USING ASSESSMENTS IN FACILITATING THE
ASSIMILATION OF ADULTS
AT CALVARY CHURCH IN GRAND RAPIDS, MICHIGAN

DAVID DEAN NEMITZ
Acknowledgements:

To my dear wife, Debbie and my children

Lydia, Luke, and Naomi,

with God's grace

and the support of many.

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First Reader

_______________________________
Second Reader

_______________________________
Program Director
USING ASSESSMENTS IN FACILITATING THE ASSIMILATION OF ADULTS AT CALVARY CHURCH IN GRAND RAPIDS, MICHIGAN

By

David Dean Nemitz

B. R. E. Baptist Bible College of PA, 1979
M. A. C. E. Dallas Theological Seminary, 1985
M. A. B. S. Dallas Theological Seminary, 1985

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Chapter One - Introduction

The mission of Calvary Church is and has been since its inception in 1929 "The Salvation of the Lost and the Perfection of the Saints." Individuals who attend Calvary Church are always faced with the opportunities, not only to be born into the family of God by faith through grace, but also to mature in their faith. This maturation process involves nurturing and discipling of individuals so they may grow in their relationship with God. God's ultimate purpose for those individuals in His family is "to be conformed to the likeness of His Son" (Romans 8:29). Once an individual has been saved from the penalty of sin, there is a constant struggle to be saved from the power of sin until the day God will save them from the presence of sin. Over the years, Calvary Church, like many other churches, has attempted to prescribe and program various ways for individuals who call themselves "Christians" to engage in the process of becoming more like Jesus Christ. God has indeed faithfully sent spiritually gifted pastors, teachers, and evangelists to spur on and prepare believers gathered at Calvary Church to reach "the whole measure of the fullness of Christ" (Ephesians 4:13).

Calvary Church, under the leadership of the board and the teaching of Pastor Ed Dobson, saw a tremendous increase in the number of individuals placing their faith in Jesus Christ as Savior between the years 1987 and 1994. By the fall of 1994,
because of the numerical growth, the church instituted four Sunday morning services, a Saturday evening service, and a Sunday evening service to accommodate the worship aspect of the ministry. To engage increasing numbers of believers in some type of spiritual formation outside the worship service, the church created a number of specialized (or focused) ministries. Each ministry, whether age specific or classified by an affinity group (men, senior citizens, single adults, etc.), had the mandate to make disciples. Even though each ministry was reaching out to a sizable number of people, it was obvious that a significant percentage of members and regular attendees were not engaged in these ministries.

What percentages were not participating in any of these ministries became an ongoing question of the leadership. For example, the Adult Congregations (25 small groups, ranging in size from 15 to 120 people each, meeting on Sundays and Wednesday evenings) averaged an attendance hovering around 1000 participants per week. This only represents about one-third of the potential adult members and a lesser percentage of regular attendees who could be engaged in this important element of discipleship at Calvary Church.

In the fall of 1997, the board and ministry staff of Calvary Church, after months of review and reflection, established a listing of prioritized goals (Appendix A) in
reference to the mission of the church. The leaders listed the number one priority as the establishing a comprehensive and cohesive emphasis of spiritual growth and assimilation for the members and regular attendees. They defined this priority in the following manner: "to move Calvary Church attendees toward personal spiritual maturity and personal involvement in ministry." ¹

Up to this point the history of Calvary Church, only grace (testimony of salvation at the time of membership) and generosity (giving records) had been the primary foci for assessing the depth of one’s relationship with the church and progress on the path of discipleship. The development of an intentional process by which individuals are assessing the areas of their: 1) growth (core competencies in relation to loving God and loving their neighbors), 2) gifts (spiritual abilities specifically designed to build the body of Christ), and 3) groups (connectedness to the church community in regard to care and accountability) is a fairly new strategy in church ministry.

Being a member of the church since the fall of 1994 and actively involved in two of the adult ministries as a teacher and trainer, my heart affirmed the direction God had given to the church leadership. Through a series of events, God led me

to develop a facilitated assimilation process to engage adult believers at Calvary Church. The assimilation proposal (Appendix B) was reviewed and approved by the board in November 1998. After approval, the construction of the actual procedure was completed in April of 1999.

The original assimilation method included inviting individuals via postcards, letters, and/or phone contact initiatives (Appendix C) to engage in the process. It also included the individual receiving and completing three separate inventories (Appendix D). The progression of the assimilation method then led to a 90-120 minute meeting with a trained facilitator. At this meeting, the results of the three inventories were used as the basis of discussion and goal setting on the part of the individual (Appendix E). Following the meeting, two follow-up contacts, one via phone from a volunteer and the other a written note from the facilitator (Appendix F), are made with the participant. Since June 1999, the Office of Spiritual Growth & Assimilation has been systematically engaging adult believers at Calvary Church in the facilitated process described above. Then, in September 1999, I accepted the fulltime position as Pastor of Spiritual Growth at Calvary Church to oversee the Adult Ministries Team that includes the Office of Spiritual Growth & Assimilation.
One of the main motivations to design such a procedure stems from the dynamics of serving in a large church setting. Therefore, the assimilation process that has been developed is rather unique and provides a sought after model of foundational information to other churches attempting to help their members assimilate into the local church body. The basis for the assimilation development is primarily built on a combination of two existing large church assimilation models.

The spiritual growth component has its basis in the work currently being implemented at Pantego Bible Church in Arlington, Texas by Rev. Randy Frazee. The original process involves the assessment of thirty core competencies of the Christian life in the context of Pantego Bible Church's small groups. Since Calvary Church is older and more traditional in structure, an alternative implementation strategy had to be created. The revised process gives an alternative implementation strategy for other churches structured like Calvary who would desire to engage their body in assessing spiritual growth in regards to these competencies.

The other two parts of the process find their origins in the Network Ministry developed at Willow Creek Community Church in Illinois by Bruce Bugbee, Don Cousins, and Bill Hybels. Again, the complete transfer of the Network Ministry into the Calvary Church structure and culture was not feasible (Willow
Creek is also a highly small group oriented ministry. The values of connecting to a group in the church (other than a morning worship service) and serving the body in an area related to one's spiritual gift are reconfigured to fit the needs of a more traditional structure. Again, the adaptation of the main objectives of the original Network system will help more traditional churches practically apply the benefits of networking to their particular church culture without major restructuring.

The purpose of this applied ministry project is to substantiate the effectiveness of the facilitative assimilation process set up for the adults at Calvary Church. It is proposed that the assimilation process actually helps adults at Calvary Church to become aware and make commitments in regard to the use of their spiritual gifts to serve others, to connect with a small group that would provide care and accountability, and to strengthen their spiritual relationships with God and other believers at Calvary Church. Has the assimilation process implemented by Calvary provided an effective way to gain the desired results?

In accordance with other established assimilation programs, effectiveness will be defined as having sixty-five percent of the participating adults follow through on one or more of the commitments as a result of going through the process. Since
Calvary Church is a regional and nationally known church, the project should also help other churches, that have seen increased numbers, deal with the common but important task of assimilating people beyond just attending worship services.

Chapter Two will give a review of the biblical and recent applied ministry literature to frame the assimilation process designed for Calvary Church. The assimilation process designed for Calvary Church specifically focuses on identifying an individual’s spiritual giftedness, their relationship with the church body, and their greatest individual spiritual growth need. Within these foci, are the three categories of literature pertaining to the various aspects of the process: 1) Spiritual Gifts, 2) Spiritual Formation, and 3) Christian Community.

The category of Spiritual Gifts is connected to the project simply because the spiritual gifts assessment tool is part of the designed procedure. The identification of one's spiritual gifts is considered an essential springboard from which individuals are able to live out and mature in their relationship with God by serving others. The topic of spiritual gifts is one of four issues about which the Apostle Paul exhorted his readers not to be ignorant (I Corinthians 12:1). The review of recent applied ministry literature in this area will demonstrate how other assimilation models have engaged believers in building the body of Christ by understanding and
applying their spiritual gifts. Specific assimilation models such as "Network" by Bruce Bugbee, "Team Ministry" by Larry Gilbert, and "P.L.A.C.E." by Jay McSwain, provide practical references to compare and contrast with Calvary's process.

The category of literature pertaining to the process of spiritual formation also relates to the project from the utilization of the assessment tool focusing on identifying the current spiritual growth need. The biblical and recent applied ministry literature pertaining to spiritual formation will provide a comparison and contrast listing of the essential beliefs and disciplines that need to be practiced or prioritized to prompt spiritual growth. It will also provide a list of resources that can be utilized by the participants in the assimilation process to affirm the practicality of personally engaging in the process of deepening their relationship with Christ. Some of the primary references in this area of review are *Spiritual Disciplines For The Christian Life* by Donald Whitney, *The Life You Have Always Wanted* by John Ortberg, *The Spirit of the Disciplines* by Dallas Willard, and *Success God's Way* by Charles Stanley. These resources are important because they provide a road map for individuals who desire to follow through on the goals they have set stemming from the assessment tool used in the process.
The third area of literature pertaining to the project focuses on the importance of Christian community as a key component of the spiritual growth process. Many a Christian has attempted to grow spiritually and engage in Christian service energized by selfishness and pride. Because of the use of the Spiritual Growth Questionnaire in the assimilation process, it is necessary to review the literature pertaining to Christian Community. Similar to the previous two areas of literature, there are two connections of the literature with the project. The literature first provides a library of resources for those engaged in the process and secondly also provides principles by which to evaluate the strength of this area of the process.

Chapter Three will review the procedure and research method used in substantiating the effectiveness of the process. The assimilation process was designed and implemented at Calvary Church starting June 1999. The original design of the process asks the participants to complete the three assessment tools adapted or created specifically for Calvary. The Spiritual Growth Questionnaire allowed the participants to identify relational contexts within and outside the church. These typically are, but not limited to, worship services, age or gender specific groups, and even parachurch or community based activity groups. The process also includes a Spiritual Gifts Inventory that focuses on the nine gifts directly related to
serving. The inventory is self-scoring and includes a brief two-sentence description of the gifts involved. The third and final tool is an inventory that assesses the individual's perception of his/her competencies in thirty core value areas of the Christian Life.

Chapter three will present the results of a questionnaire sent to 338 individuals who completed the process in the 2000 calendar year. These individuals represent a cross section of the church body in gender, age, number of years attending the church, marital status, etc.

