holden to start a church, my father-in-law who had made a profession, told me, ‘Pastor, when I see what God is doing in your life, it makes me want to follow you.’ That was not the basis of my faith; his testimony was reassurance to my faith.

*B. Faith and Doctrine.* Martelli says that faith comes before doctrine. Once a person makes a profession of faith, he can grow his doctrine and at this point, “doctrine becomes vital for Christianity.” He believes a Christian cannot grow without doctrine, and in that relationship; a church cannot grow without doctrine. He feels his church would have continued growing if those who left had been taught doctrine.

*C. Faith and Objectives.* Martelli believes the objective of a church is to win lost people to Jesus Christ. He has demonstrated the gift of evangelism in his personal life and his preaching continues to be evangelistic in nature.

Martelli believes the pastor is responsible to keep the objectives of the church in focus. “I am not a dictator, but I will lead my people and I see that God wants us to win the lost to Christ. I will lead them in that direction.”

Martelli was asked to reflect on his faith when a large group of people left the church. He responded, “What looked like a failure or a decline in church growth could have been God’s will for this church.” He went on to say that he would not judge the people, for many of those had professed Christ in his church. Also, he indicated that he did not lose any of his faith. He was encouraged by remembering how Dr. Falwell announced that Thomas Road Baptist Church was facing a severe crisis when the FCC (Federal Communication Commission) was examining the church. He remembers that Dr. Falwell explained that the whole ministry could be lost. “The example of Falwell’s faith in a moment of crisis kept me going in my moment of crisis.”

A group of people from his church began traveling to a Bible institute class that was charismatic. They returned to the church and began “forcing things” according to Martelli. “They wanted to make the church charismatic and force their teaching on us.” According to Martelli, they wanted to change the nature of the church and when he would not, they left. However, Martelli states, “The fact that people continued to make professions of faith after they left indicated to me that we are still doing what God originally called us to do, to reach Wachusett Valley for Jesus Christ.”

*D. Faith and Principles.* Martelli says that the principles of saturation evangelism do not work in a northern city that is predominately Roman Catholic. He feels that the lack of Protestants in the area makes it difficult to use “every available means, to reach every available person at every available time.” By that, Martelli meant that it was difficult to use advertisement to motivate people to attend church services, whether campaigns, Sunday School busing or other advertisements were used. But Martelli has motivated his people to witness constantly to their lost friends. Perhaps he is adapting saturation evangelism to the area and making it work in a different way.

When asked to explain any doubts in his life, Martelli said he did not doubt God, he only doubted his ability to do the work of God. He testified, “I question why God called me. I am not eloquent, I am not adequate to start a church. I am only willing to do His will.”

When asked to give his greatest step of faith, he said it was beginning the Christian school without proper facilities. Concerning his faith, Martelli indicated, “My only concern was to find out if the Christian school was scriptural.” When I became convinced that the school was scriptural, the next question was timing. Was this the time to start the school?” When he was convinced of the timing, he stepped out on faith. The fact that the men of the church did not support him bothered Martelli, but “their lack of support did not make me doubt. The only doubts I had were in my ability, not in God’s ability.”

## SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

John Martelli has integrated his view of faith into his gifts, calling and basic approach to ministry. He believes that the gift of faith is vision or insight. When he knew God was calling him to Holden, Massachusetts, he obeyed and began planting a church. This was a step of faith to Martelli. When he says that faith has eyes that look to the past, looks within, and looks to the future, he is basing his faith more on experience than on objective Christianity. Obviously, because Martelli identifies himself with Liberty, he accepts the authority of Scripture and would probably testify that faith is based on the Bible. But in answering questions relating to faith, there seems to be a high degree of integrating it with his experience.

It is obvious that God has uniquely prepared John Martelli for ministry in the Wachusett Valley. He has learned faith from Jerry Falwell and benefited from Liberty, yet he has adapted it to his hometown. Martelli has maturity and individuality. He has arrived at this position through much suffering and a variety of experiences. His faith is blended on many facets and the church has a bright future.

## CHAPTER 8

### Harvest Baptist Church Charleston, South Carolina Marvin Wood, Pastor

Some think that a man cannot go home to plant and build a super-aggressive church to the glory of God. But Marvin Wood was brought up in Charleston, South Carolina, educated in his home town at the Citadel, returned in 1976 to plant the Harvest Baptist Church that now averages over 500 in weekly church attendance with over \$5,000 in weekly offerings. The church, worth approximately \$750,000, is located on 5 acres of ground with an auditorium that seats 300 and enough Sunday school space to educate everyone. They are in the process of doubling the education space. According to Dr. Cecil Hodges, pastor of Bible Baptist Church, Savannah, Georgia, "The Harvest Baptist Church in Charleston is the most beautiful 'first' building of any new church I have ever seen."

### I. COMMUNITY AND CONTEXTUAL FACTORS

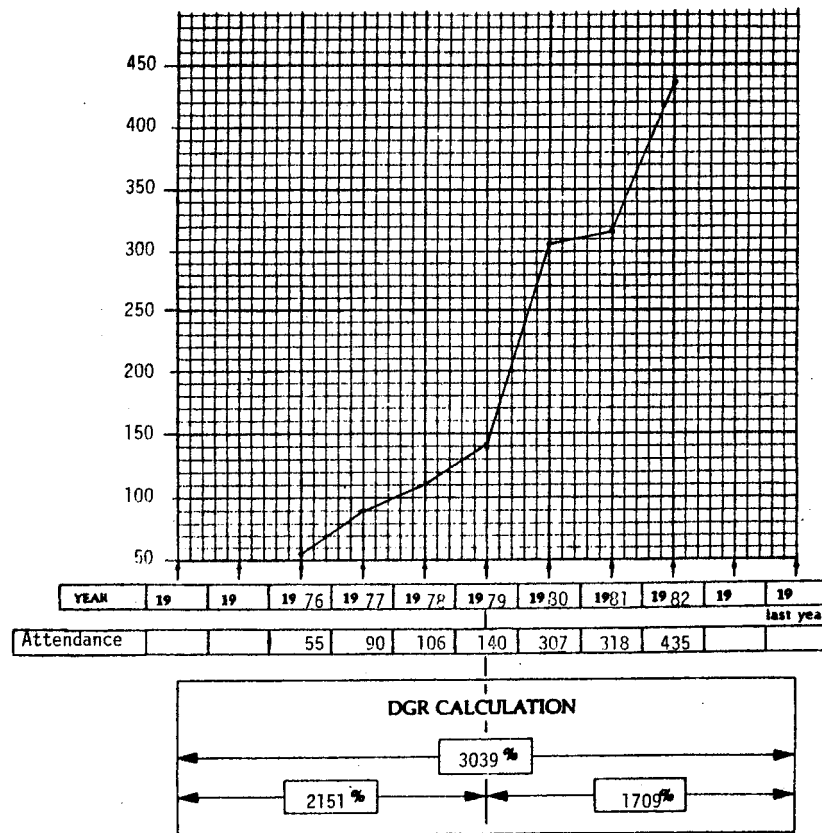
Charleston, South Carolina has a population of 150,000 with a large segment of military and government personnel, a college community (The Citadel, Charleston College, University of South Carolina Medical School, plus community colleges), both light and heavy industry, a seaport plus a variety of state and county offices. Charleston still retains the historic downtown district and a large part of the population could be characterized as "typical southern," many from rural and farming areas. Yet, Charleston is a progressive city with expressways, shopping malls, and cultural advantages. The city is moving west, primarily along the I-26 expressway and the Harvest Baptist Church is located approximately ten miles from downtown on the I-26 corridor. Actually, the church is located on a four lane highway in the fast growing suburbs.



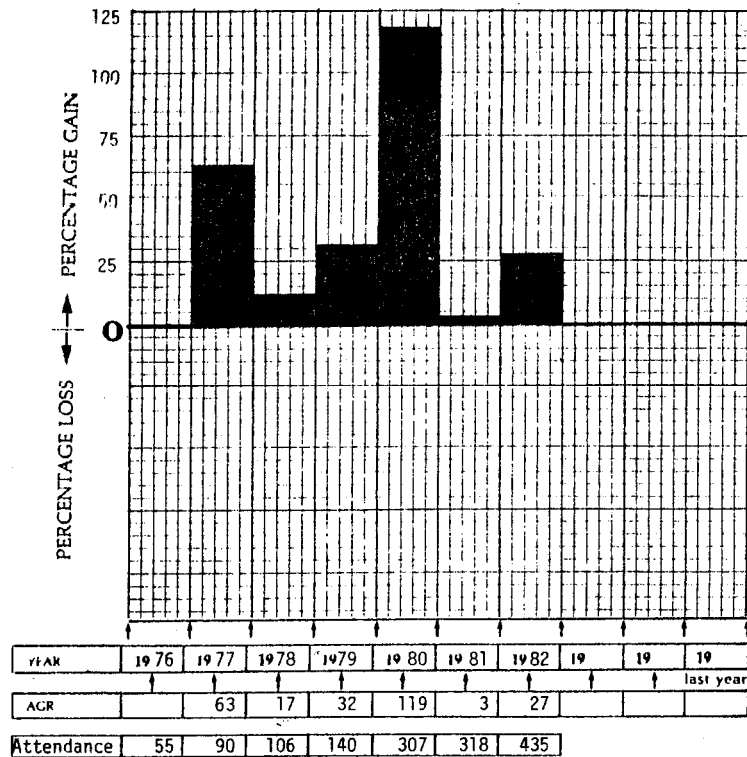
The church is well balanced, drawing from the military, college students, permanent residents and those just moving to the area. Both young and old attend the church. Marvin Woods' parents attend the church as well as other relatives and friends that he previously knew. Many of these have made professions of faith in Christ.

## II. DIAGNOSIS OF CHURCH GROWTH

Obviously, the church has had steady growth; the greatest jump in actual and percentage increase came in 1980 when the church grew from 140 to 307 in church attendance. This is the year they occupied their building. Also, Dr. Falwell preached at the church which usually gives a church visibility and some who watch him on television (especially those without a church home) began attending the church.



The church had its largest percentage growth in its second year of ministry and in the year it occupied its new facilities. At present, the church is suffering sociological strangulation and could probably not grow appreciably without going to a second church service or building larger facilities.



### III. HISTORY OF THE CHURCH

In many occasions, the history of a new church has its roots in the conversion of its founder. As a young boy, Marvin Wood thought he was a Christian because he was brought up and baptized in a church. He went to the Citadel, a military college in Charleston where he was a starter on the football team. After college, he was recommended for Sears training school in Orlando, Florida, and while there, joined a Baptist church and was asked to be the superintendent of the junior department. His first job was in Merritt Island, Florida, at a Sears store where he did not want to go and assigned to a department that he did not want to manage. Across the aisle at the Sears store were several young men in the vacuum cleaner and sewing machine department who were aggressive soul winners. They met every morning for prayer and one asked Marvin, "Are you saved?" He said, "Yes," not realizing that he was lost. One of the salesmen, Ernie Weaver, had worked nearby in the space program at Cape Canaveral and was laid off after the Apollo project was finished. He ended up working on commission selling vacuum cleaners. Ernie saw his lay off as part of God's plan for his life. Marvin Wood was amazed at Ernie's acceptance of the "demotion" in life. The two men struck up a deep friendship and Marvin said, "I must have asked him ten thousand questions about the Bible." He confessed, "Ernie had something that I had never experienced in life." Finally, one night when he could not sleep, he sat up on bed and prayed, "Take my life, Lord, I give it to you, I will do anything for You." Later, he looked back on that experience and realized it was his salvation. "One of the reasons was that I was immediately changed and was called into the ministry." For three days he said nothing to his wife but finally came home and announced, "God has called me to preach the gospel."

Marvin Wood was attending the First Baptist Church where Dr. Adrian Rogers was pastor. Dr. Rogers told Marvin, "Any seminary worth attending must have its full support of the pastor." Rogers recommended that Marvin Wood contact Dr. Jerry Falwell, at Thomas Road Baptist Church in Lynchburg, Virginia. They had heard that Falwell was beginning a school. Wood testified, "I read the book *Church Aflame* and wanted to go to Lynchburg to learn church growth." Also he added, "I wanted to go to a school where my pastor sent me."

Wood wrote Lynchburg telling them he was a college graduate and asked, "How could he fit into the program?" The registrar wrote, "Take Bible courses for one year and then we will transfer them into the Seminary program." When he arrived in Lynchburg, he found the college courses would not transfer to the Seminary that would be started in the future, so he enrolled in the Bible Institute. It was his purpose to learn as much about the Bible as he could. Later, Wood testified, "God had to teach me something about faith which is more important than just getting Bible knowledge or the tools of the ministry."

At the end of the year, a pastor from Charleston put tremendous pressure on Marvin Wood to leave school and come to work in a church in Charleston, South Carolina. As young Christian, he had difficulty in handling the pressure, but he told the pastor no. It was a step of faith for Wood was doing what God wanted, not what others pressured him to do. The following year, he left the Institute and entered Liberty Baptist Seminary. It was there he testified, "My greatest lessons were not academic ones, although I had to work hard and I learned much. My greatest lessons were being forced to trust God and to depend on Him for everything. I was forced to trust Him for money, direction and His supply in my life." Before this the Woods' had tried to have children but were unable to do so. Marvin and Carol Wood laid the matter before God in prayer and fasting. In response to the preaching of Dr. Falwell on faith, they decided to ask for four things from God. First, to have children; second, a home; third, financial support for school and Marvin added a fourth request, "That my wife would not have to work."

They decided that if they were going to have a ministry of faith, they would have to begin in school. God began to answer when Carol got pregnant and had to leave work. In the next three years, they had three children. Then God provided a home for them in Lynchburg. Since Marvin had played football at the Citadel, he was given a coaching job with the fledgling football program at Liberty Baptist College. Finally, his parents helped to financially support him which got him through Seminary.

He had stepped out on faith and God had honored his trust. Wood had no idea of returning to Charleston and starting a church when he went to Seminary. "School was just one step of faith at a time," he testified. "Coming to Charleston and starting a church was just another step of faith, not a great step of faith, not a great threat to me because I had followed the Lord for three years in Seminary."

Marvin's wife wanted him to candidate for an empty pulpit in Charleston, but he said, "No." Later she testified, "He had enough faith that God would use him to build a bigger church than the one he turned down."

During his last semester at Liberty, Marvin went to the last row in the top of the balcony and saw a gentleman sitting alone writing on a tablet. "I was really just trying to be kind, and

help the gentleman,” Wood said. There he met the author who asked him what he was going to do after graduation. When he said, “Go to Charleston and start a church,” the author recommended that he go first to Florence, South Carolina and talk to Bill Monroe, Pastor, Florence Baptist Temple. The following week, Marvin Wood talked to Monroe who gave him \$500 to help get the church started. Then Monroe introduced Wood to the Tri-State Baptist Bible Fellowship which financially supported him for \$600 a month for two months.

Marvin spent his first two weeks in Charleston passing out flyers and contacting people about the new Harvest Baptist Church. Jerry Falwell provided the mailing list of people in Charleston (a practice no longer permitted). The new church was scheduled to meet in Goose Creek Elementary School and on Thursday before the first Sunday meeting, the chairman of the school board phoned to inform them they could not use the building. At the last moment they met in the banquet room of the Holiday Inn. There were seven in Sunday School, twenty-six in the morning service and thirty-three that evening, August 22, 1976.

According to Wood, that first Sunday we got acquainted and I shared my burden for beginning a church with them. He did not actually preach.

The biggest miracle in the life of the church was purchasing the present property and God’s supply of the money. In January of 1977, Wood looked at the present property owned by Georgia Pacific, who only wanted to sell him 200 frontage feet, for \$60,000. He turned it down and the church prayed and searched everywhere for property. Finally, a real estate man who was helping the church locate property showed him the present location again in August of 1977. Wood told him, “Write up a proposal for 300 frontage feet instead of 200 feet and offer them 7 percent instead of 82 percent, and make the total offer for \$46,000 rather than \$60,000.” The real estate agent said, “I do not expect Georgia Pacific to sell but I will make the offer anyway.” They accepted the offer and wanted \$9,000 down.

From the beginning, God has blessed the church financially; one of the reasons is that they have given 15 percent to missions. Also, the church had been putting \$200 a week aside for its building payment, long before they found property. As a result, when they approved the sale of the property, they needed to only raise \$15,000 in twelve weeks for the total purchase price. The church had its first stewardship campaign in September 1978 and paid cash for the new location.

A contractor joined the church who was used as the general contractor to build the new building. But first, the church needed financing. Wood approached a former friend from Sears days, who was managing the Chatlos Foundation; which made humanitarian gifts. Wood asked them to loan them the money for the new building at a low interest rate. The foundation wrote back and said that a loan was outside of their purpose, but they did send a \$10,000 check. Finally, the church borrowed \$200,000 from First Federal at 102 percent interest. At the time Wood exclaimed, “Lord, I never thought I would praise you for 102 percent interest.”

Jerry Falwell dedicated the new building in March 1980 on a Sunday afternoon. A crowd of over 500 gathered for the service.

#### IV. ANALYSIS OF FAITH

When Marvin Wood was asked to define faith, he said, “faith is believing God.” He went on to state that living by faith was “doing what He wanted me to do.”

When asked how his faith grew, Wood testified that it grew first from the scripture, second from the lessons he previously learned by faith (track record), and from soul winners:

The men who asked me at Sears if I was a Christian, Dr. Rogers who preached and motivated me to soul winning, Dr. Falwell who built a church on soul winning, and Dr. Hughes (Seminary Dean) who stressed soul winning.

Marvin Wood indicated he has not made a study of faith and was not even sure he had the gift of faith. He said, “I believe God will accomplish in Charleston what he sent me to do, if I will faithfully do my part.” He was asked to distinguish between: (1) Instrumental faith, (2) Insight faith and (3) Interventional faith. He answered, “It is all three. Faith is simply believing God can do what he promised.”

*A. Faith and Location.* When asked to assess his faith in relationship to God’s leading him to Charleston, Wood gave it a score of ten on a scale of ten to one.

I knew this was where God wanted me, so we just came. We didn’t hesitate. As a matter of fact, I finished school on Friday, packed on Saturday, left Sunday morning, and got into Charleston Sunday night and started immediately working on the church. I had no job, no income. I just knew that was where God wanted us to build.

When asked to explain how God led him to Charleston, Wood gave the rational basis for choosing the area. “Charleston did not have the kind of church that I was saved in, or the kind of church (Thomas Road Baptist Church) where I was studying.” Then Wood explained that he was doing more than making a rational choice.

Charleston was constantly on my mind. I sat in school and thought about Charleston and about the Air Force there, the colleges there, my relationship with the Citadel and football, and the medical school. I thought about having a national and international ministry through winning, servicemen who would be sent around the world. I thought about medical missionaries who could go through the medical school and become missionaries. God put it upon my mind constantly. Just as Jerry was committed to his mountain (Liberty Mountain) so I was committed to my mountain (Charleston).

Beginning the church was a step of faith, but it was not fearful to Marvin Wood. “I had a track record of trusting God at Liberty and He had answered four specific requests.” Yet, he testified his greatest step of faith and his most fearful step of faith was quitting Sears and going to school.

B. *Faith and Doctrine.* When asked to relate faith to doctrine, he testified, “my faith is directly related to Bible knowledge.” He continued, “the more I know what the Bible says on a matter, the more I preach on a matter.”

I have faith in the doctrine that I understand from the Word of God. I always try to make sure it is not my own private interpretation but what I hear from other good men. When someone else (I respect) has a different interpretation, I want to study it, understand his interpretation and why he believes like that. Then I come to the point where I decide for myself. God, called me to preach. So in the end, I answer to the Lord.

C. *Faith and Objectives.* Wood testified that the objectives of a church are found in the Great Commission. Even though it is one objective, there are three aspects: (1) discipling people, (2) baptizing converts, and (3) teaching or maturing them. To Wood, there is no mystical aspect of faith when related to objectives. “Faith is simply obeying Jesus Christ and carrying out the Great Commission.” He believes if he is faithful to this objective, God will bless the church.

D. *Faith and Principles.* When Wood was asked to relate faith and principles, he testified, “all I knew was God wanted me to knock on doors and win souls. I would have preached whether or not I had a crowd.” To him faith is doing what God wanted him to do, and he did not know of any other way to build a church. He did not want to be like the churches he called “dead” in his community.

## SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

Marvin Wood says that faith is all three, (1) instrumental, (2) insight, and (3) interventional. He apparently demonstrated all three when he was a student at Liberty. Yet in the church, there seems to be a demonstration of instrument and insight. There does not seem to be the crises situations or occasions when he has set faith goals and seen God intervene. However, he may interpret the daily and weekly intervention by God as steps of faith. The size of the crisis or goal is measured by the present size of the faith of the leader and the past accomplishments of God. In this light, Marvin Wood’s faith could be an exercise of all three.

## CHAPTER

Calvary Road Baptist Church

Alexandria, Virginia

David Rhodenhizer, Pastor

The Calvary Road Baptist Church averaged over 1,000 in attendance during the fall of 1982, received an average offering of \$8,000 per week, has facilities valued at almost three million dollars, and has an aggressive evangelistic outreach by radio, television, and visitation into the greater Washington, D.C. area. The church has a Christian school with 350 enrolled, and this year the church will receive approximately one million dollars income.

Actually, the phenomenal strength and growth of Calvary Road Baptist Church is in part a result of the merger with New Life Baptist in June 1979. At that time, Calvary Road averaged

in growth was initiated when he was called into full-time Christian service. He knew that God was calling him to preach, but he had a speech impediment that made it difficult for him to say even his name without stuttering. In junior high school he had been offered a scholarship to attend a rehabilitation program at Virginia Tech. Because it was away from home and his family did not encourage him, he did not respond to the offer. When he knew that God was calling him to preach, he spent time in prayer, wrestling with God. He reminded God, “How can I preach when I can’t speak clearly?” He was not healed immediately, nor was he healed sensationally. He testifies that his healing came gradual.” Every time he tried to preach, God lifted more of his impediment from him. He testified, “I preached every opportunity I had, but people did not give me many opportunities.” To that he adds with hindsight, “People did not try to dissuade me from preaching; it’s the fact that they did not encourage me that hurt.” Today, he feels people were kind to him, not wanting to hurt his feelings.

Line graph showing attendance from 1978 to 1982. The Y-axis represents attendance from 200 to 1000. The X-axis represents years. The attendance values are: 1978: 226, 1979: 392, 1980: 469, 1981: 574, 1982: 825.

YEAR	19	19	19	19 78	19 79	19 80	19 81	19 82	19	19	19
Attendance				226	392	469	574	825			

**DGR CALCULATION**

2453%

3748%

1594%

David Rhodenhizer testifies that another turning point in his life of faith came at the end of his first year in college. He had completed one year at Baptist Bible College, Springfield, Missouri. He had gone there because his pastor, Dr. Jerry Falwell who had graduated from there, encouraged him in that direction. At the end of Dave's freshman year, Dr. Falwell founded Liberty (then, known as Lynchburg) Baptist College that met in the Christian education facilities of Thomas Road Baptist Church. The college did not have fully developed programs, adequate college facilities or a complete faculty. Now Rhodenhizer testifies, "I believe that God's perfect will for my life was attending Liberty Baptist College and capturing the pioneering spirit of faith." To David Rhodenhizer, the new college was a demonstration of faith before his eyes. He saw Dr. Falwell set a goal of having 100 students in the first year, and David Rhodenhizer was one of the 153 students in that pioneer class. He recalls, "I saw how faith overcame obstacles, motivated people to become involved in the college, and produce young people to go out and plant churches." His experience at the new college left a lasting impression on his life.

After graduation David served almost two years at Berean Baptist Church, Salem, Virginia, as youth pastor, then moved to West Huntsville (Ala.) Bible Church, again as youth director and associate pastor.

In August 1977, he was visiting with his family in Lynchburg, Virginia. God was motivating him to plant a church. He was beginning to preach with ease, although his speech problem was still evident. He drove up Liberty Mountain (before the college buildings were there) and found a quiet mountain road. He recounted, "I knew that God wanted me to start a church, but I did not know where." He remembers telling God, "I am not coming down from this mountain until You show me where I should start a church." He bowed his head against the steering wheel of the car and prayed, but does not remember how long he prayed. Slowly God brought to his mind the Alexandria area of Virginia. The people in Lynchburg call the area (made up of several cities and suburbs) "Northern Virginia." David testifies, "I did not surrender and plan there to go to Northern Virginia, but it was most predominant on my heart. I decided to talk to Jerry Falwell the next day."

When he walked into Dr. Falwell's office, Jerry surprised him by saying, "I would like for you to come back to Virginia and start a church either in the Tidewater or Northern Virginia." Rhodenhizer remembers surrendering to God on the spot. Because of his conversation with his pastor he testified, "From then on I had no doubt whatsoever that God wanted me to go to Northern Virginia and start a church."

He speaks about having no fear in taking that step of faith; in fact, he said, "I was afraid not to go to Northern Virginia." Even though he knew Northern Virginia was the place to start a church, he had not yet found the exact spot. He recognizes that God leads by faith as a person takes one step at a time. In following his own advice, he first resigned his position at West Huntsville Bible Church. Second, he loaded all his belongings on a rental truck and drove to the Northern Virginia area. Third, he began looking for an apartment or house to rent. He had told the Lord that he would plant the church near the place where he found a house to live. Fourth, he spent about ten days getting his family settled. He remembered the words of his pastor, Dr. Falwell, "Get your wife settled and happy so she can support you. Then go out and plant the church." Dr. Falwell had said on many occasions, "The pastor can wait two weeks to get his church started, but a woman can never wait two weeks to get her house settled." The fifth step



was simply to go into the neighborhood and begin knocking on doors to solicit support for the new church. In the sixth place, Dave testifies that if a person does the will of God, He will provide the needs. Before he left West Huntsville, they received a love offering large enough to live on for four weeks. Then Dr. Falwell promised a gift of \$1,000 a month for the next six months. Berean Baptist Church., Salem, Virginia, also made a monthly contribution to Rhodenhizer. Rhodenhizer says that when a person believes God is leading, he ought to pray, set goals, then state them publicly. He set a goal of having 50 people in his first service. His new church would be called New Life Baptist Church for the “new life” that converts to Jesus Christ would experience. He had rented the Walt Whitman Junior High School on U.S. 1 for church services. That first Sunday his wife taught the children and he taught the adults. There were 51 people there, showing that God supported his step of faith. On the first anniversary, Rhodenhizer set a goal of 200; there were 213 present.