Chapter Four will delineate the results of the questionnaire. In summary, the results indicate that the assimilation practice set up at Calvary Church was effective for 71% of the people who were involved in the assimilation process during the 2000 calendar year and responded to the questionnaire. This effectiveness percentage exceeds the normal expected rate of success of similar assimilation programs. The chapter will also communicate specific results gleaned from follow up interviews with those completing the questionnaire on how the assimilation method helped them to become: 1) Involved in a ministry using their spiritual gifts; 2) Involved in a small group for care and accountability; and 3) Aware of their spiritual needs and able to set goals in relationship to those needs.
Chapter Five is designed to submit conclusions and implications for further study. In light of the ever increasing number of large churches, there is a need for creating effective rather than efficient ministries to build the body of Christ in our culture. This chapter will review how the results of this project prompted revision of the process in order to add clarity to the invitation for people to become involved. It will also give insight on how the tools were revised so the decisions being made are carried though by the individuals involved. The chapter will also explore other questions surrounding the use and strength of using assessments as a tool for assimilating adults in the church's overall ministry.
Chapter Two - Research & Literature Review

The goal of assimilating believers into the community of faith has been, is, and will continue to be a crucial element of all Christian ministries. Working through the issue of practically incorporating the assimilation of adult believers into a local church ministry, one must define assimilation. Webster's Dictionary describes the essence of the term as "the action of making something similar to something else." A common synonym of the word assimilation is the term absorption. Most commonly, assimilation is used to describe the process by which a people group is absorbed into the cultural tradition of an existing population or organization.

Chapter 2 contains a review and analysis of the biblical and recent applied ministry literature pertaining to assimilating adults into a local church body of believers. Chapter 2 is divided into three main sections.

The first section focuses on the category of Spiritual Gifts. This section presents the biblical and recent applied ministry literature that explores the connection of understanding, developing and using one's spiritual gifts in relation to assimilation.

The second section focuses on the category of Spiritual Formation. This section presents the biblical and recent applied ministry literature that ties the assimilation process
to a local church body and the assimilation path that God desires for each believer as it relates to His Son, Jesus.

The third section of Chapter 2 focuses on the category of Christian Community. This section presents biblical and recent applied ministry literature that sets the context for the assimilation process.

**Spiritual Gifts and Assimilation**

The most popular recent applied ministry approach for assimilating adults into local churches focuses on the understanding, development and use of spiritual gifts. This approach centers on the identification of one's spiritual gifts as the springboard from which individuals are able to serve others. Then, by serving others, an adult believer is assimilated into the body of believers. The issue of spiritual giftedness is biblically important. Spiritual giftedness is one of four issues about which the Apostle Paul exhorted his readers not to be ignorant (I Corinthians 12:1).

Spiritual gift listings are found in at least five passages of scripture, with the most prominent being Romans 12, Ephesians 4, and I Corinthians 12-14. Using these three core passages, with a special emphasis on I Corinthians 12, one can explore the vocabulary, the instruction, and the general significance of the listings of spiritual gifts given to believers. From the
interpretation of the words and teachings surrounding these listings, one can draw some simple but direct conclusions that are helpful in evaluating the impact of identifying spiritual gifts in the process of assimilation.

Within the core passages, written by the apostle Paul, there are four distinct words that help to define the various aspects of the spiritual gifts listed. Larry Pettegrew reviews these terms and their connotations in a very practical manner:

1. *Pneumatikon*, means a spiritual thing, de-emphasizing the fact that the gift comes from the Spirit. Paul begins his instruction on gifts by writing, "Now, concerning spiritual gifts, brethren, I would not have you ignorant" (I Cor. 12:1). The word, "spiritual" is a translation of the Greek, "pneumatikon", and the English translators inserted the word, gifts, to help the sentence make good sense. We might more literally translate the beginning of the sentence, "Now concerning spiritual matters." Very possibly the Corinthians had connected spiritual gifts with genuine spirituality, and Paul was intimating that he was about to discuss this relationship.

2. *Charisma*, is the most common word for gift. This word is related to grace and stresses the fact that the gift is an unmerited, gracious provision from the Lord. It might even be translated as "graces," or "favors." A grace gift is a gift freely and graciously bestowed on the individual by the Holy Spirit. Paul first uses the word in his instruction to the Corinthians in verse four: "Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same spirit."

3. *Diakonia*, is translated "administrations," or "ministries." I Corinthians 12:5 "There are differences of administrations, but the same Lord."
4. **Energema** is used in verse six, and is translated as "effects," or "operations," or "workings." In Paul's words, "There are diversities of operations, but it is the same God, which worketh all in all." Energema emphasizes the energy with which the gift operates.²

The first important implication one should draw from the words Paul uses in the spiritual gift listing passages is the relationship they have one to another. Although not interchangeable in a direct sense, Paul does seem to use them in such a way as to communicate to the Corinthians, Ephesians, and Romans believers the proper understanding of their source and intent.

One example is the relationship one sees between the words, *pneumatikon* and *charisma* in the First Corinthians, chapter twelve passage. On close examination, one can see that Paul uses the term *pneumatikon* in his introduction to the subject of spiritual gifts, but then uses *charisma*, in the remaining of the passage. D.A. Carson sheds some light on the relationship of Paul's reasons for the switch when he says:

An easy guess, and almost certainly right in itself, is that Paul wants to remind his readers that whatever might truly be considered "spiritual" is better thought of as a gracious gift of God. The quest for individualizing and self-centered form of "spirituality" was in danger of denying the source of all true spiritual gifts, the unbounded grace of God.³

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In Ephesians 4:7, another spiritual gift listing passage, one is reminded that God himself is the one who apportions grace-gifts. Another significant lesson comes from the relationships between the three other words defined earlier. In all of the core passages (Romans 12, Ephesians 4, and I Corinthians 12-14) Paul sets forth for his readers the foundational picture of unity within the body of Christ. Believers are ONE IN CHRIST! Yet in each of the passages, he expands on that theme to emphasize the diversity within the unity. That is crucial for the oneness to bring glory to God.

As it concerns spiritual gifts, the parallelism between the words; gifts (charismata), service (diakonia), and workings (energemata), have great significance and meaning in understanding the intent of the listings. Some have suggested a parallelism between the terms "gifts", "service", and "workings" with the terms "Spirit", "Lord", and "God". The idea is to relate Paul's focus of his understanding of the Trinity's diversity and how it manifests itself in the body of Christ. Another suggestion is that the parallelism is strictly rhetorical, associating common concepts with word associations (Spirit = gifts, service = Lord, and workings = God, see I Corinthians 12:6) It would be well to consider what D.A. Carson points out when he says:
What is clear from this sequence is that Paul is not concerned to define "spiritual gift" too narrowly. The parallelism does not of course make the works strictly synonymous, any more than Spirit, Lord, and God are strictly synonymous; but because none of the terms can be associated with only certain spiritual gifts and not with others, it is clear that Paul uses the three terms to describe the full range of what we might call spiritual-gift phenomena. One conclusion is unavoidable: Paul tends to flatten distinctions between "charismatic" gifts and "non-charismatic" gifts in the modern sense of those terms. 

This conclusion has merit when one considers the literary range Paul and other authors give these terms in their writings. "Workings" are merely ways by which the divine power of God is applied, thus emphasizing the power by which God's grace-gifts are energized. "Service" is a general term used for all kinds of work, not specifically works done in the church. Finally "gifts" has such a broad range of intention by Paul that it cannot be held to a technical, select, set of gifts. If this were so Paul's use of the term to describe the "gifts" of marriage, celibacy, encouraging, and generous giving would have to be understood as "human" in nature, not Godly empowered gifts.

The conclusion also makes sense when one considers the varied listings of the different passages, for if spiritual gifts is meant to be narrowly defined, the listing would show a unity in pattern and type. This interpretation has led some to believe that no list of spiritual gifts in the scripture is

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*Ibid., 33-34*
meant to be exhaustive, or that a combination of all the lists
(9-30 gifts, depending on the author) should be taken as the
extent of God's grace-gifts to His church. There are many who
agree to this perspective of interpretation as illustrated by
the following:

First, no list, including the one immediately before
us in I Corinthians 12:8-11, is meant to be
exhaustive.\(^5\)

This list in I Corinthians is not necessarily
exhaustive. There is a different list in Romans 12,
and there is a suggestion of a list in I Peter 4.
There is no reason to assume that this is all there
is!\(^6\)

He pours out His gifts, as the sun spreads its beams
all over the land.\(^7\)

Nothing indicates that New Testament gift lists were
meant to be exhaustive or final. Spiritual gifts are
God empowering His people through the Holy Spirit for
kingdom life and service, enabling them in attitude
and action to live and to minister in a manner which
glorifies Christ.\(^8\)

The fact that these four lists overlap but are not
identical suggests that there is in fact no set number
of gifts available. Paul's lists are representative
samples, suggestions of the general kinds of things
which can function as spiritual gifts. There is no
indication that they as intended to be exhaustive -
conceivably one's gift might be something that doesn't
even appear in the lists.\(^9\)

\(^5\) Ibid., 35
\(^7\) Calvin, John, \textit{Corinthians} (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1965), 262.
\(^8\) Hunt, Boyd, \textit{Redeemed! Eschatological Redemption and the Kingdom of God} (Nashville, TN: Broadman
\(^9\) Williams, Donald T., \textit{The Person and Work of the Holy Spirit} (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman
For the purposes of this project, the following is a list of perspectives that is used in training with each of the facilitators in preparation for their meetings and discussions with individuals about spiritual gifts:

1) Gifts are for the common good of the body of Christ.

2) Though there is a diversity of gifts, they all come from the Holy Spirit.

3) Each believer is given some gift to be used to glorify God.

4) No gift or gifts are more significant than others, even though some may be more recognizable in the body.

5) Gifts are supernatural and thus should not be equated with natural abilities even though spiritual gifts may frequently be demonstrated through the use of one’s abilities or talents.

6) The focus for believers should be on the Giver and not the gifts. It is fruitless to try to use the gifts without His empowerment.

7) Obedience to God’s commands take precedence over usage of gifts. Love is the primary motivation for obedience and the use of gifts within the body.

8) Gifts listed in the scripture are not exhaustive.

9) Spiritual gifts should be discovered, developed, and used with zeal (I Cor 12-14, I Tim 4:14, II Tim. 1:6, Hebrews 10:24-25, I Peter 4:10)

10) Even though the listings are not exhaustive, it is apparent that for many early New Testament churches, there were repetition of three major categories of gifts necessary for the ongoing building of the body. One might categorizes them as; A) speaking gifts, B) serving gifts, C) sign gifts.¹⁰

¹⁰Nemitz, David, *Spiritual Gifts Training Notes* (Grand Rapids, MI: Calvary Church, 1999), 3.
Moving from Biblical literature into a review of recent applied ministry literature reveals more than one assimilation model that focuses on fully engaging adult believers in the body of Christ via the process of understanding and applying spiritual gifts. For this project, the specific assimilation models of "Network" by Bruce Bugbee, "Team Ministry" by Larry Gilbert, and "P.L.A.C.E." by Jay McSwain, have provided practical references for this specific type of assimilation practice.