Calvary Road Baptist Church, a church in the area, was without a pastor, and had been searching for God’s man for their church. Calvary Road had been deteriorating in attendance, getting just enough money to take care of basic expenses. Its greatest need was leadership. Some people had transferred their membership from Calvary Road to New Life Baptist Church because they wanted to be in an aggressive soul winning church. Finally when more people from Calvary Road began coming to New Life, they got together and said, “We had buildings, property and equipment back at the other church. This new congregation needs buildings, property and extra help to win souls.” The members of New Life who had come from Calvary Road went back and began talking to their friends. Everyone seemed agreeable on a merger.

Rhodenhizer said his next step of faith involved the merger of the two churches. He testified,

There was a chance that the merger would be a great success, or we could lose both churches. I wanted to reach the entire area for Jesus Christ, but I could not find any property or a permanent location. I prayed much about the merger because I wanted to make sure that it was of God, and not of the flesh.

In April 1979, David Rhodenhizer was asked to candidate at Calvary ,” Road Baptist Church. He told them, “God called me to begin New Life Baptist Church, therefore if I am voted upon, we must understand that the vote includes a call for me as the pastor and a vote for the merger of the two churches.” After he preached, 106 out of 114 present voted to call him as the pastor.

Rhodenhizer asked the author to come and speak in June 1979 to perform a “marriage ceremony” between the two churches, which assumed the name Calvary Road Baptist Church because it was known in the community.

At that time the author challenged both churches to keep the Great Commission as their objective. To this, Rhodenhizer added, “I challenged them to saturate the entire area with the gospel and immediately begin an aggressive soul winning program. I knew that as long as the church was reaching out, it would not turn within in criticism.” Before the merger, New Life Baptist Church averaged around 80 in attendance and Calvary Road Baptist Church about 150.

God honored the step of faith and the church jumped 73 percent in attendance the next year, from 226 combined attendance, to 392.

The motto for the “marriage service,” was “Two like spirits, One great vision.” When the spirits of the two churches came together, they had one great vision of soul winning.

The following year the church continued to grow but not as aggressively as in the previous year. In 1980 there was only 19 percent growth, Rhodenhizer realized, “We were maximizing our facilities with one service. The auditorium was filled at every service and I realized that when an auditorium is 80 percent filled, the church will not grow.”

By faith Rhodenhizer began to plan for an early church service. “This was a great step of faith because I did not know what would happen.” Before adding a second church service, Rhodenhizer had set a goal of having 1,000 in attendance in the fall of 1979, but only had 950. He explained to the congregation, “This was a psychological victory, even though we did not reach our goal.” Again in the spring of 1980, they set a goal of 1,000 and missed it again. After providing space by adding the second service, they reached an attendance of 1,000 in the fall of 1981 without a special attendance campaign. Beginning on Easter Sunday 1982, the church began offering three services: 8:00 a.m., 9:00 a.m., and 11:00 a.m., with Sunday school at 10:00 a.m. Once again, Rhodenhizer sees the third service as a step of faith that paved the way for growth in the church. “Adding the third service was a step of faith because we did not know how people would respond. Tradition is a powerful thing and when you tamper with tradition, it is always a step of faith,” He faced the alternative: “If people don’t like the extra service, they will leave the church.”

As a result of the three services, attendance jumped in 1982 by 44 percent, reaching an average weekly attendance of 826. On many occasions, the church has gone over 1,000 in attendance. Now Rhodenhizer looks back on the times they tried to break 1,000 and could not. “That barrier of 1,000 seems very minute to us now.”

The next step of faith, for David Rhodenhizer was a scheduled banquet in the last part of March 1983 with Dr. Falwell scheduled to speak. Rhodenhizer planned to raise a half million dollars in cash at that banquet. The church plans to build a new 1,000-seat auditorium. They raised the half-million dollars, so the church can start construction.

## **FAITH IS BELIEVING THE INVISIBLE CAN BE ACCOMPLISHED**

When David Rhodenhizer was asked to assess the three definitions of the gift of faith (1. instrumental, 2. insightful, and 3. interventional), he identified primarily with insight or vision. But he also included interventional. He defined faith as “the ability to see the invisible and believe that it can be accomplished.” When asked if faith is the same as “possibility thinking,” he said, “No. Possibility thinking is believing you can do it, but faith is knowing that God can do it through you.”

To Dave Rhodenhizer, “Faith is the ability to see what God can do, and He can do what people think is impossible. Faith is first vision, but faith also includes the ability to trust God to remove the mountain barriers.”

To Rhodenhizer, “Having faith in God is not only assimilating the Bible, but putting it into practice. This involves announcing goals by faith so that people know beforehand what we want to accomplish,” When the goal is accomplished, people know it was done in the power of God. “By that, I mean we should put God to the test; He will do what He has promised.” At this point, Rhodenhizer identifies with the interventional aspect of faith.

On the other side of the picture, Rhodenhizer realizes that there have been times when he missed his goals:

I foolishly set goals that were not God’s will. When I set an attendance goal of 1,000, I did not have the organizational structure to reach the people nor did I have the room in my sanctuary to accommodate them. What I thought was a step of faith was not a step of faith.

When analyzing his faith, he says it came by reading accounts of the heroes of the Bible and trying to do what they have done. In modern life, Rhodenhizer says that Jerry Falwell has done more to strengthen his faith than anyone else.

When asked if the gift of faith is given sovereignly or developed in relation to other gifts, he said,

The gift of faith is from God. It is a life to be lived. When I exercise faith in the Word of God, and God answers, my faith grows so I have more faith to serve Him better.

I do not have the skills of many of my co-laborers, and I have always struggled with the speech impediment. The main strength I have in the pastorate is my ability to trust God. Anything we have accomplished is because we have put God to the test, and He has proven Himself. We have lacked something in the church because I have been fearful to take a gigantic step of faith.

*A. Faith and Location.* David Rhodenhizer looks back to the time when he prayed on Liberty Mountain for God to show him if he should plant a church. The circumstances clearly indicated to Rhodenhizer that God was guiding him to Northern Virginia. He sees every goal that was accomplished as verification of God’s guidance to Northern Virginia. He has accepted his location by faith. When asked if God could have used him in another location he replied, “I have never even thought of another location.”

*B. Faith and Doctrine.* David Rhodenhizer says that faith is based on the Bible; and the more a person knows and applies, the more faith he will have. He makes the same application to the church; the more the church knows about God (as revealed in the Bible) and what He wants to accomplish, more faith a church will have to step out in obedience. To the Rhodenhizer, faith and doctrine cannot be separated. However, a person can know doctrine without having faith; but no one has faith without knowing the Bible.

*C. Faith and Objectives.* When the two churches merged, Rhodenhizer stated,

If we lose our vision of soul winning, we will not grow. If we place nurture or fellowship before soul winning, the church will turn in upon itself. We would probably have disagreements. Winning the lost to Jesus Christ and evangelizing Greater Washington must be our marching orders. Soul winning will unify us and keep the church healthy.

The church has a full program of activities for nurture and fellowship, so Rhodenhizer is obviously using them in their place. He has a clear objective for the church and is able to carry out his vision.

*D. Faith and Principles.* The church is committed to saturation evangelism. It has advertised on television, radio, newspapers, flyers, and in various other ways. The church has an aggressive evangelistic program and has attendance campaigns.

Rhodenhizer applies all three aspects of faith to principles. First, the principles and their application must be in harmony with the principles of the Word of God (instrumental); second, a leader must have a vision or burden from God on what can be accomplished (insightful); third, the leader must then launch out in faith by taking a risk. He must publicly set goals and publicly lead his congregation to trust God for big answers to prayer (instrumental).

## CONCLUSION

David Rhodenhizer believes faith has all three aspects (instrumental, insightful, interventional). He has a historic basis for knowing God has called him to the ministry his healing. He seems to be measured in stating faith goals, and is quick to admit some goals were wrongly set. The accomplishment of his goals has given him credibility in the eyes of his congregation. Now they are willing to follow his leadership when he announces greater goals for the future.

Rhodenhizer seems to have a good blend of evangelism and nurture; this is predictive of future growth. Also, he has a good blend of leadership and lay involvement, another indication of future growth. The church is planning a large auditorium and more parking, all with a view of growth. David Rhodenhizer is young, and if he can keep his present balance, the church should continue to grow.

## CHAPTER 10

### New Life Baptist Church New Cumberland, Pennsylvania Ronnie Riggins, Pastor

Ronnie Riggins describes himself as meek and reluctant. He says he would probably never have planted the church except that a layman who owned an empty church building invited him to come and begin an aggressive soul winning church in New Cumberland, Pennsylvania, a suburb of Harrisburg. Within three months, there was a disagreement with the owner of the building over church polity, and the infant church moved into a fire hall, then into a public school. The church continued its steady growth and four years later bought acreage on I-83 and

constructed a \$300,000 building with an auditorium that would seat 300 people. The attendance has decreased 15 percent in the past year due to a de-emphasis in the bus ministry, but the financial offerings, drive-in attendance and other areas of the church continues to grow.

## I. COMMUNITY AND CONTEXTUAL FACTORS

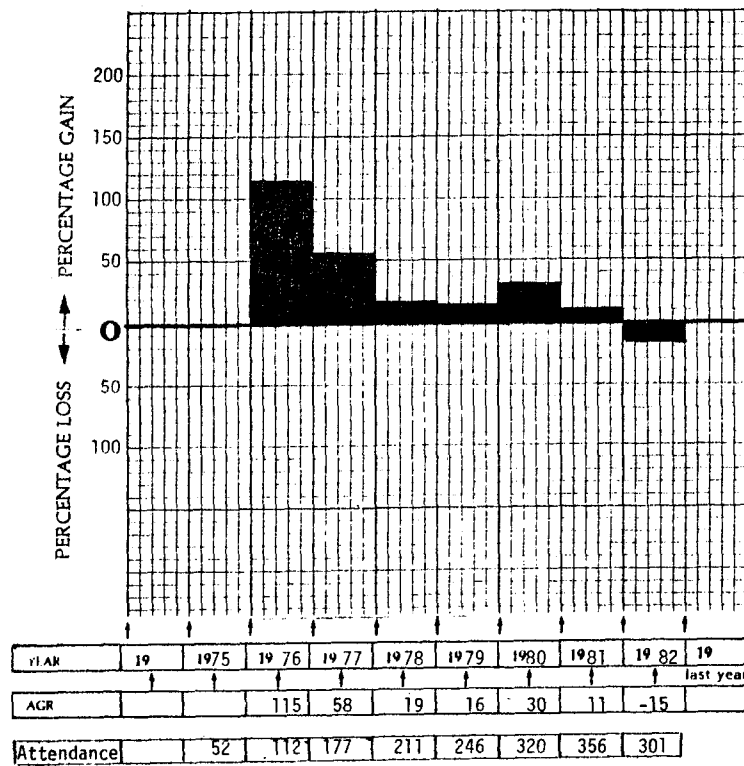
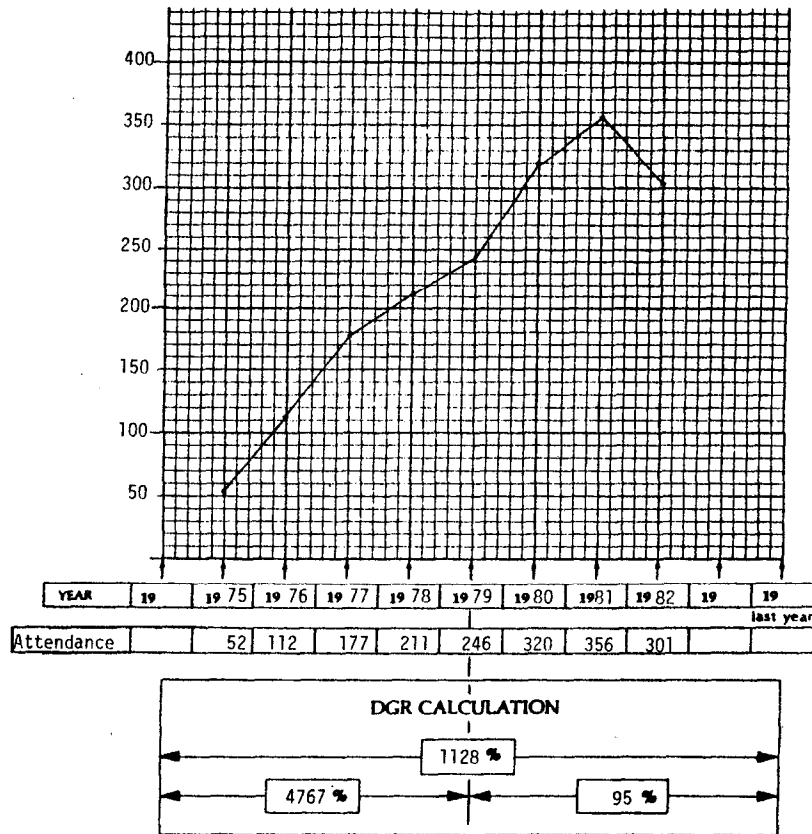
New Cumberland is thirty miles south of Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, where many of its residents commute to employment. Harrisburg, the capitol of Pennsylvania enjoys the stability of state and federal employment, plus having both heavy and light industry. The area surrounding New Cumberland has a great amount of industry, and many of the farms are becoming subdivisions, producing population growth. At one time, New Cumberland was a sleepy town, the historic downtown area is still well identified. But today, the area has new shopping malls and new business areas.

The primary church population in the area is mainline protestant denominations and Roman Catholics. There are a few churches representing the smaller evangelical denominations, but they are in the minority. The timing was right when Ronnie Riggins came to the area. There were a number of people who were watching Jerry Falwell on the Old-Time Gospel Hour. They, were primarily inactive members of the mainline churches who considered Thomas Road Baptist Church in Lynchburg their source of spiritual strength. The lack of an aggressive evangelistic church in the area and the desire for one by many residents provided the soil for the growth of New Life Baptist Church.

## II. DIAGNOSIS OF CHURCH GROWTH

The DGR shows a line of growth that goes up almost in a straight line. The church continued to grow (1975-81) because of aggressive evangelism. However, the attendance line turned down in 1982 because the pastor changed his attitude toward Sunday school bus ministry. During the past three years the DGA was 95 percent compared with 4767 percent during the first half of the church's existence.

An analysis of the Annual Growth Rate (AGR) reveals a growth of 115 percent in the first year, but a steady decline in the AGR until a minus figure is shown in 1982 (-15 percent AGR). The pastor feels that the church will begin to grow in the future because he is once again emphasizing evangelism. He also feels the loss of Sunday school bus riders will be compensated by families who drive into the church. He feels that the church has not lost strength with the decrease in attendance, but it is only an outward appearance of decline. With a renewed emphasis on evangelism, the figures will once again pass the mark of 356 average attenders (1981) and that in the long run, the church will be much stronger.



### III. HISTORY OF THE CHURCH

Ronnie Riggins was a member of the original freshman class at Liberty Baptist College. He knew very little about the college, including its rules and objectives. He only knew that his pastor had recommended Liberty to him. When he first visited the college he had cigarettes in his pocket and long hair, not realizing the unique student code at Liberty Baptist College prohibited these. Ronnie Riggins had surrendered to serve Jesus Christ, therefore, he had no difficulty with the rules. He spent his time at the school in evangelism, especially working with Jim Vineyard who was director of Sunday school busing at Thomas Road Baptist Church.

He graduated in May 1975, and became Director of Sunday School Busing at the Shenandoah Valley Baptist Church, Winchester, Virginia. He testified, "I always had a burden to start a church. Since Jerry Falwell had emphasized Virginia, I thought I would plant a church somewhere in Virginia."

While working at Shenandoah Valley Baptist Church, he took his day off to travel to towns in different areas of Virginia to survey them with the possibility of starting a church. After surveying several towns, he found no open doors and confessed, "I became frustrated and discouraged." One day while returning home from Alexandria, Virginia, he pulled his car over to the side of the road and told God, "I'm not going to force the issue of starting a church anymore. I'd like to start a church, but I will be faithful in my bus ministry at Shenandoah Valley Baptist Church." In essence, Ronnie Riggins surrendered his future to God. He left the matter with the Lord and put his energies into the bus ministry.

Three months later, a Christian businessman from New Cumberland, Pennsylvania, heard Dr. Jack Hyles, pastor, First Baptist Church, Hammond, Indiana, speak in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania. The businessman determined that an aggressive soul winning church was needed in the New Cumberland area and since he owned a church building, he wrote to Jack Hyles to ask for a recommendation of a young man to come start a church. Rev. Jim Vineyard had moved to the First Baptist Church from Lynchburg, Virginia. He received the letter and recommended Ronnie Riggins to the businessman. Within two weeks, Ronnie Riggins traveled to New Cumberland to survey the area. Riggins determined that a church could be built in the suburbs of South Harrisburg.

Ronnie Riggins moved to New Cumberland in November 1975, spent two weeks visiting in the area and held the first service on December 7, 1975. There were twenty-one people in Sunday school and forty-five in church and they received an offering of \$246.

Within forty-five days, attendance was averaging over one hundred. Riggins indicated that the crowd came because: (1) over 5,000 brochures were mailed to everyone in the area, and (2) Dr. Falwell sent a letter to everyone on his mailing list encouraging them to attend the new church (a policy Falwell no longer practices).

Riggins testifies that the timing for the new church accounted for its growth. Many people in mainline denominational churches watched Jerry Falwell on television and considered him their pastor. Some, but not all of them, came to the new church from the beginning. Therefore, there were few financial problems in getting the church started.

Within three months, a disagreement arose between the owner of the church building and Ronnie Riggins. It was a question of authority and leadership in the church. Riggins felt that he had to give spiritual leadership to the congregation, yet the businessman, because he owned the building, felt he could give directions to the church. Riggins testifies,

The biggest step of faith I ever took in my life was to move out of the church building into the fire hall. I was only 24 years old and just getting started. The church was only four months old. The church building had stained glass windows, pews, and an amplification system. It had all we needed for our ministry.

Some people warned Riggins, “You will lose all of your financial support and regular members. You will only have a few children left.” After several long periods of prayer, Riggins was convinced that he was doing the will of God. He did not know who would follow him into the fire hall. When the move was made, most everyone in the church followed him. What the owner of the building did not realize was that the people were not committed to a building nor were they committed to someone’s financial support. They were committed to a church with objectives similar to the ministry they received from Dr. Falwell on television. They did not realize they would be in temporary facilities for one month and a school building for three and one-half years.

The church continued to grow on a monthly basis while they were in the public school. Finally, they found acreage on I-83 and sold \$200,000 in bonds to finance the new facilities. The church also had to borrow \$75,000 from the bank to get into the building. In the next three years, they had accumulated almost \$25,000 in the building fund. The new facilities were occupied in 1979 and attendance increased 30 percent the next year.

#### IV. ANALYSIS OF FAITH

When asked to define faith, Riggins said, “Faith is just taking God at His word, without question, and obeying Him.” When his faith is compared to (1) instrumental, (2) insight, and (3) interventional, he seems to say that faith is an instrument to be used in the ministry of the Lord. Yet when Riggins was asked to define the gift of faith, he said, “It is the ability to believe God for the impossible.” He noted that the Bible called the gift of faith, “the measure of faith”. He defined the word measure, to mean “the size of faith”. When asked if he has the gift of faith, Ronnie said, “I do not know if I have the gift of faith, but I do know that I have faith; and that my faith is stronger now than when I began the church.”

Riggins was asked how his faith has grown.

First, by study of the Word of God and applying its principles to my life. Second, I have grown by my times of prayer and getting answers from God. In the third place, faith grows by exercise. When I use what I have, my faith grows to trust God for bigger things. In the fourth place, my faith has developed by being around godly men who have faith. Jerry Falwell has done more than anyone else to strengthen my faith and to challenge me to trust God for big things. The fifth step is simply to be faithful.



Once Riggins asked Dr. William Pennell, Pastor of Forrest Hills Baptist Church, Decatur, Georgia, "What do I need as a young man?" Pennell answered him, "Walk with God". To this Riggins says that as he grows in his total experience of being a Christian, he will grow in faith. Riggins adds a sixth step to grow faith. "Faith grows through trials." To prove this point, Riggins quotes, "That the trying of your faith worketh patience" (James 1:3). "Trials work to purify the Christian and draw him nearer to Jesus Christ. In the process, it causes the person to grow in Christ." Finally, Riggins indicated that a person grows in faith by being contented in the Lord. He indicated that, "On occasions we did not know how God would put food on the table, but He has always answered our prayers. When we trust God, we must be absolutely satisfied with the results God gives, or we are not trusting God." Riggins testified that he as pastor seemed to always be under financial pressure, but God taught him how to live by faith on a day to day basis.

*A. Faith and Location.* Riggins said that he knows God led him to New Cumberland. When seeking the will of God, he used the "open door" principle. "I tried to find a place to start a church but could not. When God opened the door with an invitation, I knew that was where I should go." When asked if he had any doubts about going to New Cumberland, especially in view of losing the building after three months, Riggins answered, "My faith has never been shaken about the location. New Cumberland is the place God wanted me to be."

*B. Faith and Doctrine.* Riggins feels that the Bible and doctrine is the foundation of faith. He testifies that his faith is based on Scripture. During the interview, he frequently quoted Scripture to illustrate or show the basis for his faith.

When asked about the credibility of doctrine, Riggins has no doubts about what he believes. When asked about doubts, since his faith is Bible based, he does not question God, nor does he have doubts when the expressions of his faith are based on the Word of God. He notes, "Faith is not measured by my sincerity but by its source, the Bible."

*C. Faith and Objectives.* To Riggins, the purpose of the church is soul winning. He has not changed this objective, but recently he has balanced it with a stronger emphasis on teaching or nurturing his members.

When asked about changing his objectives, he responded, "Why should I change, the Great Commission is still the purpose of the church. I am still committed to winning souls, but now I will emphasis building up people in the Word of God."

*D. Faith and Principles.* Riggins testified that super aggressive principles have worked to some extent, but he has found that Pennsylvania is different from the south.

I have shifted my gears because people are not oriented to the super aggressive church. I am plowing on new ground and I need to plant more seed. The super aggressive pastor is reaping the harvest, and we cannot reap what we have not sown. However, we have not changed our principles, but we have redirected our faith to a balanced ministry. This is not to lessen our faith but to trust God to use other principles.

Recently, Riggins reevaluated his attendance in light of past results. He stated, "I know that when I get away from soul winning, the church quits growing. We will continue to win souls, but in the future we will have a balanced ministry." Riggins says his main problem is to keep his own life growing to be like Jesus Christ. "I have never doubted that God has called me to the ministry. My faith has grown over the past seven years. I know God will take care of our personal needs and supply all that we need at the church." But by the same token, Riggins testifies, "I struggle with what I can do. I feel like David struggling with Saul's armor. I sometimes feel bogged down with other people's principles or with other people's goals. This frustrates me." Riggins is applying what he learned at Thomas Road Baptist Church and Liberty Baptist College to his particular church. He knows he cannot do exactly what was done in Lynchburg, but he can apply the faith that he learned there.

Riggins indicates that one person cannot force his faith on another person. And Riggins wants to live and minister in the way that God has called him to minister. "All a person can do is keep his motives pure and do the ministry to which God has called him."

## SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

Even though Riggins says he is a reluctant leader, he has given mature leadership to New Life Baptist Church. His view of faith seems to reflect his personality and his community context. Riggins is not confrontational, hence he does not interpret faith as interventional. When he says "faith is believing God for the impossible," he does not mean that God will produce New Testament signs, nor will God do the empirical miracle in the life of his church. To Riggins, faith is insight or vision, seeing the "impossible." Then he works to accomplish the "apparent impossibility." The key seems to be that Riggins works to accomplish the "apparent impossibility" rather than waiting for a crisis to be solved by divine intervention.

Of all the Liberty graduates, Riggins seems to have the most objective or traditional approach to faith. It is grounded in Scripture. What has been accomplished by faith is simply the application of the Word of God to the situation in which Ronnie Riggins finds himself.

## CHAPTER 11

### Freeport Baptist Church

#### Freeport, Illinois Kurt

#### Strong, Pastor

Kurt Strong graduated from Liberty Baptist Seminary and returned to Freeport, Illinois in June, 1978 to begin a church in his home town. The church met in four different temporary locations for two years, then purchased three acres of land on a major artery and built facilities valued at \$275,000. Attendance at the morning services now average 135 with an annual income of \$97,235. There seems to be no miraculous intervention of God to a threatening crisis or no outstanding answer to prayer that explains the growth of Freeport Baptist Church. Rather, the growth is the result of a man who faithfully ministered the Scriptures and God blessed the church with growth.

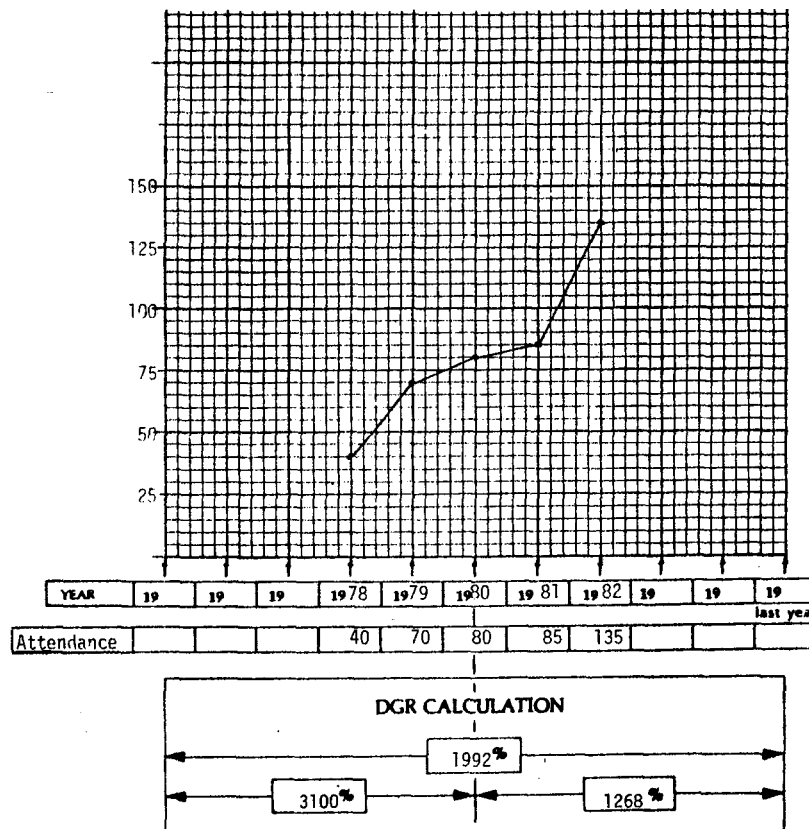
## I. COMMUNITY AND CONTEXTUAL FACTORS

Freeport is a mid-size town of 26,000 residents located on the prairies of North Central Illinois. The area serves a larger farming community, it also has light and heavy industry, with several large industrial complexes located in the community. The total population of the surrounding area is 50,000 with Rockford, Illinois (population 200,000) only 25 miles east. Some residents commute to Rockford for employment, other area residents travel there for shopping, entertainment and large city advantages. Freeport has almost stopped growing in population, yet there is marginal growth.