Assimilation models that focus on spiritual gifts attempt to engage the adult believer beyond an intellectual-based faith into an application-based faith. In the Team Ministry course, Larry Gilbert identifies a common trend in modern churches that leads to a intellectual-based faith when he states,

"Historically, churches have placed supreme emphasis on their doctrinal statement, thinking a clear statement of the church's doctrine would pave the way to a successful ministry (i.e. knowledge guaranteed function)."

In his philosophy of ministry, Gilbert strives to balance four areas (leadership, bonding, involvement, and evangelism) which he perceives as crucial in local church ministry. The whole Team Ministry philosophy is dependant upon the Ephesians 4 passage. Although he submits that spiritual gifts are the

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"tools" for believers to do the work of ministry, he suggests, "The discovery and use of spiritual gifts goes far beyond a place of service." He gives the following seven reasons why people should discover and use their spiritual gift:

1. Knowing your spiritual gift helps you understand the will of God for your life.
2. Knowing your spiritual gift helps you understand how the Holy Spirit works in you.
3. Knowing your spiritual gift helps you understand what God has not (italics added) called you to do.
4. Knowing your spiritual gift relieves you from serving out of duty.
5. Knowing your spiritual gift fills a deep inner need.
6. Knowing your spiritual gift adds to your self-acceptance.
7. Knowing your spiritual gift builds unity among Christians.

Paul R. Ford echoes some of those same perspectives in the introduction of his book, Discovering Your Ministry Identity. He references an earlier passage in Ephesians, chapter two, verses eight through ten, and makes the following observation:

I have worked with Christians from Los Angeles to Moscow to Bombay, with hundreds of stops in between. I can tell you with great confidence that Christians everywhere are searching to find significance in Christ... many are trying to work their way toward a sense of deeper meaning and personal fulfillment. But what if you and I really are the workmanship of God, created in Christ Jesus for good works as Ephesians 2:10 states... How can we describe God's workmanship in us? I call it Ministry Identity: not what you do for God, but what you already are in Christ.

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12 Ibid., 14.
13 Ibid., 14-15
Ford goes on to identify a ministry identity process that is anchored by the discovering and using of spiritual gifts. He submits the following seven reasons that churches should mobilize people to discover and use their spiritual gifts:

1. Mobilizing spiritual gifts builds and multiplies the church.
2. The Bible calls us to discover and use our spiritual gifts.
3. Mobilizing spiritual gifts is an essential ministry of the local church.
4. Every Christian has a ministry identity.
5. Christians can discern their spiritual gifts.
6. Our spiritual gifts maximize how we serve the body of Christ.
7. Spiritual gifts are best discovered in relationships.\textsuperscript{15}

Ron Shevelend, founder of the Lay Action Ministry Program (LAMP), also believes that people "...cannot be a happy Christians unless they seek God's face, study His Word, and serve Him faithfully."\textsuperscript{16} In his book, Discover Your Ministry Niche, he focuses on a two-step process involving nine learning exercises. At the heart of his process is an evaluation of what he calls spiritual resources or assets. Using Matthew 25:14-30 as a pivotal learning challenge, his readers are given a self-directed pattern to fully integrate into the life of the church. The interpretation of assets in this approach not only refers to one's spiritual giftedness but natural talents as well.

\textsuperscript{15} Ford, Paul R., Unleash Your Church (Pasadena, CA: Charles E. Fuller Institute, 1993), 23-59.
\textsuperscript{16} Sheveland, Ron, Discover Your Ministry Niche (Parker, CO: Lay Action Ministry Program, 1996), 7.
This broad assessment of giftedness is exactly the pattern many of the more recently applied ministry assimilation approaches take to help individuals become fully assimilated in the culture of the church. Jay McSwain submits that the assimilation of believers in the church occurs when believers develop a profile that contains the following elements:

1. Personality Discovery
2. Learning Spiritual Gifts
3. Abilities Awareness
4. Connecting Passion with Ministry
5. Experiences of Life

After developing this summary, the person is also encouraged to determine the level of spiritual maturity, evaluate his/her time commitments, and review possible ministries within the church that match his/her complete profile analysis. This type of holistic approach to assimilation does run against the compartmentalized approach to life most Christians have grown accustomed to in 21st century America. Yet, it is an approach, no matter how time consuming, that breaks open the doors to many of the areas that God desires for us to relinquish to Him.

John Bradley, the President of the IDAK Group (a career matching service) and Jay Carty, founder of the YES! Ministries, are co-authors of the book, Discovering Your Natural Talents: How to Love What You Do and Do What You Love at Home, Work,

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Church, and Play. They also promote this holistic approach to assimilation via a comprehensive profiling. In their book, they go one step beyond the PLACE process and empower their readers to be entrepreneurs and create a ministry plan out of the self-discovery process. By reviewing the information gained from the method, a person can prepare a proposal to present to the church. This type of proposal may help the church to fill gaps in the overall ministry rather than just perpetuate the current ministries created by someone else.

One such church that has implemented a holistic approach to assimilating individuals in a similar manner is Calvary Church of Souderton, Pennsylvania. Under the leadership of Jay Deskto, new members of the church are required to participate in a process that help individuals identify who they are in relationship to six key elements. The discovery process involves delineating spiritual gifts, passion, temperament, talents, spiritual maturity, and schedule. The combination of these elements helps the person focus on one or two ministries where the majority of the elements can be maximized. Before using this holistic approach, decisions about ministry were made by the same variables but in many cases led the person to be linked with six different ministries.

Willow Creek Church and its networking system has had the most influence in promoting an assimilation process centered
around the assessment of giftedness. What Jay Desko and his church experiences is what Bruce Bugbee, Don Cousins, and Bill Hybels used as the subheading of their popular book, Network, that is to have "the right people...in the right places...for the right reasons." The Willow Creek system includes many of the elements that we have already described in the other approaches because of its prominence and promotion across church ministry circles. Its uniqueness is found in the consultation meetings included in the procedure. The training of network consultants that interpret the variables from the various profiles and assessment instruments is a determining factor in assimilating that person into the "right place." The network procedures are as follows:

1. Welcome the participant.
2. Determine the participant's motivation for serving.
3. Interpret the Servant Profile which includes passion, spiritual gift mix, and personal style.
4. Interpret the Personal Resources Survey which includes talents, abilities, acquired skills, spiritual maturity, availability, and additional items determined by the consultant.
5. Determine an appropriate Ministry Category.
6. Identify three possible ministries.

The commitment the individual participant makes before engaging with the consultation, is to attend a structured class where

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19 Ibid, 17-32.
they are taught about spiritual gifts, personal style and defining passions.

As much as we can qualify the concrete results of having believers involved in some type of service by identifying and using their giftedness, the process of assimilation goes far beyond just doing. Although some of the assimilation approaches attempt to speak to some of the other issues surrounding assimilation, the fact is because of the emphasis on giftedness, they typically result in a "spiritualized" human resources program for the churches in which they exist. Assimilation is not only about doing but doing and being in the context of other believers. Therefore, an effective assimilation program should instruct individuals about their spiritual giftedness and help them use that gift to serve others.

**Spiritual Formation and Assimilation**

Jesus, in His prayer found in John 17, longs for the people called into His kingdom to become one as He and God the Father are one. This is not a new revelation of God's desire for people who are part of His family. In Psalms 133:1, God reveals the pleasure that is a result of Godly unity. The apostle Paul, in his communiqué to the believers in Philippi, also refers to the complete joy he would have if his readers would become likeminded and driven by the one overriding value that Christ
demonstrated by his life, that is, love. Remembering that the definition of assimilation relates to the idea of people being absorbed into a culture, it is necessary to have the assimilation process identify the unifying cultural values so that one can meet the proper cultural expectations. In brief, the biblical and theological framework surrounding this portion of the assimilation process is grounded in helping people understand and practice God's purpose for the church. Scripture references such as Romans 8:29, Romans 12:1-3, and I John 3:1-3 make it clear that God desires us to be conformed to the image of His Son. He is holy. Passages of scripture such as I Peter 1:13-15 and Hebrews 12:14a make it clear we should strive to reflect that holiness in every aspect of our lives. I Timothy 4:7 gives us a clue about one of the elements that will indeed help us fulfill God's desire. It will take discipline! Discipline without direction is drudgery, but discipline with direction turns into delight.

Scripture gives us many illustrations of people and their relationships with God. God is not silent on the pathway He has provided for people to establish and maintain that relationship. These identifiable issues that strengthened the bond between God and people also became the unifying elements that allowed people to assimilate into a corporate body satisfying God's purpose here on earth. In the Old Testament, the path of assimilation
into the nation of Israel was made possible by the adoption of the core beliefs and practices made clear through the Law. The assimilation of Ruth into the people of God is a good illustration. Even though she was a Moabite by birth, she became an important person in God’s plan for his people (Ruth is in the direct lineage of King David and our Lord Jesus, Matthew 1:5) which all hinged on the fact of her commitment to the God of Naomi and the ways of God’s people.

The sovereign purposes of God are fulfilled when His people are unified around the standards He has so clearly communicated in His Word. When people identify, understand, and practice His words there results a unity with God and with others who are called by His name. In the days of Ruth, the assimilation focused on the understanding and practice of the Ten Commandments. In the New Testament, Jesus fulfilled the Law and set into place the new assimilation focus of grace. Since the death, burial and resurrection of Christ, people are called into unity and relationship with God and His people by grace. By totally submitting to God and his grace by faith, people begin the assimilation process. Although the foundation of the assimilation is grace not the Law, God continues to desire people to identify, understand, and practice His words as a testimony to His grace. So what does God’s Word direct us to do in order to become totally assimilated? What identifying
factors define the process that transforms us into the image of
His Son and draws us into unity with other individuals who have
experienced God's grace?

Historically, people who have experienced the wonder of
God's grace have been identified and unified around four primary
spiritual practices or disciplines. One needs to go no further
than the book of Acts chapter two to see that people dedicated
themselves to the study of God's Word as taught by the Apostles,
prayer, fellowship with other believers in Jesus, and the
partaking of the Lord's Supper (remembering the events that made
grace possible). W.H. Griffith Thomas, in his outlined studies
of the book of Acts, makes a good observation of the unifying
assimilation elements of those participating in the early
community of believers. He observes:

They were united by -
(1) Common faith (reflective of Ephesians 4:13)
(2) Communal fellowship (Ephesians 4:3)
(3) Community of goods (Acts 4:32)  

Over the centuries, those associating themselves with God,
through the finished work of the Lord Jesus Christ, have
included the practice of other disciplines as distinctive and
unifying pathways to focus on the goal of godliness. Fasting,
silence and solitude, and journaling are examples of practices
that groups of believers have held forth as deepening their

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relationship with God as well as unifying their relationships with other believers. In all of this discussion of practice, one must not miss the point that it is not the practice that actually makes one holy, but the practice places one in a position where the grace of God can transform one's life. Since the focus of one's life is to become holy or godly, the unifying factor of believers is not the actual practices but the transformation that is occurring because of the practices.