When Kurt Strong began the church in 1978, he thought the area was largely unchurched. However, since returning to the city, he finds there is a large population of Roman Catholics, Lutherans, and mainline churches. There are some evangelical churches, the fastest growing is the Evangelical Free Church which was planted fifteen years ago. Freeport is a church community according to Kurt Strong and church involvement by the residents is high. The lack of mobility by the residents and church loyalty within the community lessens the possibility of rapid church growth.

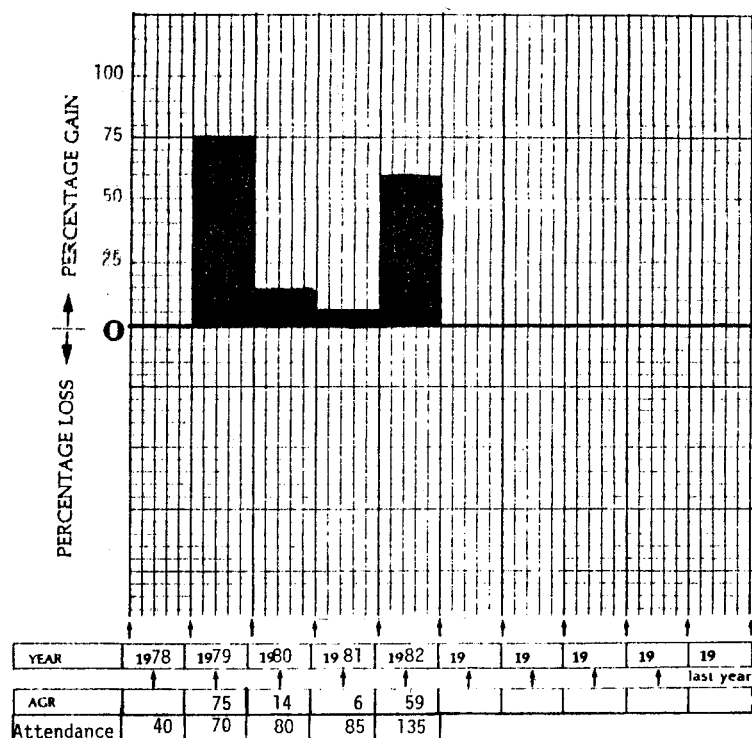
## II. DIAGNOSIS OF CHURCH GROWTH

The charts on church growth reveal that Freeport Baptist Church has had the greatest growth in its first year of existence and in its most recent year of existence. The church grew from forty to seventy in its first year (1978 to 1979) and from eighty-five to 135 in 1981 to 1982.



The first year of growth is due to the halo effect, i.e., the excitement of a new church in the area. The growth in 1981-82 is the result of expanded facilities and a change in pastoral attitude toward involving laymen in church ministry.

The following chart reveals that growth was marginal for two years, 1979 and 1980. During this time, the church did not have a permanent building and was moving from one location to another. Apparently at the beginning of the ministry, the pastor reflected the principles of saturation evangelism taught at Liberty. In the past two years, he has given more time to pastoring the church. Also, a child born with a defect had a great influence on him and his attitude toward faith. When he expanded his view of faith, it also affected his attitudes toward the ministry. The church had a 59 percent AGR in 1982, apparently the results of moving into larger facilities.



### III. HISTORY OF THE CHURCH

Kurt Strong was saved as a child and grew up in the church, attending Sunday School, youth activities and normal church pursuits. After graduating from North Illinois University with a degree in business management, he was working as a manager in training for a Rockford, Illinois firm. He got involved in the First Baptist Church, Freeport, Illinois in church bus ministry and led the high school evangelistic visitation. God began speaking to him about full-time ministry. Then because of the 1974 recession, he lost his job, and the only employment he could find was a janitor of the First Baptist Church. According to Strong,

God had humbled me. After college, I had planned to be president of the corporation. I did not mind hard work and I refused to go on welfare. We had a baby coming, and I did not want to go further in debt.

During this time, God began to speak to him about the ministry. During this time, he surrendered to become a full-time bus minister, willing to go to any church that would call him. But in his heart he knew that he had not done enough. Finally, he surrendered to be a pastor and felt satisfied that he was doing the will of God.

He wrote to many seminaries and decided to attend the one that had the most emphasis on evangelism in its catalogue. Finally, he chose Liberty Baptist Seminary, Lynchburg, Virginia.

During his first semester at seminary, the Thomas Road Baptist Church and Liberty Baptist Seminary sponsored a conference for youth workers. During one of the general sessions, Kurt Strong felt God was speaking to him to return to his home town and plant a church. This was a difficult decision for him. His home church, the First Baptist Church, had an effective ministry and he did not want to be in competition with his friends. There were other smaller evangelical churches in the community, but Kurt Strong wanted to plant a church that had a strong emphasis on separation and soul winning, yet emphasizing love among its members. Since he had finished seminary in two years, attending two summer schools, he graduated in 1978, then returned immediately to Freeport, Illinois.

To begin the church, he visited 1,850 homes within the first two weeks of his return to Freeport. The first service was held on June 4, 1978 with forty-three people present. As Kurt Strong looked out over that first weeks' congregation, he was greatly disappointed. Out of his visitation, over 100 families had promised to attend, not one family was there.

The next week only nineteen people returned. "I wanted to back out of my commitment, but there was no honorable way to do it. The greatest step of faith that I have ever taken was to come back to the church on the third week." During that summer, Kurt Strong continued to minister. Whereas some may feel that their church went forward with a great answer to prayer, or receiving a big gift, but Kurt Strong said the church grew because he did not give up. This statement reveals his attitude toward faith for he said to weekly continue the church was the greatest step of faith he had ever taken.

The church began meeting in an old farm bureau building. Next, they moved to an abandoned Evangelical United Brethren Church, later to the public health center, the YMCA, and finally, to a public school. To Kurt Strong, faith was not the miraculous supply of a new building but continuing in the facilities that God provided.

As soon as the church was organized, they began putting money into a building fund account. This later became the basis of growth. Dr. Frank Schmitt, professor of Christian Education at Liberty Baptist Seminary, came for the chartering service in October, 1978. As he surveyed the town with Kurt Strong, Schmitt told him they needed ten acres of ground on Pearl City Road, one of the main arteries that had just been built. Strong felt that was impossible, for the owners were asking \$20,000 an acre and he confessed, "I did not have faith to believe God could give us \$200,000."

As the church moved from one building to another, they prayed and continued looking for property. Everything in the city seemed closed. Two years later, Kurt Strong went back to Pearl City Road and prayed over the property. When he called the owners, they said, "Please meet us." They reduced by half the price per acre. Apparently, they had tax problems and were now anxious to sell. Kurt Strong agreed to buy three acres of ground for \$30,000 with an option to purchase seven more acres in five years at \$10,000 per acre. The church was able to pay cash for the property. A loan for \$130,000 was arranged and the church built on this property, dedicating the new building in March, 1981.

#### IV. ANALYSIS OF FAITH

When Kurt Strong was asked to define faith he said, "I used to believe that faith was believing God to do something that is impossible." He went on to explain that a daughter was born to them in 1979 without a brain, she only had a brainstem. That meant she was only capable of involuntary motions, and at times for thirty-six hours, she would have seizures characterized by loud screaming and involuntary shaking. On several occasions, Kurt and his wife asked God to give them faith that she would be healed. On many occasions when their daughter would go into a seizure, they would claim I Corinthians 10:13, "There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man, but God is faithful who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able, but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it." Whether Kurt Strong and his wife were asking God to give them strength to bear the seizure or to stop the seizure is not clear in his thinking. The little girl lived for eight months, but the experience left an impact upon Kurt Strong.

Now he says, "Faith is the ability to see and understand what God is doing, then trusting Him through every circumstance of life." To this he testified,

I did not have faith that she would be healed, but through the whole experience, I had faith to see God's plan in my life. Now I can trust God for every situation because I know He is working in me and in the church.

When Kurt Strong was asked to define the gift of faith, he said, "It is the ability to see something that seems impossible to accomplish then trusting God to accomplish it." When asked if he had the gift of faith, Kurt Strong replied, "Periodically I think I have experienced the gift of faith, but I have not maintained it on a consistent basis throughout my ministry."

When viewing the gift of faith as (1) instrumental, (2) insight, and (3) interventional, Kurt Strong seems to say that faith is not the last point which is interventional faith. But at the same time he is saying that faith is the first two aspects. Faith is an instrument in the work of God and faith is insight that sees what God is doing or can do.

Kurt Strong responded that his faith had grown since he started the church. When asked how his faith has grown, he answered with four points:

First, "My faith grows when I have the security of knowing that God is using me." He points to a recent change in his thinking concerning the church leadership. Several people told him that he needed more organization to get more done in the church. A neighboring pastor helped him organize the people into five commissions within the church. Now the laymen are

involved in church leadership, and he sees them growing in spiritual nurture through involvement. "I am encouraged when I realize I am not standing alone, but I am standing with my people." Therefore, to Kurt Strong, his ability to organize is an important step in the growth of his church. "By faith, I have learned organization which has helped my ministry." He indicated that previous to this, "faith was only a vision, but I could not accomplish my vision." He responded, "If faith is the substance of things hoped for (Hebrews 11:1), I was not getting what I wanted. Now I have substance in my ministry because I have more than a dream, I have organization in my church."

Kurt Strong indicated that a second way his faith has grown is by learning to challenge or confront people with the Word of God. "I was too reluctant when I first began my ministry." He indicated that in the spirit of Matthew 18:15, he has gone to his people in love with the truth. This is another way of saying that he is more honest with people. Also, he has challenged people not to gossip, but to be honest with others. By adding honesty to lay involvement, "Our people are more responsible to the church, hence, they are more involved and they are growing by faith." Kurt Strong points out that in the past year, there have been fewer people who left the church than in former years. As a result, the church is stronger and his faith is stronger. He stated, "Because we have a stronger church, I have stronger faith in God."

The third step that grew his faith was through trials. Because of the birth defect of their daughter, Kurt said, "I now can trust God for everything in my life, because of trials, my faith is stronger."

Kurt Strong said that the last thing to grow his faith is his relationship with men of faith. He mentioned Jerry Falwell stating, "I marveled at his faith and learned from his ability to trust God." The second person who meant the most to him was Bill Gothard who taught him to live by biblical principles.

*A. Faith and Location.* It was a step of faith to return to Freeport to plant a church. Kurt Strong was embarrassed by his former life (even though he was a Christian) and wondered if the people would respond to him as a pastor. Also, he did not want to conflict with the ministry of First Baptist Church because he had made a profession there and was active in the ministry of the church. Yet, when God was calling him to return to Freeport, he realized, "it was not a matter of what the people thought, but what was the will of God. When I realized that God was giving me a burden for Freeport, I realized I could not go anywhere else." When asked what would have happened if he had gone to another location, he responded, "God could have used me at another location, but not as greatly. By going elsewhere, I would have said 'no' concerning Freeport, I would have had limited my future elsewhere."

*B. Faith and Doctrine.* Kurt Strong is deeply committed to the precepts of Christianity. He accepts them as the Word of God because of the claims of Scripture, but also because they work in his life and through his ministry at the church. It is not a question if God could have blessed him if he believed otherwise, he would not have done otherwise. The basis for church growth in doctrine and faith is basing your vision upon the pure Word of God.

*C. Faith and Objectives.* When asked about his objectives, Strong answered, “I have not changed my vision since I left Liberty. I still desire to win people to Christ. By faith, God shares His vision with me and I obey His objectives, His Word and His principles to accomplish it.”

*D. Faith and Principles.* When asked about the principles of super-aggressive evangelism, he indicated, “Faith is vision to see what God wants to accomplish, then doing it.” By faith, Strong believes he must aggressively obey the principles of the Word of God to accomplish the work of God. Even though soul winning is his primary thought, he has spent more time pastoring his people than in door to door evangelism. When viewing the conditions of Freeport, he sees the necessity of building a strong congregation that will nurture the people. From that foundation he will reach out with evangelism.

When he came to Freeport, Strong mentioned that his greatest doubt concerned money. “I had questions concerning if we would get enough money to accomplish our vision.” Yet after five years, he explains, “I do not have the doubts about money now that I had. I believe God will provide for our needs, because I have seen what He has done over the years.”

## SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

Kurt Strong views faith and vision (insight) and uses the Word of God to carry out his vision for the church (instrument). His articulated view of faith has changed since leaving Lynchburg. Whereas he once believed faith was interventional, he does not now hold that view. The growth of the church seems to reflect his attitude toward faith. There seems to be no great answer from God that was clearly in response to a crisis. There seems to be no great “leap of faith” by the pastor and people so that the church jumped in growth. Kurt Strong seems to have an objective-based Christianity that is reflected by the measured growth of the church.

## CHAPTER 12

### Fredericktowne Baptist Church

#### Frederick, Maryland

#### Gary Byers, Pastor

Gary Byers, a young pastor, seems to have gone the cycle in church ministry from the eager youth evangelist to a Bible teaching pastor. He entered Liberty Baptist College in the first year of the institution, traveled with an evangelistic singing group and was introduced on the nationwide telecast of the Old-Time Gospel Hour by Jerry Falwell as a super aggressive “preacher boy.” He traveled with Dr. Falwell as a friend. Dr. Falwell went to Frederick to inaugurate the church, but it has had a rocky path of growth. In four out of eight years, the church has registered minus or no growth. The church began with a super-aggressive vision of reaching the entire Frederick area. Yet, in the past few years it has evolved from an attempt at being a metropolitan type church into a neighborhood type church and in the later model has had its best growth because of its well rounded ministry. Byers has also evolved from an evangelistic preacher to an expository preacher and now is enrolled in a master’s program at Hebrew Union Seminary, an extension of John Hopkins University.



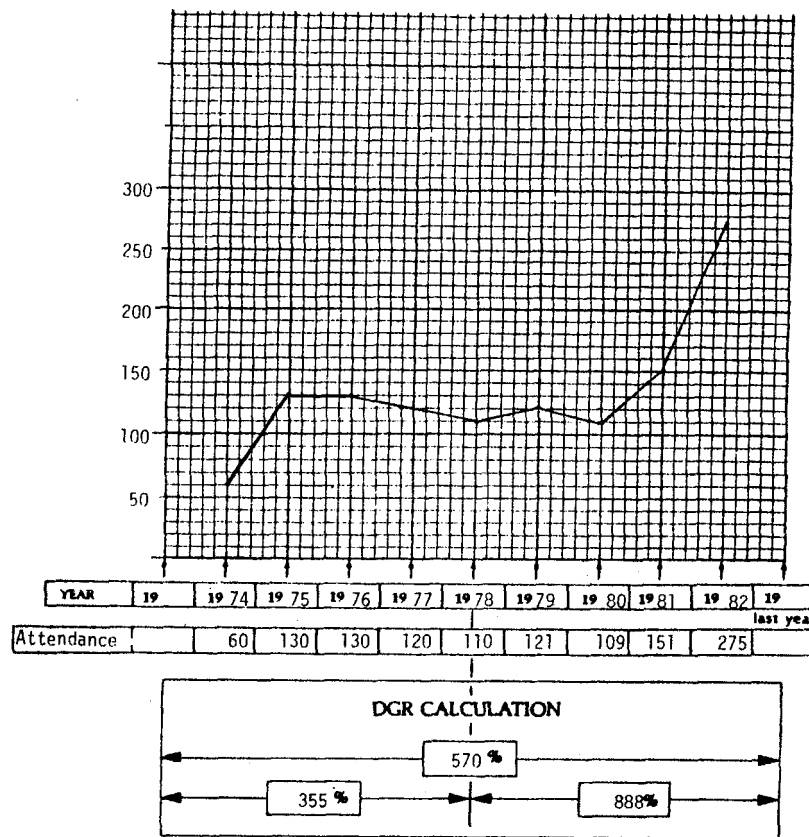
## I. COMMUNITY AND CONTEXTUAL FACTORS

Frederick is a mid-size town of 30,000 located forty-five miles from Washington, D.C. The greater Frederick area serves 100,000 people. Many of its residents commute to Washington, a high number of them hold federal government jobs giving stability to the area. There is a diversification of industry in the area. Frederick is a historic center-city that dates back past the Revolutionary War. The area is steeped in tradition, yet two interstate expressways converge in Frederick and modern shopping malls have located there. There is almost no slum area and an area of new subdivisions has spread out over the surrounding farmland.

## II. DIAGNOSIS OF CHURCH GROWTH

The name Fredericktowne, rather than Frederick was chosen to identify the church with the historic nature of the area. The church was originally located near the center of the historic center-city and attempted to serve the entire region. It was similar to a mid-town type church (Walrath), yet without a permanent building, no identifiable parish or no history. In 1980, the church purchased 32 acres near the Discovery subdivision PUD (Planned Urban Development) and began construction of a \$300,000 building. The site was designed by the developers as a church. It was located near the entrance to the subdivision. By identifying with Discovery subdivision, the church lost its image of ministry to the entire area.

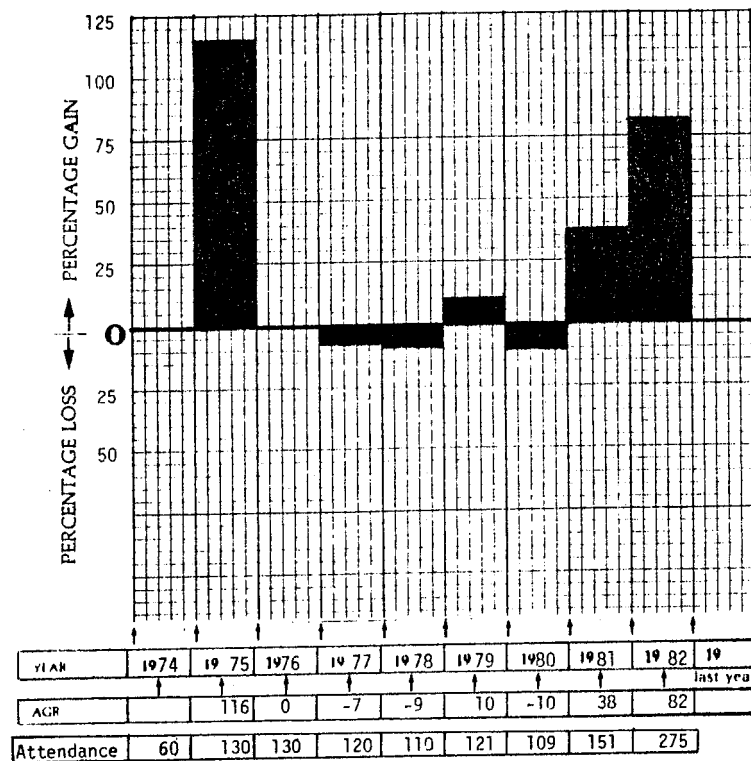
The expectation of entering the new facilities produced 38 percent DGR in 1981. When the building was occupied in 1982, annual growth jumped to 82 percent. The church became a fringe suburb-type church (Walrath) and the growth came primarily from Discovery subdivision and other subdivisions located nearby.



The church had its largest growth (116 percent) in 1975 as a result of Sunday school busing and the use of two annual Sunday school attendance campaigns. Byers confesses his lack of ability to negotiate the sale of property and construct a building brought growth to a standstill in 1975-76. The problem was his inexperience with purchasing and construction. He confesses, "It was my immaturity and fear of launching out by faith." The church had accumulated almost \$50,000 in its building fund which was enough for a down payment on property and/or a building.

The church suffered its first decline in 1977 because of a disagreement over Byers' leadership or lack of it. The congregation was positionized over a piece of property and some left the church over the next two years (-7 percent in 1977 and -9 percent in 1978).

The next decline came in 1980 (-10 percent) when the church moved into the facilities of a Seventh Day Adventist (SDA) church. Even though the facilities were spacious and modern, the frustration level of the congregation grew because of two reasons. First, some disagreed with SDA doctrine and felt they were compromising by using their facilities. Second, others were convinced the church would never make it because they had looked at and/or tried to obtain several different pieces of property, all without success. Gary testified, "We got to the place where we had to buy property, even if it was a poor place, just to survive."



### III. HISTORY OF THE CHURCH

Gary Byers graduated from Liberty Baptist College in 1974 when he was only 22 years of age. During his senior year, he had been traveling each weekend to Shenandoah Valley Baptist Church in Winchester, Virginia, approximately 180 miles away from Lynchburg, Virginia. He visited on the bus routes, worked with the young people and taught Sunday school. The training was invaluable and he enjoyed the evangelistic ministry. Half way through his senior year, Byers and three other young people from Liberty (who worked with him at Shenandoah Valley) made plans to begin a church in Frederick, Maryland, some 50 miles away from Winchester.

In January 1974, Dr. Falwell held a rally in Frederick, Maryland, with approximately 200 people in attendance. At the time, a new church was announced and plans were made. The next four weeks, Byers traveled from Lynchburg to Winchester on Friday, then on to Frederick for Saturday night meetings. Attendance began dwindling in the Saturday night meetings and they moved from the public school gym to the Salvation Army Citadel in the inner city. Attendance reached a low of approximately 25 people.

Finally, on Palm Sunday 1974, the church held its first service in an elementary school with 32 people present. The group was composed of a number of students from Liberty Baptist College, plus the core of the new church which was two families.

For the next few months, two LBC students came with Gary Byers to work at the church. They lived each weekend in a camper in the backyard of one of the member's home. They

visited on Saturday and held services on Sunday. To advertise the new church, an ad was placed in the local newspaper that read, "Jerry Falwell says, a new church is starting in Frederick, watch this space for name and place." Two weeks later, the same ad was reprinted,

"Jerry Falwell says, a new church has started in Frederick," the name and place was given.

After graduation, Gary Byers moved into a motel in Frederick and began his ministry. He was out walking for exercise near the church and saw an old empty home. Byers claimed it for the Lord. Finding the owner they offered to rent it. He announced, "How did you know we were getting ready to put it on the market?" The old home became the center for church activity; Gary Byers lived there along with the other students. During that first year, the church grew by 116 percent from 60 to 130. The aggressive evangelism of the students, plus the Sunday school bus route accounted for the growth. The church was meeting in a school building (the old home was the headquarters).

#### IV. ANALYSIS OF FAITH

When Byers was asked which of the three concepts of faith expressed his view, (1) instrumental, (2) insight, and (3) interventional he indicated faith is insight and/or vision. He defined it as follows, "Faith is visualizing what God intends to do in a given situation and then acting in harmony with God's plan." His concept of the gift of faith is consistent with his definition of faith, "A person has the gift of faith when he has special ability to see a great thing that God wants to do and then that person makes the right decision that brings it to pass."

*A. Faith and Location.* Gary Byers is sure that God led him to Frederick, Maryland, "I never had a doubt about the location." In college his mother had sent him a clipping from a Washington, D.C. newspaper concerning the death of a football coach at Liberty. On the back of the clipping there were three maps: Washington, D.C., Baltimore, Maryland, and Frederick, Maryland. A few days after receiving the clipping and maps, another student asked Byers if he would like to go with him to Frederick, Maryland to start a church. Gary Byers knew nothing about Frederick, Maryland other than he had seen a map of the area on the back of the clipping. He said about the invitation, "I sensed God wanted me there and I told them I should help start the church."

As Gary Byers began praying about Frederick, Maryland he used the closed door concept of faith, rather than the "open door." By that he began praying, "God the door is open for me to go to Frederick, if you do not close the door I will feel that you are leading me there." Byers made a list of approximately ten things that needed to come to pass for him to start the church. He determined, "If the Lord does not close the door by stopping these from coming to pass, I will know that He wants me in Frederick." These things involved a building, key families to start the work, students from Liberty to help, plus other items that he has forgotten. He prayed on several occasions, "Stop me if you do not want me there." Today he reasons that since God did not close the door, he found the right location by faith.

*B. Faith and Doctrine.* According to Byers, "Right thinking produces right growth, and right thinking comes from correct doctrine." When he hears about other church growth, especially when built on doctrine different from his; he states, "I don't understand how some

churches are built on different doctrine, but I do not reject it.” In the area of faith and doctrine, Byers sees God working in the heart of all people who agree on major church doctrine. He stated, “I honestly see God dealing with everybody in a special way. I believe God blesses a person for what he has that is right (correct doctrine) not because of what they believe wrong. When applying faith to his doctrine Byers states, “If I believe right and if I live right, God will bless me and the church will grow.”

When Byers first started the church, doctrine was extremely important to him. Over the years he has not changed his doctrine, but his priority on content is not the same. He states, “My practical application has sharpened, but my doctrine has not changed. I feel that as the pastor, if I am on the cutting edge of life, God will bless me. Also, I need to apply doctrine to life as a father, husband, and in my personal walk before God.”

When viewing doctrine Byers says, “Correct truths of Christianity do not build a church. Doctrine must be supernaturally dynamic so that it changes daily life. When this happens, the life changing influence of Christianity attracts others to the church, and the church will grow.” In addition to applying doctrine to his personal life, Gary Byers said that, “Interpersonal relationships are imperative for church growth.” He noted that some people believe the cardinal truths of Christianity, but they cannot get along With anyone else. This deters church growth. “If a church correctly teaches doctrine, people will love one another and the church will grow.” When viewing large churches Byers noted, “I am suspect of large churches where the people do not live the Christian life. I am committed to helping many people live godly lives, and let church growth take care of itself.”

*C. Faith and Objectives.* Byers states plainly, “My objective is to make Fredericktowne Baptist Church the best church that I can with the help of God.” Going through the original years at Liberty, Byers faced the pressure of living up to the expectation of the faculty and other students. He was called a “preacher boy” and many of the ministerial students felt they had to do as well as Jerry Falwell. When viewing this standard Byers said, “I failed miserably.” He went on to say, “I got into the numbers game and was miserable.”