II Peter 1:1-10 is a motivating passage of scripture in regard to the importance and results of practicing disciplines. The context of the passage is directed to those who are holders of the precious faith made possible by the sacrifice of Christ. The Apostle Peter reminds his readers of the continual abundance of grace, peace, and power that is available and necessary for the life they are to lead as believers. The readers are also reminded that these resources, though readily available, are not just handed over to each believer. Each person has a responsibility to find, gather, and use these resources. The pathway of tapping into these resources is the ongoing pursuit to possess faith, goodness, knowledge, self-control, perseverance, godliness, brotherly kindness, and love. The possessing of these eight qualities in an ever-increasing measure is the way one not only becomes effective in his/her relationship with God, but successful in his/her relationships
with others. If a person does not possess these qualities, it is as if the person is blind in a group of people with perfect vision. The lack of effort in chasing after these qualities results in disunity.

Therefore, true assimilation of God's people focuses on the heart and the passion to become and have all that He designed for His followers. Jesus' words in Matthew 22:37-39 helps give, in a simple but definitive sense, the passageway that will help us become and have all He has designed for our lives. Not only did Jesus' words, "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and all your mind...Love your neighbor as yourself" summarize the Ten Commandments of the Law (the assimilating factor of the Old Testament) but, also can be the summarization of all of the New Testament exhortations (assimilating factors) given to those saved by grace.

Hearing and knowing the truth of scripture sets a good foundation by which individuals can begin to be transformed into the people God intends them to be. The more people reflect the person of Jesus in their lives, the more they are drawn together in unity toward accomplishing God's purpose for themselves corporately. True blessing comes from practicing the things that God exhorts us to do. Jesus reminded his disciples of this principle after teaching them about being humble in John 13:17 when He says, "Now that you know these things, you will be
blessed if you do them." The book of James also exhorts us to activate our faith by engaging in deeds that demonstrate that we are not just listening to what God says.

The recent applied ministry literature pertaining to spiritual formation provides a comparison and contrast listing of the essential beliefs and disciplines, which need to be practiced or prioritized to prompt spiritual growth. It also provides a list of resources affirming the practicality of personal engagement in the process of deepening his/her relationship with Christ.

Dallas Willard, highly regarded in the area of spiritual formation, defines spiritual formation this way:

Spiritual Formation is the progressive occupation by the life from above, bringing transformation of our thoughts, emotions, conative tendencies (including those embedded in our body) so that they are the ones that Jesus Himself has. Central to all of this is where our mind automatically rests and the actual governance of the automatic responses of the body by the truth and spirit of Christ.\(^{21}\)

The design of recent applied ministry assimilation programs and processes intend to set an accountability plan to allow individuals to move from being believers to disciples. The Evangelical Training Association sets down the eight principles of spiritual growth in an attempt to set the boundaries in reference to setting forth a spiritual growth plan. The

\(^{21}\) Willard, Dallas, *What Spiritual Formation is and How it is Done*, (Deerfield, IL: Spiritual Formation Conference Notes, Plenary Session, held June 16, 1999 at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School) 18.
understanding of these dynamics should help people form a strategy. The principles are:

1. God is ultimately responsible for all spiritual growth.
2. Effort, diligence, and discipline are absolutely necessary for growth.
3. Spiritual growth potential may not be easy to see at first.
4. Spiritual growth depends on an intimate relationship with Jesus Christ.
5. Growth is primarily an inside-out process.
6. Spiritual growth relates to every aspect of our lives.
7. Growth happens most naturally within a close social context.
8. Significant growth occurs within the context of frustration, suffering, or challenge.\textsuperscript{22}

What a spiritual formative assimilation process consists of, and how it engages individuals, are issues upon which most recent applied ministry authors in this area agree to disagree on. As the culture moves from the modern to postmodern mindset, the boundaries appear even more nebulous. What can be identified from recent applied ministry literature is a listing of the multitude of approaches and curriculum content that has seen fruit in various settings.

The broadest listing of what and how spiritual formation should be formulated and presented is found in the book, The Christian Educator's Handbook on Spiritual Formation, edited by Dr. Kenneth Gangel. Within its pages are found at

\textsuperscript{22} Newton, Gary C., \textit{Growing Toward Spiritual Maturity} (Wheaton, IL: Evangelical Training Association, 1999), 5-13.
least seven different forums, which are, suggested paths for individuals to engage in spiritual formation. These range from the common path of prayer to the idea that formation comes through personal physical healing. No one forum is stated to be the exclusive path which all people need to experience, but the idea is that all may be useful in allowing God's transformational purpose to be realized in one's life.

Mel Lawrenz promotes this same idea that the spiritual formation process should consist of multiple pathways or experiences, in his book The Dynamics of Spiritual Formation. After a person engages in what he calls "the war against the soul"23 (because "there is a power at work in us that persistently deforms and disfigures"24), he submits that each individual Christian must be engaged in the following elements to see true spiritual metamorphosis:

1. Formative Reading
2. Formative Prayer
3. Formative Worship
4. Formative Fellowship
5. Formative Preaching
6. Formative Service25

Donald S. Whitney submits that the formation process consists of the perseverance in engaging in the following ten disciplines:

23 Lawrenz, Mel, The Dynamics of Spiritual Formation (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2000), 7
24 Ibid., 49.
25 Ibid., 7.
1. Bible Intake
2. Prayer
3. Worship
4. Evangelism
5. Serving
6. Stewardship
7. Fasting
8. Silence and Solitude
9. Journaling
10. Learning

Another approach to helping people identify a pathway to true spiritual formation is listing the end results seen in people who practice the spiritual disciplines, in other words, identifying the heart attitudes and identifiable passions in people who are being transformed. One such list suggests the following seven points:

1. Trusts in God's saving grace and believes firmly in the humanity and divinity of Jesus.
2. Experiences a sense of well-being, security and peace.
3. Integrates faith and life, seeing work, family, social relationships, and political choices as part of one's religious life.
4. Seeks spiritual growth through study, reflection, prayer, discussion with others.
5. Seeks to be part of a community of believers who give witness to their faith and support and nourish one another.
6. Holds life-affirming values, including commitment to racial and gender equality, affirmation of cultural diversity, and personal sense of responsibility for the welfare of others.
7. Serves humanity, consistently and passionately, through acts of love and justice.26

27 Benson, Peter and Eklín, Carolyn, Effective Christian Education: A National Study of Protestant Congregations (Minneapolis, MN: Search Institute, 1990) 70.
How, in church ministry contexts, do leaders gauge whether people are actually engaging in the right type of spiritual formation assimilation process? Recent applied ministry assimilation programs based primarily on spiritual gifts assume that the person has, is, and will continue to make an effort to gain those things that will produce spiritual maturity. In some assimilation methods they presuppose that involvement with serving others will provide the necessary experiences to prompt spiritual dependence and growth. In other assimilation approaches, people are asked to rate their spiritual maturity level. One such program engages its participants in an evaluation of the following four categories as it relates to their personal spiritual maturity status.

Seeker - You are gaining a better understanding of Christ and the Christian faith, but you have not yet personally trusted Jesus for the forgiveness of your sins. You are still investigating Christianity, still seeking truth.

New/Young Believer - You have recently become a Christian and you are enthused about your new walk with Jesus Christ, or you have been a Christian for sometime, but you are just now learning what Jesus meant when He promised abundant life. In either case, you need to grow further in your understanding of the basics of the Christian faith and of what it means to walk daily in a personal relationship with Christ.

Stable/Growing Believer - You are confident in God's faithfulness and his ability to accomplish His will in your life. You are teachable and sensitive to the Spirit's leading. You exhibit the stability that comes from knowing Christ, regularly worshipping with
His people, and actively pursuing a life of greater devotion.

Leading/Guiding Believer - You have reached a high level of maturity in the faith. You are able to model faithfulness and inspire other believers. You can lead by example and guide others in a deeper understanding of what it means to walk personally with Jesus Christ.\(^{28}\)

If spiritual formation is crucial to assimilating with God, His plan, and His people, some type of rating system should be incorporated to support the claim of achieving what is crucial to God’s plan for His people. Unfortunately, as one Christian writer has said in evaluating the current state of believers in American culture, "The gap between what Americans say they believe and what they do is great and growing. The same is true of Christians. Values do not always translate into actions."\(^{29}\)

In light of the seriousness of the task, there have been several surveys developed to assess spiritual formation. Dr. David Slamp created such a survey for the Church Growth Institute in 1997. It evaluates one’s commitment level or devotion to God in the following twelve areas reflective of the values of the organization:

1. Worship
2. Personal Devotion
3. Giving
4. Lay Ministry


5. Bible Knowledge
6. Missions
7. Fellowship
8. Witnessing
9. Attitude toward Ministry
10. Distinctive Lifestyle
11. Service
12. Social Justice

Another assessment tool designed to help people assess, measure, plan and grow in their walk with Jesus is the *Christian Life Profile*. This assessment tool is built around thirty core competencies derived from three sub-categories, which spring from the broad categories of Jesus' discussion in Matthew 22, Love God and Love Neighbor. The full assessment (Appendix G) not only includes an individual's self-evaluation but assessments completed by others close to the individual.

Jane Thayer's Doctorate of Education studies led her to create the *Christian Spiritual Participation Profile*. The CSPP is an instrument designed to assess the participation of believers in the hypothesized learning modes, in which she suggests people engage as they mature in their faith. The combination of David Kolb's experiential learning theory and ten basic spiritual disciplines gives the participants an idea where they rate in regard to their religious experience, faith quest, vision, and new life. Other such academic assessment tools

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developed in recent history similar to this are Ellison's Spiritual Well-Being Scale, Allport's Religious Orientation Survey, and Hadlock's and Massey's Religious Status Inventory.

Even in the area of Christian psychology the need to measure the impact of one's faith has led to the development of assessment instruments. The Religious Life Inventory was created in 1976 to measure a person's responses to questions raised by the contradictions and tragedies of life. Other similar assessment tools used by psychologists are the Religious Problem Solving Scales, God Questionnaire, Shepherd Scale, and Spiritual Leadership Qualities Inventory.

Whatever the scale, inventory or survey a ministry uses to measure the spiritual formation progress of its people, there must be a standard process which leads to substantiating the reliability of the assessment. Dr. Michael Green submits the following standards for use of spiritual formation assessment instruments:

1. Assessment for the right purpose: development
2. Assessment of the right traits: Biblical mandated traits rather than culturally defined attitudes, behaviors or personality traits
3. Assessment by the right person(s)

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34 Ibid, 413
35 Ibid, 415
36 Ibid, 414.
37 Ibid, 416.
38 Ibid, 417.
39 Ibid, 417.
4. Assessment by different persons
5. Assessment in the right place
6. Assessment in different places
7. Repeated assessments over an extended period of time.\(^{40}\)

Given the priority that spiritual growth has in a believer's life, developing an assimilation process without including some emphasis on assessing formation would yield incomplete outcomes. The analysis of recent applied ministry literature gives one much latitude in constructing and interpreting an assessment tool that would both evaluate and prompt individuals toward assimilating the biblical values the community deems most important. Whatever tool or programming approach a community uses to help individuals engage with becoming more like Jesus, the resulting unity accomplishes the objective of having an assimilation process. Therefore the establishment of an effective assimilation process is one that helps people identify spiritual growth needs and provides the necessary path(s) to address that need.

**Spiritual Community and Assimilation**

God's words recorded in Genesis 2:18, "It is not good for the man to be alone," does not diminish the fact that God and God alone can provide for man's every need. This statement demonstrates God's magnificent creativity in providing for man's

\(^{40}\) Green, Michael Dr., *Assessment of Spirituality: Futile Effort or Formative Experience* (Deerfield, IL: Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, 1999), 3-4.
every need. It is also the inaugural revelation of God's intention for mankind to live in community with each other. One commentary puts it this way:

This section (Genesis 2:18-25) records the creation of the first woman and the institution of marriage; so it says much about the mainstay of Israel’s society. God intended husband and wife to be spiritual, functional unity, walking in integrity, serving God, and keeping His commandments together. When this harmony is operative, society prospers under God's hand.41

"Community is not a human invention. It is not a mere social phenomenon."42 The very nature of God is relational. The communion and harmony of the Trinity sets a standard for unity in diversity. The history of mankind recorded in the Old Testament, specifically the history of the nation of Israel, paints a picture of God's intentions for His people. In accordance to God's plan, He intentionally communicates the importance of community in the establishing of twelve tribes of Israel. The lineage of individuals, representing the family unit or household, was held in high esteem throughout all of Old Testament history. It was within the community of the household that the assimilation of children occurred. Deuteronomy chapter 6 lays out an all-encompassing mandate for each family unit within the nation of Israel, so that the unifying values of God's Word would not be lost. Although some later

interpretations of these words centered on literally binding scripture to one's wrists and foreheads, the clear intent was that there be a saturation of God's Word so that every day life integrated with its teachings.

The Old Testament gives us many examples of a person accomplishing God's purposes in the necessary context of relationships. Exodus 17:8-15 illustrates this point in the story of Joshua's fight against the Amalekites. Joshua's victory was not accomplished alone. In fact, scripture is clear to underscore that without the support of Moses, Joshua would have been defeated. And in the same light, without the help of Aaron and Hur, Moses would not have been able to support Joshua as God intended.

The New Testament revelation of God also denotes the key part people, united in community, play in accomplishing God's intended purposes. For example, Jesus' own ministry reflects the necessity and power of community. It was in the context of the community of His twelve disciples that Jesus was able to disciple them concerning their faith, behaviors and attitudes. Even apart from the twelve, Jesus developed sub-communities (Peter, James & John) and also focused on macro-communities of people to help people see God more clearly. Even when Jesus focused His attention and teaching on just one individual, the scriptures are quick to point out the effects that specific
encounters would have in that person's sphere of relationships. We are reminded of this as we see Jesus talk to the Samaritan woman, raise Lazarus from the dead, or heal the blind man.

This model of community continued on in the early church as more and more people were assimilated into the faith based on the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus. From passages like Acts 5:42 and Romans 16:3-16, one can conclude that relationships, whether in large gatherings in the temple or small groups in houses, are the operative and necessary form of the church that God desires. There are nine sections of scripture, in the New Testament, exhorting believers in the early church to "love one another."\textsuperscript{43} There are at least 15 other "one-another commands"\textsuperscript{44} in the New Testament. Without a defined community to practice these commands, the testimony of God's transforming power is not fully demonstrated. Community is absolutely necessary for spiritual formation and service to occur.

The "body" concept as set forth in I Corinthians 12-14, also indicates the necessary interdependency of those called to share in the grace of God. The intentional interaction and relationships we have within the body of Christ are designed to work together to glorify God by transforming the lives of the

\textsuperscript{43} John 13, 15, Romans 13, I Thessalonians 3, 4, I Peter 1, I John 3, 4, and II John 5.

people involved and at the same time building the church. That interaction is empowered by the Holy Spirit. Becoming more like Christ is a work of God’s grace, not a product of something people do or a result of relationships we hold.

Doing the right things with the right people in the power of the Holy Spirit places people in the spot where God’s grace can transform them. Transformation cannot be programmed, but the church’s ministry can and should facilitate individuals within its body to engage in a process that provides on-going accountability and assessment to that God given goal. Believers who attempt to grow in their relationship with God isolated from others often find themselves engaging in the spiritual disciplines and Christian service motivated by selfishness and pride.

In modern day America, church growth strategies have been the focus of many of the popular books for ministry leaders. Those involved with church growth seminars are concerned about "closing the back door" as well as providing an inviting atmosphere to which people are attracted to visit and stay involved. Some of the conclusions that church growth and assimilation models are currently using to shape their programs are heavily weighted in the area of community building.

One such assimilation program states that, "Ninety percent of people who visit a church are looking for friends or for
relationships." They conclude "If a person makes six or more friends in the first six months at the church there is a ninety-eight percent chance he or she will remain." They also make the apparent observation that "every person is different and the church will need a variety of hosts to follow up effectively." Because each host is also different, there is no one-way to train them to connect with people who desire a relationship with the church and its people. Although churches do not actually place a sign in the window that says "members only," there are commonly unwritten "organizing principles" that either attract people to or repel people from the community of believers at individual churches. A true unity of the body cannot be achieved solely upon a doctrinal statement. God has created us for relationships.

A few years back, the International Bible Society did some research in the area of assimilation and came up with a list of diagnostic questions that churches could ponder in order to fortify or re-prioritize the "glue" that held them together. The questions are as follows:

1. Identify the major organizing principles that have kept your church together in the past 20 years?
2. Which of these principles have diminished in recent years?

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46 Ibid

3. What has happened as a result of these changes in the organizing principles?
4. List the cohesive forces that have been added to replace some of the forces that have diminished or disappeared?
5. Identify the four strongest unifying forces in your church today. Put them in order of influence.
6. Identify any of these forces which may cause people to feel unwelcome in your church.
7. What steps could be taken to help alleviate this problem? 

Answering these questions and acting upon them would set the stage for change in assimilating people into most churches. As we live out our faith in 21st century churches, change and the challenges that change brings, demand relationships to be strong. Of course, there are also fears associated with change that place obstacles to developing relationships. These fears include "fear of being known, exploitation, disappointment, change, failure, or sacrifice." There are some who will submit that relationships have a way of overcoming the fears and worries, because people are experiencing the ups and downs of life together. James Hinkle and Tim Woodroof use the theme song of a popular television show to make a powerful point of this fact:

Making your way in the world today takes everything you have got. Taking a break from all your worries sure would help a lot. Wouldn't you like to get away?

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Sometimes you wanna go where everybody knows your name, and they're always glad your came. You wanna be where you can see our troubles are all the same. You wanna go where everybody knows your name. The characters of "Cheers" are greeted heartily when they enter the tavern. They make a place for them at the bar and ask about their day. They share their doubts and fears, their failures and victories, their hates and loves. This is group therapy for a price of a six-pack, confession without a priest, acceptance without fear of rejection. Millions tune in each week to experience a vicarious belonging and - at some level of consciousness - must wonder if there might be such a place for them.50

The church can and should be a place where community can be built. It is not a theater, social club, or corporation. The church is a body, a family, and a fellowship. If churches do not shape themselves as such and work hard to assimilate people to this type of existence, people will continue to be content to be loosely associated with the church, never being fully integrated and never experiencing the full benefits that God has intended. They will seek out a place, whether that be in a bar, bowling alley, country club, or workplace, where they feel accepted for who they are and/or where they sense a sincere connection with others as they live out their lives.

Recent applied ministry literature has not only tried to address the issues of assimilation of new people in the church but also the individuals who seemingly were born into the church. One of the long-standing traditions in most churches is

the volunteer committee structure. What started out as a potentially wonderful assimilation tool has become institutionalized to the point that people who serve on committees many times decline to serve again because of the lack of connection with the mission. Actually, any volunteer service opportunity has the potential to be institutionalized. One writer has addressed the issue of committees or other volunteer positions by refocusing and renaming them as mission communities (e.g. Worship Community, Elementary Education Community, etc.). This author does an excellent job of pointing out the distinctions between the intentions of typical committees found in churches as opposed to mission driven communities. The listing is as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factors</th>
<th>Committees</th>
<th>Mission Communities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Level of Commitment</td>
<td>limited/varied</td>
<td>serious</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To the task</td>
<td>low/casual</td>
<td>high with energy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To the others in the group</td>
<td>two hours/month</td>
<td>as often as necessary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frequency of Meetings</td>
<td>structure</td>
<td>gifts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Task assignments</td>
<td>appointment</td>
<td>self-chosen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Method of assignment</td>
<td>duty</td>
<td>ministry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sense of work</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Even though the items on her descriptions were at the extremes of each category, the idea is to move, change, and progress to a new paradigm where the value of relationships have priority over tasks.

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This is an important element to consider when developing an assimilation model because of the natural tendencies to assimilate by ability or giftedness and be content with that information. With so many of the recent applied ministry assimilation models centering on spiritual gifts leading to the person serving in a volunteer role, leaders should take extra care to build volunteer ministries that are holistic in their approach to the volunteer. By doing so, the organization communicates that they value who the person is, not just what the person can do. It takes more intention on the part of the leaders, but it has longer lasting impact in the person's life.

Conclusions

A review of the biblical and recent applied ministry literature pertaining to the assimilation of people into a local body of believers has given us both a clear expectation to follow as well as a wide varied scope of implementation options to consider. In order to fully engage individuals in a process that will allow them to reach God's designed goals, the people themselves must be aware and committed to pursue those goals. The process, based on the information gathered from these sources, must be balanced in content and in approach. The content of a balanced assimilation process thus focuses on discovering a person's unique spiritual giftedness, connecting
that person with a spiritual community in which he/she can develop relationships, and finally helping that person bring to light his/her greatest spiritual growth need. The review of the literature also suggests that the approach of a balanced assimilation process consists of individuals being self-directed to set and fulfill goals in these three crucial areas.
Chapter Three - Project Research Methodology

This applied ministry project seeks to substantiate the effectiveness of the facilitative assimilation process set up for the adults attending Calvary Church. Does the assimilation process help adults at Calvary Church set goals and make commitments in regard to the use of their spiritual gifts to serve others, to connect with a small group that would provide care and accountability, and to strengthen their spiritual relationships with God and other believers? In a large church setting, like Calvary, which averages 4500-5000 people attending the services each weekend, there is great potential on the part of people attending to develop a "spectator" attitude. Even among the approximately 3500 adult members, there is demonstrated a varied commitment to what the leaders of the church have stated to be the standard.