Byers took a decided turn in his ministry when he moved into the SDA building. At the time he had three deacons and two opposed the move. But according to him, Fredericktowne Baptist Church had no other alternative. All three deacons quit. One of the deacons did not resign in protest. He was a graduate of Liberty Bible Institute and felt God leading him to start a church in Gettysburg, Pennsylvania. Byers collected money and helped him get his church started. The other two deacons quit and formed a church in the area. Byers indicated, “When we went into the SDA building, I quit trying to reach other people’s standards for me.” It was more than an internal change in the pastor, there was also a change in his ministerial philosophy. He had seen a number of people make professions of faith, but they did not follow through on their professions. He decided to spend more time preaching to his people and discipling individuals. He shifted his pulpit ministry from evangelism to nurture. He called it “pastoring the people from the pulpit.”

“When I went into the SDA building, I felt like a failure.” Byers described the change, “I decided to do whatever God wanted me to do--that freed me up, to be a pastor.”

There was another major change when Byers entered the SDA building. Without being aware of it, he had become extremely legalistic in his attitudes. To this he confessed, "I was much more legalistic than what I learned at Liberty Baptist College." He attributes his legalism to other fundamentalist pastors who measured spirituality by short hair, or their negative ideas to movies, cigarettes, etc. Two of the deacons who left him were extremely legalistic. "They had pressured me to take stands that I did not really believe in," Byers later testified. Then he went on to say, "When they left I had freedom to preach what God was telling me, not what the deacons wanted." Finally, Byers testified that by moving to the SDA building, he moved away from super-aggressive evangelism. He had known how to go door to door and witness and he had also known how to get children to ride his bus to church. But he did testify, "I did not know how to build a super-aggressive church, and really I did not know where I was going with the super aggressive church."

Byers indicated he had the privilege of "starting over twice." When the first split came over the property in 1977, he changed his approach becoming more legalistic. When the deacons left in 1980, he changed to a nurturing model. When asked what the purpose of the church, he stated, a "I still believe the purpose of the church is to make disciples of all nations, to baptize them and to teach them all things." But he now defines the word discipling differently, "Evangelism now means more than getting persons to make decisions, it includes follow-up." He still believes that the purpose of the church is evangelism, but he applies evangelism in a broader sense.

*D. Faith and Principles.* Byers testifies, "I started out trying to be super-aggressive, but I found that that I could not do it right, and I did not know where I was going with it." He testified that as he went door to door, "Many of my decisions were not lasting. I could get people to make decisions at the front door, but I could not get them to the church. Some who attended church would not come forward and make a public profession." When he moved into the SDA church he felt free to change his principles. Byers began attending seminary in 1979, taking courses in counseling, organization and evangelism. He wanted to apply these principles to see if they would work. He began placing more emphasis on counseling. In 1982 he found that he was able to lead more people to Christ who stayed in the church than in previous years. These people made professions of faith after counseling sessions, rather than on door to door evangelism. As a matter of fact, the church has had more growth through counseling than in previous years through door to door evangelism. Byers testified, "I was presenting the gospel to fewer people, but was getting more results and the church was growing."

With this change came a new emphasis in his pulpit ministry. The people supported Byers, and he became known as an expositor of the Word. With this change he gave more attention to study. After graduation from Liberty Baptist Seminary (1981), he enrolled in Hebrew Union Seminary, Baltimore, Maryland. With this change from evangelistic preaching to expositional preaching the people began bringing their friends and relatives, accounting for church growth. Technically speaking, the church went from front door evangelism to side door evangelism, accounting for the growth in 1981-82.

## V. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

Gary Byers began his ministry with Jerry Falwell as an example and standard. In planting a church, he scored his faith ten on a scale of one to ten. Probably his concept of faith was

interventional. Yet he could not produce the numerical growth expected of him. When viewing the history of Fredericktowne Baptist Church, there seems to be no great answer from God where he stepped out on faith. Obviously there were crises but no supernatural intervention by faith. If his faith was interventional, he was not able to make it work in his ministry.

After two major crises, Byers made a philosophical change in his ministry. He did not repudiate his relationship to Dr. Falwell, but intensified his ties to Liberty. The change involved Byers bringing his concept of faith into line with his personal application of Christianity and his experience in Frederick. He now interprets faith as insight or vision of what God expects of him. Also, the change involved Byers adapting his style of ministry to his own lifestyle and to the new community contextual factors in which he found himself. As a result of his change, Byers seems to minister from inner strength because he is using his gifts rather than, imitating someone else.

Byers still claims that Falwell taught him more faith than any other person. However, it seems evident that even though one credits the other; today both Falwell and Byers express their faith differently.

## CHAPTER 13

### Summary and Conclusion

This thesis attempts to show a correlation between faith and church growth, i.e., that the leader who properly exercises faith will have church growth. If this thesis is true, then the opposite may also be operative, i.e., the leader who does not exercise faith will have little, if any, church growth. Therefore, one of the primary areas of this dissertation involves the conclusions learned about faith and principles that can be used by others to cause their church to grow.

1. *Faith is one of the primary influences on church growth.* Whether the pastor believes that faith is caused/interventional, or faith is passive/instrumental; this study tends to conclude that those pastors with the strongest perception of their faith also have the fastest growing churches. This does not prove that faith and church growth have a cause and effect relationship. It could mean that pastors with the strongest perception of faith have other qualities that produce growth; such as confidence, self acceptance, goal orientation, or some other trait that may be a by-product of faith. But the practical application is evident, for those who want to grow, they should give attention to their faith.

2. *Those with growing churches also have growing faith.* Each of the Liberty men testified that his faith has grown since he started the church. At the same time, each of their churches was growing. This does not say that their growing faith caused the church to grow or vice versa. But there is a correlation between the two, Liberty men testified that their growing faith produced growing churches.

3. *The pastors of growing churches have the gift of faith.* Some of the literature doubts the existence of a separate gift of faith. Apparently, some feel that all spiritual gifts become operative with faith. The Liberty men testified they possessed or previously had the gift of faith. Some had questions about their gift and others did not emphasize their gift, but none doubted the existence of the gift of faith and its role in church growth.

4. *Pastors can grow their churches through the gift of faith and they can sharpen their spiritual gift of faith to be more effective.* This study concludes that: (1) there is a gift of faith, (2) that it is a capacity for Christian service, (3) that it grows in its effectiveness, and (4) that it can produce church growth.

5. *If pastors do not have the gift of faith, they can seek it.* This study has concluded that spiritual gifts are given to believers, perhaps when the Holy Spirit indwells him; and that the gift of the Holy Spirit includes the embryonic, or latent capacities for service, called spiritual gifts. Therefore, since the pastor has the germ seed of the gift of faith, he should seek to manifest it in his service.

6. *Pastors can increase the effectiveness of their spiritual gift.* This study has reflected the testimony of those who say their gift of faith has grown. There was no precise agreement how the gift of faith could be developed, but there were some general steps. The effectiveness of the gift of faith can be increased by: (a) knowing and applying the Scripture, (b) exercising the faith one already has, (c) praying, (d) trials, (e) fellowship or being influenced by those who already have the gift of faith, (f) looking at the past work of God, (g) being a clean vessel, (h) setting and accomplishing goals, (i) growing in Christian character, and (j) growing the gift of faith as the church grows.

7. *There are three aspects of the gift of faith that influence church growth.* Church growth is influenced as pastors: (a) use faith as an instrument to accomplish the work of God, (b) use faith as insight or vision to see what God is doing, or wants to do; then works to accomplish that dream, and (c) use faith to intervene against a crisis or to successfully meet a goal, whereby God gives victory over the problem and causes the church to grow.

8. *Those who use all three aspects of the gift of faith seem to have greatest church growth.* The author can never be certain if the pastors he interviewed were using all three aspects of the gift of faith to produce growth. He has to rely on the testimony of those who say they have the gift of faith. Then the certainty of how they have used faith is not known. But those who began at (a) instrumental faith, then went on to (b) insight, and finally employed (c) interventional faith, seem to accomplish most. To bring another qualification to perspective, those who claim to have interventional faith, may in fact, misinterpret the circumstances concerning faith. Their church growth may come from some other motivation. Whether this perspective is true, the fact is that Liberty men perceive their gift of faith and correlate their church growth to it.

9. *The gift of faith is an instrument that can be used by the pastor to influence church growth.* The quality of faith is measured by its source which is Jesus Christ as revealed in Scripture: Faith is not measured by the subjective trust of the pastor. Therefore, any spiritual growth in an individual or in a church, must come as the pastor uses faith as an instrument to build up individuals or the church. Then faith, like prayer, the Scriptures, or witnessing; is an instrument to effect spiritual growth in a broad range of areas. Instrumental faith will produce numerical growth, but probably not in a clear cause and effect relationship. When the pastor uses instrumental faith, the total spiritual quality of the church increases and numerical growth usually results; but not in every instance.



10. *The gift of faith is insight/vision that can be used by the pastor to influence church growth.* Faith is the capacity to see what God is doing or wants done in an area, then the pastor can work to accomplish that goal. Vision or insight may include the ability to see the proper place to plant a church, the ability to see the principles that can work in an area, the ability to understand and apply doctrine to a group of people, or the ability to perceive the size and/or varied ministries of a potential church. Therefore, church growth begins with insight/vision, which becomes the foundation for meaningful labor. Hence, vision has a correlation to church growth.

11. *The gift of faith can intervene in crises that face a church or solve problems that hinder growth.* Varied interpretations of theology are involved in this principle. Some believe the day of signs and miracles are past, therefore, they probably would reject the view that implies faith is the causal agent to motivate God to do the impossible. Others believe signs and miracles exist today, therefore, they probably accept the miraculous nature of faith. This study has concluded that interventional faith is located between the two positions. Granted God controls His universe through His laws and that the day of miraculous signs and revelations have past, but God obviously works today in an experiential way. The filling of the Spirit, answers to prayer and the illumination of the Holy Spirit all testify to the present day work of God in the world. These operate in the Christian's spiritual experience with implications for the physical world. Therefore, the gift of faith can have an experiential influence on the work of God. When the pastor says to the mountain, "Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea; and shall not doubt in his heart, but shall believe those things which he saith shall come to pass; he should have whatsoever, he saith" (Mk. 11:23). This is interventional faith to solve crisis and overcome barriers that keep a church from growing. Interventional faith can lead to church growth.

12. *Pastors do not have to express their faith in the same manner to influence church growth.* It is obvious from this dissertation that Liberty men do not all agree in expressing their faith for the same purposes or in the same way. Yet, all the Liberty men that were examined were growing in spite of their differences. One: Liberty man said that faith was not getting a "handle on God," while others were seeking that special edge that faith would produce. Some might wonder how different expressions of faith could influence church growth. Remember, faith pleases God, "for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him" (Heb. 11:6). God is pleased by those who trust Him for church growth, therefore, in spite of their varied expression, doctrinal beliefs, or other deviations; He rewards them according to their faith.

13. *The gift of faith can be stimulated in pastors by those who exercise their gift.* Most of the Liberty men testify that Jerry Falwell either taught them faith, or motivated them to use their faith. Earlier the author called this the "hot poker" method of transferring the gift of faith from one person to another. Just as the hot coals heat the poker, so spiritual gifts are transferred/stimulated by the person who exercises them (Rom. 1:11). Therefore, to apply this principle, the pastor who wants to grow in faith should expose himself to those with faith as they exercise it. This can be done through sermons, seminars, tapes, counseling, books, etc..

14. *Pastors should refine their unique expression of faith because it will not manifest itself exactly in them as it has in their teachers.* The obvious conclusion of this dissertation is that the students of Jerry Falwell do not generally agree with his expression of the gift of faith. The

author interprets Falwell to exercise interventional faith, yet several of the Liberty students do not feel they can use interventional faith. However, because they disagreed, did not mean they felt Falwell was wrong. They felt faith can be expressed in different ways. Two students who once believed like Falwell have changed their position on the application of faith. This study is not attempting to draw a line between Falwell and his students but to point out that even in a system that is perceived to be closed, students not only have the freedom to express their indigenous beliefs, but they in fact disagree. But even in their disagreement, the students credit Falwell with motivating their faith in their ministry, and constantly exercise their faith to cause their church to grow. For a practical application, pastors should realize that their faith may have a different expression from their spiritual “heroes,” and that their members will express their faith different from them. Therefore, everyone should work out his unique expressions of faith.

15. *Goal setting can be a unique expression of the gift of faith.* Several Liberty men have learned to set and achieve goals as an expression of faith. Setting goals will challenge the whole church to faith when the goal, (a) has a biblical basis, (b) is Scriptural in its motivation, (c) is achieved, and (d) glorifies God rather than the man or the church. In the practical area, goal setting can relate to attendance, visitors, offering, conversions, obtaining property, or other tangible goals.

16. *Announcing or asking for victories over problems or solutions to crisis can be an expression of the gift of faith.* There is a fine line between spiritual “pride of life” and announcing an answer to prayer before the answer is delivered. In one sense, the pastor must condition everything on the premise, “If the Lord will . . .” (James 4:15). David Rhodenhizer was the most honest to admit missed goals. He admitted on occasions he had a wrong perception of faith in setting goals, when in actuality the natural laws of church growth were broken. Therefore, he did not get what he set as a faith goal. Yet one failure did not discourage him from making other faith statements. He now plans to raise \$500,000 in one banquet.