In 1996, the board established a new membership procedure, which identifies five foundational issues, expected of each member. The identification of the "Five G's" (grace, growth, gifts, groups, and generosity) became the standard of a fully assimilated person at Calvary Church. Not only is this unifying structure communicated to those just joining the church via the membership questionnaire and study guide (Appendix G), but also has been and continues to be communicated to the existing
membership and attendees in various forums like the bi-monthly newsletter (Appendix H).

The assimilation process at Calvary Church is designed to allow three of the "Five G's" (growth, groups, and gifts) to become more than just words on paper, but true characteristics of members and attendees of the church. Testimonies of grace can be validated by submission of one's salvation experience in applying to the board for membership. Yearly financial statements can give credence to a member or attendee's level of commitment to generosity. The assimilation process seeks to raise the bar in accountability to the issues of gifts, growth and groups.

Since June 1999, every new member has been informed via the membership acceptance letter (Appendix I) that he/she will be contacted to go through the process. Systematically, the Spiritual Growth and Assimilation team members are working to have these new members, every established member, as well as any regular attendee who desires, experience the process.

In order to answer the question of the process' effectiveness, individuals who completed the process in the calendar year of 2000 were invited to participate as a sample group. This sample group consisted of 338 individuals who most closely represent the diversity of members, regular attendees,
men, women, and the span of ages that are served by the assimilation ministry.

Of the 338 individuals in the sample group, 285 (84%) are members and 53 (16%) are regular attendees. 185 of the 338 chosen (55%) are female and 153 (45%) are males.

Sample Group Characteristics

The sample group consisted of 39 (12%) people in their 20's, 64 (19%) in their 30's, 97 (28%) in their 40's, 79 (23%) in their 50's, 40 (12%) in their 60's, and 19 (6%) in their 70's.
In January 2001, 338 individuals who completed the assimilation process in 2000 were asked, via a mailing, to be a part of the sample group. They were sent a Calvary Church Assimilation Questionnaire (Appendix J) and were notified of the nature and purpose of the questionnaire by an attached cover letter (Appendix K). The questionnaire gave individuals the opportunity to identify themselves by gender, age group and membership commitment. It also gave individuals opportunity to delineate their awareness, involvement, and actions regarding gifts, groups, and growth before and after the process.

The post-testing methodology used in the project asked the individuals to give an evaluation of their awareness, involvement, and actions prior to the process and compare it to the actual results of the process in those three areas. In order to substantiate that the process is effective in engaging the members and regular attendees with the growth, gifts, and group
goals of the church, the respondents would provide a body of information from which to draw conclusions.

Specifically, individuals were asked to identify, prior to completing the assimilation process, their awareness of the spiritual gifts they personally possessed and whether they were serving in ministry using those gifts. The individuals were also asked to identify whether or not, before completing the process, they were involved with a small group that provided care and accountability. The third and final area of questioning asked them to determine whether, prior to the process, they were aware of their current spiritual need and had set goals to strengthen their spiritual life as it pertained to God and/or other believers.

By gaining answers to these questions, the baseline need for the assimilation process would be confirmed. One of the hypotheses which motivated Calvary Church to establish the assimilation process was the idea that the majority of the people were not aware, involved, or actively setting goals in the areas of gifts, growth, and groups. Was there really a need for the process? Has the assimilation process implemented by Calvary provided an effective way to gain the desired results?

If there was a need, did the process established by Calvary Church, prompt awareness, involvement, and active goal setting in these areas deemed as necessary marks of spiritual health?
The participants were specifically asked to answer exactly the same questions upon completing the assimilation process. A comparison of the answers before and after the process would institute a body of information that could be analyzed for patterns of effectiveness.

By the deadline date of February 25, 2001, 197 of the 338 questionnaires or 58 percent were returned.

**Questionnaire Results**

![Pie Chart](image)

| Respondents-197 | Non-Respondents-141 |

Of the 197 individuals who responded to the questionnaire, 166 were members (84 percent) and 31 were regular attendees (16 percent). This is consistent to the sample group.

**Respondent Group Characteristics**

![Pie Chart](image)

| Members-166 | Attendees-31 |

60
Of the 197 respondents 82 were males (42 percent) and 115 were females (58 percent). This also is consistent to the sample group.

Respondent Group Characteristics

![Pie chart showing male and female distribution](image)

There was also a consistent age span represented by the 197 individuals completing the questionnaire in comparison to the sample group. Of the respondents, 26 were individuals in their 20's, 47 were in their 30's, 50 were in their 40's, 47 were in their 50's, 20 were in their 60's and 8 were in their 70's.

Respondent Group Characteristics

![Pie chart showing age distribution](image)
A final question gave individuals the opportunity to be involved with individual follow-up as to the specific dynamics of their answers. Of the 197 individuals who completed and returned the questionnaire 99 (51 percent) indicated a willingness to be interviewed further about their perceptions of the assimilation process. Those willing to be questioned were engaged in conversations surrounding three general questions and a series of specific questions related to their response to the original questionnaire (Appendix L).

Upon beginning the follow up portion of the project, it became apparent that these individuals, albeit willing to participate as per the survey, were distracted by the fact it was part of the process for a Doctor of Ministry project. After receiving and sensing an unwillingness to convey open feelings because of the connection to the Doctor of Ministry project, the planned interviews were changed to follow up conversations that were not scheduled but intentionally pursued to gain comments about the assimilation process. Thus the various comments given in chapter four are a result of these informal but intentional conversations with those who indicated an initial willingness to give information about their experience with the assimilation process.

The demographics of those willing to be interviewed were slightly older in age than the sample group.
The 99 people closely mirrored the sample group in membership status with 84 (85%) members and 15 (15%) regular attendees.

And the 99 people of the follow up group were similar in gender to the sample group.
Chapter Four - Project Results

As stated previously, along with the introduction of the "Five G's" as the standard measure of spiritual health of those attending Calvary Church, came the need for accountability. The establishment of the assimilation process as both a prompt and method to establish measurable accountability was a highly valued requirement of the church leadership. In the areas of gifts, groups, and growth there was uncertainty as to the commitment of the members and regular attendees to these goals. Does the assimilation process assist adults at Calvary Church to become aware and make commitments in regard to the use of their spiritual gifts to serve others, to connect with a small group that would provide care and accountability, and to strengthen their spiritual relationships with God and other believers? Has the assimilation process implemented by Calvary provided an effective way to gain the desired results?

Aware of Spiritual Gifts Before Assimilation Process

[Graph showing percentages]
Reviewing the questionnaires from the respondent group reveals that 126 of the 197 (64%) of the individuals knew their spiritual gifts before engaging in the assimilation process. In the follow up conversations, 65 of the 99 (64%) also indicated knowing of their spiritual gifts prior to the process. A majority (40/65 - 62%) of those involved in the follow up conversations indicated they had known their gifts before the process and had first been introduced to the topic via the Lay School of Ministry at Calvary Church. A course on Spiritual Gifts was offered by Calvary Church for a span of four years in the early-mid 1990's. Other individuals conveyed, in follow up conversations, that various other teaching venues on the topic of spiritual gifts such as Chuck Swindoll's radio program, Insight for Living, or a previous church in which they had been members had given them the information prior to the assimilation process.

The follow up conversations also revealed that those who knew their spiritual gifts before the process were appreciative of the review and reminder of the issue. One person, during a follow up conversation said, "Although I already knew my gifts, it was good for me to be reminded of the spiritual gifts others have and how we should work together." Another project participant, who had prior knowledge of his spiritual gifts, stated in conversation, "The spiritual gifts inventory used in
the process affirmed the teaching I received in an earlier class setting."

Conversely, the results of the questionnaire also revealed that the remaining 71 individuals (36%) of the respondent group who did not know their spiritual gifts, before engaging in the assimilation process, did gain an awareness of their spiritual gifts. In the follow up conversations, 34 of the 99 (34%) spoke enthusiastically about discovering information they had heard discussed at church but never investigated for themselves. One participant said, "I always wondered what exactly were considered spiritual gifts and which ones I have. . . . I guess now I need to use them."

**Serving with Spiritual Gifts Before Assimilation Process**

![Pie Chart](image)

In a related area, 112 of the 197 (57%) questionnaires returned indicated that the respondents were already involved in a ministry using their spiritual gifts. The follow up interviews revealed similar characteristics of the people in this grouping. Of those in the follow up group, 53 of the 99
(54%) were already serving. Of those who were already serving, before the assimilation process, the characteristic of long-term membership at Calvary was a unifying theme. One dynamic that plays into explaining this pattern is the fact that membership is required in most areas of service at Calvary.

Another dynamic that plays a role in the length of membership demonstrated by those serving, is the sheer size of Calvary and the length of time it takes to build relationships. Those interviewed, who had been serving before completing the process, conveyed stories of serving in multiple roles before finding the place of service that maximized their giftedness. One of the participants commented, "I have served in teaching roles in many different groups because it provided me an opportunity to lead. But it was not until I committed to the new church planting ministry I really feel I am using all my gifts (including administration) effectively."

Conversely, the results of the questionnaire revealed that 85 respondents (43%) involved in the project were not currently serving the church using their spiritual gifts before the assimilation process. Because of the process, 44 of those 85 individuals (52%) indicated that they found a place of service where they are using the gifts they either knew they had before the process or discovered because of the process. Of the 99 people involved with follow up conversations, 46 individuals
were not serving before the process, and 26 of the 46 (57%) indicated the process had helped them get involved with a ministry using their giftedness.

In a follow up conversation with one of the participants, she noted that, "It became so clear in the process that even though I had known about my spiritual gifts long before, I had never really made the intentional commitment to use them in a church ministry." Another individual conveyed these words in a follow up conversation: "I had served in the past, maybe not directly with my spiritual gifts, but because of circumstances I had not been in any ministry for awhile. The assimilation process gave me a renewed sense of purpose, in fact, I now serve as a volunteer facilitator on the Spiritual Growth and Assimilation team."

**Part of a Small Group Before Assimilation Process**

![Pie chart showing 32% Yes and 68% No]

In relationship the church standard, set by the "Five G's," of being part of a group, the respondents to the questionnaire indicated 134 of the 197 individuals (68%) were actually part of
a group that provided care and accountability. The follow up interviews of this particular area uncovered a different characteristic pattern than that exposed in the previous area of gifts. Group participation was not directly connected to membership or time attending Calvary.

Although an overwhelming majority (84%) of the people who completed the questionnaire and participated in the follow up interviews were members, 69 of the 99 people involved in the follow up conversations (70%) indicated that they participated in a group before they were members. It was often expressed in the conversations that the desire to become members and more active at the church was a direct result of being part of a group. One couple, participating in the project, described it this way: "We had just moved from a church where we were very active and we were not really sure that Calvary was the right church for us. But after attending the LifeBuilders Adult Congregation for a couple of months, it gave us a sense of belonging and so we joined." In fact, a number of those follow up conversations cited the Adult Congregation groups at Calvary fulfilling the need they have for care and accountability regarding spiritual things.

Adult Congregational groups were established out of the Adult Sunday School Classes in the early 1990's. Adult Congregations differ from the traditional Sunday School model
used up to that point by establishing themselves on a three-legged foundation. Along with Education (the foundation of the Adult Sunday School program) an intentional establishment of fellowship and outreach builds a community that has the capability for care and accountability.

With 68 percent already involved with a small group, the results of the questionnaire indicate 63 (32%) of the respondents needing to connect and follow through with this standard. In the follow up group, 30 percent were not part of a small group for care and accountability. Because of the process, 32 of the 63 (51%) respondents and 18 of the 30 (60%) in the follow-up group sought out and are now participating in a group.

Part of a Small Group Before Assimilation Process

Finally, the results of the questionnaire give us a glimpse of the members and regular attendees awareness of spiritual needs and whether or not those members set goals in relation to those needs. Of those completing the questionnaire, 146
individuals (74%) were aware of their current spiritual need. The follow up group parallels these percentages in that 76 of the 99 (77%) were aware of their spiritual growth need before the process.

The related question on the questionnaire clarified this important area of growth by indicating that only 97 (49%) of the 197 respondents had set spiritual goals, leaving 100 of the 197 respondents (51%) with the potential of getting involved in something valuable.

*Set Spiritual Growth Goals Before Assimilation Process*

![Pie chart showing 51% Yes and 49% No]

Of the 99 in the follow up group, 56 (56%) had set goals in the area of their spiritual growth and 43 (43%) gave indication they had not set goals. As with the areas of gifts and groups, the follow up conversations shed a bit of light on the dynamics that led to these results. A consistent theme, when asked about their answers to these questions, indicated that daily Bible reading and the strong pulpit ministry emphasizing the Word of
God led to a clear understanding of their current spiritual state. One of the project participants stated, "The recent Celebration 99 focus on reading the Bible through in a year has given me a new sensitivity to the sin in my life." Those involved in the follow up conversations also related a multitude of reasons why, even though they knew of their spiritual need and in almost all cases knew the goals to set to meet that need, the actual process and follow through of doing something did not occur.

One individual, during a follow up conversation described it this way: "We are blessed to hear a good sermon every week that has a clear-cut application. The problem is that a week is not enough time to set a specific goal or pattern before the next pressing issue was discovered. So because of the multitude of issues, I did not set any specific goals in any of the areas. I just knew I had lots of spiritual needs."

Those participants who had set goals, in relationship to specific spiritual needs, prior to the assimilation process, cited having strong relationships with others who modeled this concept. One of the project participants noted, "Because I have been a Christian for some time and I try to be consistent in my life, it was easy to transfer the goal setting techniques learned in business to my spiritual walk."
Therefore, the conclusions one can draw from the results of the questionnaire and follow up conversations in regard to the question of whether there is a need for the assimilation process are somewhat mixed. There is clearly a need for the assimilation process to highlight the areas of gifts, groups and growth, but the need, percentage wise, is not negatively or positively skewed in any of the areas. Applying the percentages of those who were not aware of their spiritual gifts before the process (36 percent), those not serving (43 percent), those not part of a group (32 percent), those not aware of their current spiritual need (26 percent), and those who had not set spiritual goals (51 percent) to the 3500 members and/or the 4500-5000 Sunday Morning attendees does present a huge and ongoing ministry opportunity that should be effectively addressed.

After establishing that there is a need for an assimilation process to raise the bar of accountability in the areas of gifts, groups, and growth, the second question is obvious. Has the assimilation process implemented by Calvary provided an effective way to gain the desired results? Dialogue with the designers and those who have implemented other assimilation systems reveals that churches realize a 65 percent success rate in prompting people to enact change in their lives.

The Network assimilation process, designed by Bruce Bugbee, has a three-step process. In evaluating churches that implement
his process, he has observed a typical pattern. The pattern of those who participate in the Network process is that 95 percent of those who sign up for the class on spiritual gifts, personal style, and defining passions show up for the course, 85 percent finish the course (Step One), 75 percent meet with a consultant (Step Two), and 65 percent (Step Three) actually engaged in one of the ministries they identify with the consultant. The Network assimilation process focuses on connecting people via ministry (gifts), with others (groups) and by serving together they will mature in their faith (growth).

Another assimilation process, used by Pantego Bible Church in Arlington, Texas, focuses on providing its members small groups where the intentional and systematic review of spiritual needs is the motivating force to involve them and prompt people to serve one-another. In fact, the spiritual growth assessment tool not only involves a self-assessment of spiritual needs but allows for peer-assessments. The Sunday morning messages are also built around the thirty core competencies reviewed in the assessment tool. The church regularly realizes approximately 65 percent participation rate in regards to these small group settings. Therefore, in evaluating the effectiveness of

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53 Phone Interview with Randy Frazee. Pantego Bible Church, Arlington, Texas. February 18, 1999.
Calvary's assimilation process, we have set the standard at 65 percent.

For this section of the project, the results of the questionnaire can be broken down in many ways to analyze the process' effectiveness. The following analysis will take into consideration the process as a whole and then review the five specific outcomes in relationship to the whole.

Of the 197 questionnaires completed and returned, 140 (71 percent) indicated that the assimilation process had prompted them to make a change in one of the categories. A few questionnaires, 17 of the 197 (9 percent), indicated a potential to change but the process did not sway or motivate people to actually do it. The remaining questionnaires, 40 (20 percent) showed that the process had no measurable effect on these five areas of the people's lives.

![Respondent Group Response to Assimilation Process](image)

In the follow up conversations with people in the last category, one participant noted that, "Perhaps the assimilation
process did not work for me because I am already involved." Another of this group, who considers herself assimilated in the body at Calvary, suggested, "The church should develop a separate process for those who are very involved." Interesting enough, as a side bar, of the 40 in the respondents' group in this category, 20 made themselves available for interviews. These individuals are board members, teachers of adult congregations or other key leaders in various ministries of the church.

Another interesting observation made by one of the participants in a follow up conversation was that the 20 percent who indicated that they were proficient before the assimilation process in the areas of gifts, groups, and growth were indeed active, spiritually mature leaders in the congregation. This individual noted, "It appears that the standard the board has set is truly representative of those most active in the church. It also appears to affirm the common belief that, in any given church, 20 percent of the people do 80 percent of the ministry. If the assimilation process can get more people at a confident level of proficiency in these areas, Calvary will become a stronger ministry." Therefore, in evaluating the effectiveness of the assimilation process overall, the 71 percent change factor (140 out of 197 respondents) gives us an indication that the assimilation process at Calvary Church is effective.
Taking into consideration the diversity of our congregation, represented by those who participated in completing the questionnaires, it would be worth identifying the type of person who was affected the most. Based on the results of the questionnaire, women in their 30's, who are members of Calvary Church saw the most benefit from going through the assimilation process. The next group which indicated strong assistance from the process, is men in their 50's, who are also members. Of those involved with the follow up that fit these categories, came identification of a common stage of life. Women whose lives were consumed with the pressures of raising small children and men whose lives were filled with the pressures of vocational instability, expressed that the assimilation process helped bring perspective to their current life stage. One of the research project participants expressed it this way: "The affirmation of how God made me unique, the importance of being in a community as I walk through the different pressure points of life, and the benefit of setting goals beyond family or business concerns was a needed encouragement the assimilation process provided."

Consequently, female members in their 40's and male members in their 60's were the two groups least affected by the process. It is also significant to note that people from each of the six
age group categories were positively prompted to action by the assimilation process.

This helps put to rest the potential flaw that the process is skewed to one generation in form and practice. The people attending Calvary, no matter their age, respond well to the wording of the written assessments, the dialog at the facilitation meeting, and the follow up contact in helping them benefit from the process.

Further analysis of the effectiveness of the process can be made by calling out the before and after answers of the individual questions and comparing the percentage to the standard of 65 percent. The first question posed to the participants focused on the person’s awareness of his/her spiritual gifts. As indicated before, 71 of the 197 respondents (36%) communicated that they were not aware of their spiritual gifts before the assimilation process. All 71 people (100%)
testified that completing the assimilation process gave them that awareness.

**Aware of Spiritual Gifts After Assimilation Process**

![Chart showing 100% awareness of spiritual gifts]

In a recent survey completed by George Barna, he found that the average person attending evangelical churches in America had very little knowledge about spiritual gifts.

About 46 percent of survey respondents were either unaware of spiritual gifts, claimed they didn't have one, or were not sure which gifts they possessed. The percentage of adults indicating they had no spiritual gifts was 21 percent, up from 4 percent in 1995. When asked to identify their gifts, 30 percent of respondents listed only ones found in the Bible, while 16 percent listed gifts that were not. Nonbiblical gifts mentioned included a sense of humor, a good personality, being a good person, being observant, listening, patience, friendliness, poetry, drawing, being likeable, going to church and survival.\(^5^4\)

With the standard of 65 percent, the 100 percent effectiveness rate of having people who have no awareness of their spiritual gifts coming out of the process with awareness is a great encouragement. But, that is only one of two

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\(^{54}\) Boyle, Timm "Ignorance about Spiritual Gifts" (Barrington, IL: Willow Creek Association, 2001) 16
objectives as it pertains to the area of gifts. The complete objective of the process is not only to give the participants an awareness of their gifts but also to allow them to participate in the body by using their gifts.

Serving with Spiritual Gifts After Assimilation Process

48%  52%

The questionnaire’s second inquiry focused on this aspect. Of those completing the questionnaire, 85 of the 197 individuals (43%) admitted they were not in a place of service using their spiritual gifts before going through the assimilation process. After going through the process, 44 of these 85 individuals (52%) were prompted to get involved in a ministry using their spiritual gifts.

Some of the people involved with the follow up interviews shared significant stories of how the process influenced their thoughts and provided clarity on what ministry they should serve. One man, a member in his sixties, was quite versed in his giftedness but not serving. He conveyed, "I was prompted by the process and a company downsizing to take an early retirement,"
pursue schooling and serve in the church. My schooling has led me to currently give a significant amount of volunteer hours in the Congregation Care Ministry of the church." A young woman, a new member in her twenties, also fully aware of her gifts prior to the process, stated that, "The assimilation process was the first prompt in a series of things that led to me volunteering to join a team starting a new adult congregation at Calvary which is serving as a small group for 30 other people who needed connecting to the church." Despite the stories, in pure statistical analysis, the effectiveness of encouraging people to get involved in serving with their spiritual gifts, 52 percent (44 out of 85) is below the standard. This area will be addressed in Chapter Five.