17. *There is a close correlation between the pastor’s perception of the strength of his faith and the actual strength of his faith.* Some pastors wrongly tell others they have doubts or weak faith, thinking that a show of humility will strengthen their faith. Other pastors take the opposite side acting as if they have strong faith, thinking their strong attitude will strengthen their weak faith. Faith is not strengthened by “psyching up” oneself, nor “debasing oneself.” In this study, the perception of faith was measured and compared among ten men. While the author assumes honesty in the responses he received, he is aware that honest but wrong judgmental decisions may have been made by the responders. However, there is a correlation between faith (which involves a perception of God) and a person’s perception of their faith. Perhaps there is some credibility in perception. Since God expects faith (which involves perception) and God expects each person to strengthen his faith (which involves correctly perceiving his faith if he is to strengthen it), then a correlation between faith and perception can be expected.

This principle becomes practical when the pastor, (a) honestly accepts the inner perception he has of his faith, (b) he honestly seeks to strengthen his faith, (c) he does not become guilty for his lack of faith and (d) he exercises the faith he perceives he has for church growth, (if a pastor thinks he has faith, he should act on it).

18. *Pastors who properly exercise their faith so that they know they are in the geographical location where God wants them will have a better opportunity to grow.* The Liberty men all testified that God led them to their location by faith. They were so sure of His leading, that most of them testified they probably would not have experienced the blessing of God as greatly in another location. When Liberty men measured the assessment of their faith in relationship to location, those with the fastest growing churches scored the highest. Those with lesser growth scored lower in perception of faith and location. The author is not sure whether God (potentially) blesses them more in one location than another, or whether they have more confidence in one location, therefore, their churches grow because of a confident leader. There is no question in the minds of Liberty men, they feel God will bless them more if they are in the correct location. In a practical way, pastors who are confident of God's leading them to their location will probably enjoy more growth, especially than those who minister without confidence.

19. *Pastors who express their faith with allegiance to correct doctrine will influence church growth.* The Liberty men testified that others may/are growing who disagree with them in minor points of theology, but they all insisted that faith in the cardinal points of theology are necessary if the church will grow and the growth will be biblical. The Liberty men who made the strongest assessment of faith in doctrine had bigger growth than the average Liberty man who made a lower assessment of faith in doctrine. Hence, there is a correlation between faith in doctrine and church growth. This assessment did not attempt to determine the correctness of doctrine and church growth, nor did it attempt to determine the type (position or interpretation) of doctrine and church growth. This study only assessed the strength of a pastor's faith in relationship to church growth. Those with the strongest perception of their faith had the fastest growth.

Some may say that faith was not measured, but there was only measurement of the pastor's sincerity. If this is true, then pastors with the most sincerity had the most growth. But the testimony of the Liberty men indicates that their faith in doctrine was a determination in the growth of their church.

20. *Pastors who express their faith by carrying out the objectives of the church as found in the Great Commission influence church growth.* The Liberty men who are growing said that the Great Commission is the objective of the church. Those who had the strongest assessment of faith to carry out the Great Commission had greater growth than the average Liberty graduate who had lesser growth and lesser assessment of the strength of his faith to carry out the Great Commission.

Liberty men recognized that there were others who disagreed with their view of the objectives of the church. They recognized that pastors of other churches were growing even when they led their church from a different set of objectives. Basically, they rejoiced for any type of ministry or church growth that honored the Lord.

As a practical application, the pastor who attempts to implement the Great Commission may probably have church growth. The growth of the church will probably come with the following motives: a) The pastor sincerely expresses his faith by accepting the Great Commission as the church's objectives, (b) The pastor obeys the Great Commission by reaching

lost people, incorporating them in the church and teaching them the Scriptures. The church grows irregardless of the spiritual dynamics of faith because natural laws of outreach and incorporation are followed, (c) Interventional faith will challenge and solve the crisis that prohibits evangelism or will set goals that motivate the pastor and/or congregation to achieve evangelistic results, hence, the church will grow.

21. *The pastor who expresses faith in the principles of church growth will influence growth.* Liberty men did not always agree with the principles of evangelism they had learned, but they were committed to the principles they were attempting to use in ministering to their church. The Liberty pastors of the fastest growing churches had a stronger assessment of faith in implementing their principles than did the average Liberty graduate who had lesser church growth and lesser assessment of their faith in relationship to church growth principles.

As a practical application, the pastor who would grow should implement the following suggestions: (a) He should exercise faith when he is involved in evangelistic outreach. Liberty men testified that God honored their faith because they obeyed Him in using their evangelistic principles, (b) He should use those principles in which he has confidence (this is faith in principles, not faith in God), (c) He should have a biblical foundation for his principles (because the Word of God will strengthen the faith of a pastor) so he can minister in confidence, (d) Faith in God is expressed in using principles that are both biblical and number oriented which will lead to church growth.

## FINAL WORD

This dissertation has concluded that the pastor with the strongest assessment of his faith will influence church growth when (1) his faith uses the Bible as an instrument to provide individual and corporate growth in spiritual areas, (2) his faith sees a vision of what God wants to accomplish in the church, hence clarifying objectives, making definite plans, providing motivation, and is the basis for recruitment of others to assist in carrying out the divinely given dream, (3) his faith intervenes to solve crisis, remove growth barriers, or successfully establishes and achieves goals, (4) his faith finds the divinely appointed geographical location so he can have a confident ministry, (5) his faith confidently communicates the doctrine that he knows will be blessed by God, (6) his faith implements the obvious results that are inherent when the objectives of the Great Commission are carried out in the church, (7) his faith sincerely applies the biblical principles of evangelism so that people profess Christ as Saviour, fellowship with the church, and are taught the Word of God. When the gift of faith is so exercised, the church will grow, believers will be edified and God will be glorified.

## APPENDIX A

### STATISTICS OF THE TEN LIBERTY CHURCHES WITH FASTEST DGR

APPENDIX A - STATISTICS OF THE TEN LIBERTY  
CHURCHES WITH FASTEST D.G.R.

TEN FASTEST GROWING CHURCHES  
LIBERTY BAPTIST FELLOWSHIP

	LIGHTHOUSE BAPTIST CHURCH NASHVILLE, TENNESSEE	HERITAGE BAPTIST CHURCH LYNCHBURG, VIRGINIA	LANCASTER BAPTIST TEMPLE EAST PETERSBURG, PENNSYLVANIA	HOLY MOUNTAIN BAPTIST CHURCH KINGSPORT, TENNESSEE	WACHUSETT VALLEY BAPTIST CHURCH HOLDEN, MA	CHARLESTON, SO CAROLINA	CALVARY ROAD BAPTIST CHURCH ALEXANDRIA, VIRGINIA	FREEPORT BAPTIST CHURCH FREEPORT, ILLINOIS	NEW LIFE BAPTIST CHURCH NEW CUMBER- LAND, PA	FREDERICK- TOWNE BAPTIST CHURCH FREDERICK, MARYLAND
MEMBERSHIP	82	325	320	587	160	482	792	135	47	275
	81	225	n/a	465	170	360	n/a	90	70	218
	80	160	n/a	341	80	276	n/a	68	76	180
	79	90	n/a	280	30	145	n/a	49	61	157
	78	57	n/a	153	15	123	n/a	30	48	133
	77	37	31	102		100	n/a		76	84
	76					60	n/a		85	70
	75						n/a			36
BAPTISMS	82	36	51	142	15	92	103	75	42	30
	81	30	42	89	10	100	88	13	90	13
	80	18	80	80	28		104	13	108	2
	79	9	53	84	20		101	10	76	4
	78	15		52	5		51	14	45	27
	77	9		46					109	22
	76								61	10
	75									48
INCOME	82	\$157,926	\$107,695	\$264,000	\$57,200	\$178,795	\$460,000	\$64,454	\$134,211	\$ 81,761
	81	144,279	192,404	203,000	52,000	203,665	367,419	64,437	160,193	104,726
	80	94,250	133,369	184,000	31,200	147,978	261,459	52,817	127,137	66,000
	79	182,295	88,399	102,000	20,800	99,485	n/a	50,393	99,251	63,748
	78	53,519	67,476	84,000	11,700	77,067	40,000	38,352	84,639	61,288
	77	33,224	40,222	64,000		41,990			64,183	65,975
	76	4,229	21,916			20,000			36,529	
	75		8,707						1,480	33,647

TEN FASTEST GROWING CHURCHES  
LIBERTY BAPTIST FELLOWSHIP

PASTOR	LIGHTHOUSE BAPTIST CHURCH NASHVILLE, TENNESSEE	HERITAGE BAPTIST CHURCH LYNCHBURG, VIRGINIA	LANCASTER BAPTIST TEMPLE EAST PETERSBURG, PENNSYLVANIA	HOLY MOUNTAIN BAPTIST CHURCH KINGSFORD, TENNESSEE	WACHUSETT VALLEY BAPTIST CHURCH HOLDEN, MA	HARVEST BAPTIST CHURCH CHARLESTON, SO CAROLINA	CALVARY ROAD BAPTIST CHURCH ALEXANDRIA, VIRGINIA	FREEPORT BAPTIST CHURCH FREEPORT, ILLINOIS	NEW LIFE BAPTIST CHURCH NEW CUMBER- LAND, PA	FREDERICK- TOWNE BAPTIST CHURCH FREDERICK, MARYLAND
	AL HENSON	ROD KIDD	DAN HARLEY	STEVE RAY	JOHN MARTELLI	MARVIN WOOD	DAVID RHODENHIZER	KURT STRONG	RONNIE RIGGINS	GARY BYERS
AVERAGE	82	250	325	687	80	320	660	80	289	144
SUNDAY	81	190	300	463	90	234	437	65	343	117
SCHOOL	80	150	274	356	25	200	389	60	389	81
ATTENDANCE	79	85	265	310	20	110	314	50	228	106
	78	60	240	244	8	93	76	30	190	116
	77	35	132	116		58			143	117
	76		30			39			75	106
	75		15						23	100
AVERAGE	82	310	400	764	115	435	826	135	301	230
CHURCH	81	250	n/a	573	160	318	574	85	356	151
ATTENDANCE	80	180	n/a	456	60	307	469	80	320	109
	79	110	n/a	390	35	140	392	70	246	121
	78	75	n/a	289	15	106	88	40	211	110
	77	40	55	142		90			177	
	76					55			112	
	75								52	
TOTAL WORTH OF PROPERTY & BUILDINGS		\$460,000	\$1,000,000	\$500,000	\$350,000	\$400,000- \$500,000	\$3,000,000+	\$275,000	\$500,000	\$350,000
CHURCH BEGAN	Jan. '78	July '77	June '77	June '76	Sept. '78	Aug. '76	Oct. '77	June '78	Dec. '75	April '74
DECADAL GROWTH RATE	9695%	5906%	5203%	4582%	3808%	3039%	2453%	1992%	1128%	570%

APPENDIX B  
TO BE ANSWERED ONLY BY THOSE  
WHO PLANTED CHURCHES

1. How would you interpret the strength of your faith at the time of planting this church?  
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10  
little average strong
2. How would you rank your faith today?  
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10  
little average strong
3. When God led you to plant this church, how strong was your commitment to your present city?  
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10  
little average strong
4. If you had left this location to go elsewhere for ministry how much could God bless your ministry in another place?  
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10  
little average strong
5. How much of your church growth is the result of your commitment to a correct interpretation of doctrine?  
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10  
little average strong
6. Some are experiencing church growth, yet differ with you in doctrine; how much of their growth do you attribute to the blessing of God?  
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10  
little average strong
7. How much of your church growth do you attribute to having correct church purpose?  
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10  
little average strong
8. Some churches that disagree with your understanding of the priorities of the church are growing, how much of their growth do you attribute to the blessing of God?  
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10  
little average strong
9. How much of your church growth is the result of applying biblical principles and practices?  
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10  
little average strong

10. Some churches that disagree with your interpretation of biblical principles and practices are growing, how much of their growth do you attribute to the blessing of God?

1    2    3    4    5    6    7    8    9    10  
little                      average                      strong

APPENDIX C  
INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR  
AN ANALYSIS OF THE GIFT OF FAITH IN CHURCH GROWTH

1. What were the major steps of faith that resulted in the planting of this church?
2. Which was the biggest step of faith?
3. What was the source that strengthened your faith to plant this church?
4. What has been the sources that have caused your faith to grow since you have pastored this church?
5. Give some indications of the strength of your faith when God led you to plant this church.
6. What evidence did you have at the time that God would bless this church?
7. What would have happened to your faith if God had not caused this church to grow in this location?
8. What was the biggest financial step of faith that you have taken that led to the expansion of this church?
9. Do you see any relationship between correct doctrine, faith and church growth? What is it?
10. Can a person have strong faith and interpret Scripture differently from you?
11. Do you see any relationship between a correct understanding of the purpose of the church, faith and church growth? What is it?
12. What is the purpose of the church?
13. What is the relationship between a correct application of Biblical principles, faith and church growth?
14. Do you believe there is a gift of faith that results in church growth?
15. If yes, is the gift of faith that result in church growth inborn, or can this gift be acquired and grow in its effectiveness?



16. Do you believe that anyone who is called of God can plant and grow a church if they exercise the same faith that you have followed?
17. Is your faith acquired or a sovereign gift of God? Why?
18. How can a pastor grow his faith so that it will be more effective in church growth?

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