The third question specifically seeks to discover how the assimilation process prompted people in the area of participating in a group for care and accountability. Of the individuals completing the questionnaire, 64 people (32%) were not taking advantage of being involved in a small group that provided care and accountability. After going through the process, 32 of the 64 people (50%) proceeded to join a small group that would provide care and accountability.
Some of those people who newly joined a small group participated in the follow up interviews conducted for this project. One man and his wife, in their mid-thirties, had been active members of the church for almost eight years. In a follow up conversation they stated, "We had faithfully attended services and served in various ministries, but as a result of the assimilation process we realized that we were lacking true community. We set a goal to join a community where we could find for ourselves and provide for others accountability and care. We visited many of the Adult Congregations already meeting on Sunday morning, but we did not really fit. We continued to follow our commitment, and through the help of the church and two other couples, developed a new congregation." A similar situation also occurred in the life of another couple, which, after making a decision to start attending an Adult Congregation, is now team-teaching that congregation.
A follow up conversation highlighting the effectiveness of the assimilation procedure in prompting people to identify and connect with a small group for care and accountability, involved a woman in her fifties who had just become a member of Calvary. There are some unique issues to her story that demonstrate the ability of the Calvary's assimilation model to meet people where they are and prompt them to grow. After many years of attending another church in the Grand Rapids community and serving in various roles in her church, she began to attend Calvary. One of the things lacking in her life, identified by the assimilation procedure, was a community of support. Unlike the majority of members at Calvary, this woman is African-American. But the culture of Calvary Church did not fail the process. She joyfully testified in a follow up interview conversation that, "I can only say good things about Bill Crooks, my facilitator, and how he got me connected with the Greenhouse Adult Congregation. I love my congregation and how they have accepted me for who I am. Not only that, but how I can serve others in the group."

Four other women and two men communicated in the follow up interviews that the assimilation method really convicted them of something they had gotten away from practicing earlier in their Christian walk. Spanning ages 20-50, a common theme of their dialogue during the interviews focused on how the Spiritual
Growth Questionnaire visually demonstrated a "gap" in their connection with Calvary. Most of these six individuals were experiencing life-changing circumstances such as a divorce, a new marriage, going back to school, or becoming "empty-nesters." The landscapes of their lives were being rearranged and the lack of community that was "acceptable" before the changes were highlighted to an "unacceptable" level. The challenge provided by the assimilation procedure and many opportunities provided by the church gave them a fresh start to rekindle relationships needed by all as they walk this life of faith.

All in all, 50 percent of those completing the process who could potentially join a group, actually took the steps to do it. This is slightly below the standard of 65 percent. Discussion in Chapter Five will consider suggestions on revisions that could possibly encourage a larger number of people to connect with a group after experiencing this assimilation route.

Aware of Spiritual Need After Assimilation Process

- 4% Yes
- 96% No
- 50 Yes - 2 No
The fourth question particularly seeks to find how the assimilation process encouraged people in their awareness of their current spiritual need. Of the 197 individuals finishing the questionnaire, 52 people (26%) were not aware of their most pressing spiritual need. After going through the process, 50 of the 52 people (96%) indicated that the assimilation method helped them to become conscious of their current spiritual need.

**Aware of Spiritual Need After Assimilation Process**

![Pie chart showing 96% Yes and 4% No]

This high percentage speaks well of the assessment tool and facilitators involved with this sensitive issue. More affirmation comes along as one evaluates the fifth and final question on the feedback form that puts closure to the topic. Of the 197 respondents, 100 had not set goals in relation to spiritual needs, but 82 of those 100 (82%) were incited to do so by the process.
Set Goals Addressing Spiritual Need After Assimilation Process

Of the three issues focused on by Calvary's assimilation assessment procedure, the issue of setting goals for spiritual growth was the area that was the least acted on before the process and prompted the most response after going through the process. Talking to those involved with the follow up sessions who were positively affected by the assimilation method in this area, gave some interesting perspectives on the personal dynamics that hinders goal setting in this area. One of the most common helpful elements of the assimilation process revealed by the follow up interviews was the Christian Life Profile assessment tool used in the area of spiritual growth. This, combined with the help of the facilitator in setting goals, was identified as the most helpful part of the process by 75 of the 99 people (76%). The Christian Life Profile helps zero in on one spiritual growth issue. Being so specific in identifying the need, as well as creating a written plan to address the need, becomes a reasonable and accomplishable goal.

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Many of those participating in the follow up indicated that the need was no surprise, which gives credence to the 74 percent awareness factor before the process began. In fact, the participants had often been convicted about the issue at a previous time, but never took the time to write out steps to address the problem. They also gave great praise to the facilitators' patience in allowing them to think deeply about the issue and discover the root problem rather than accept excuses for why the matter came to the surface through the assessment tool. Some follow up participants also expressed appreciation for the creative approaches that the facilitators gave in creating action steps toward addressing the issue. Some indicated that they had memorized the verse associated with the specific spiritual need. Some suggested that the recommended books, associated with the spiritual needs portion of the process, gave them great insight on what steps to continue to follow after making the commitment to take a proactive stance in regard to their spiritual growth need.

In summary, although the overall effectiveness of the assimilation process is acceptable (71 percent), there are certain elements of the method that are not meeting the standard of 65 percent. The approximate 50 percent effectiveness rate of prompting people to actively serve and to participate in a small group for care and accountability gives opportunity for
revision. The 100 percent effectiveness rate in helping people understand their spiritual gifts as well as the 96 percent effectiveness rate of individuals becoming aware of their current spiritual need, points to the strong assessment tools and facilitation meetings. The 82 percent effectiveness rate associated with setting goals for spiritual growth also reflects on the ability of the facilitators to use the prescribed method to engage the participants in taking ownership of this important aspect of their relationship with God.
Chapter Five - Project Conclusions and Implications

The purpose of this research project is to ascertain the effectiveness of the assimilation process at Calvary Church in helping individuals in the church set goals and commitments in the areas of gifts, groups, and growth. It is proposed that the assimilation process helps adults at Calvary Church to become aware and make commitments to using their spiritual gifts to serve others, to connect with a small group that would provide care and accountability, and to strengthen their spiritual relationships with God and other believers at Calvary Church. Has the assimilation process implemented by Calvary provided an effective way to gain the desired results? The task was accomplished by means of a questionnaire completed by a group of people who are representative of the make up of the target group for the assimilation process. The results from the completed questionnaires, as well as several follow up conversations with participants in the project, help finalize conclusions about the effectiveness of the existing program. But, the research also opens the door for further investigation around the issues of the assimilation process.

The first conclusion one can draw from the research is that the existing assimilation method is much more effective in making people aware of the standards than actually prompting them to action in the areas of gifts, groups, and growth. No
The assimilation system is 100 percent effective because of the dynamic of freewill. Individuals who are challenged or convicted to an action may choose not to follow through with the action. The implications of this weakness in the assimilation procedure at Calvary, is brought to light by the low effectiveness percentages that are associated with two specific areas: serving and getting involved with a small group.

In comparison to the areas of the awareness of one's spiritual gifts, current spiritual need, and setting spiritual goals, the level of commitment needed to follow through is much higher and more complicated. It is a much higher risk to extend oneself to serve others and/or to join a group of other believers for the purpose of care and accountability. Even though the assimilation process is designed to have multiple "touches" with the individual over an extended period of time to encourage action, it never demands the participant to comply with the standard.

Some of those involved with the follow up conversations noted this "loophole" as one of the reasons why they were not prompted to action. One of the study participants stated, "I know of a church that requires each of its members to be part of a small group or your membership can be taken away. I know this is not true at Calvary, so the pressure to conform is optional." Some indicated that other than some of the communication from
the Office of Spiritual Growth and Assimilation received along the way, they really did not fully understand the significance of the "Five G's." Some indicated that they perceived the assimilation method as just a new way of recruiting volunteers and increasing numbers for established programs, not something that would benefit them personally.

In the follow-up interviews it was also noted, many times, that the most confusing part of the assimilation process was the term "assimilation" itself. Only 50% of the follow up participants could define it properly. A few associated the term with the popular television show Voyager because assimilation is related to an antagonist's primary directive in this futuristic space series. The Borg's (antagonist) mission in the program is to assimilate (absorb into their own existence) as many cultures and people groups as possible. They assimilate by force, and resistance to this mandate is futile.

One implication of these conclusions and observations is the ongoing communication of the importance of the standards (the Five G's) expected by those attending Calvary Church and the reality of what the existing assimilation process is seeking to accomplish. This may explain the higher success rate in the areas of awareness as opposed to the areas of action. The existing assimilation method cannot bear fruit from soil that has not been previously prepared and seeds planted.
In light of the results of the questionnaire and the follow-up conversations, the Spiritual Growth and Assimilation Team made two critical adjustments to address the less than acceptable percentages in individuals serving with their gifts and participating in a small group for care and accountability. The first adjustment came in the form of an additional worksheet that the facilitators use in their meeting with the participant. The worksheet (Appendix M) gives the participant the opportunity to record his/her commitments in regard to serving with the spiritual gift(s) they have identified. The worksheet is modeled after the goal worksheet used with the spiritual need aspect of the procedure.

The other adjustment also addressed the commitment to serve as well as people making a commitment to get involved in a small group. The modification of the process focused on the inclusion of more people providing more "personal touches" in the process. The original process of follow-up involved a letter from the facilitator and a phone call from a volunteer thirty days after the letter was sent. To avoid the "telemarketing" label and lack of response our phone call volunteer was experiencing, we created a system that connected the assimilation participant to familiar people.

The first new part of the follow up system utilized the individual's relationship with the Pastor overseeing the
process. The first communiqué inviting them to experience the assimilation path came from him, and so a follow-up greeting card of thanks (Appendix N) was created and is now sent thirty days after the meeting. It gives an open door for the individuals to follow up with someone who is not a stranger.

In addition to the greeting card, two postcards were created and are used by the facilitators as connecting tools for small group leaders of ministries needing people to serve or to participate for care and accountability. If, indeed, the process participants are not connected to a small group or a place of service, the facilitator not only gives suggestions to the participant of names and contact numbers of those leading small groups or service opportunities (this was how the original process worked) but now asks permission to give their name and number to these leaders via the postcard. The postcard (Appendix O) is then sent to the small group leader or service opportunity coordinator, who is asked to contact the assimilations process participant. When he/she calls, it provides a strong reminder of the importance of their commitment.

A second postcard (Appendix P) was also designed and is given to the small group leader, just in case he/she cannot reach them by phone. It provides another written indication or prompt for the person to make good on his/her commitment.
Involvement with a small group or a service opportunity is most often prompted when individuals already have some type of connection with the others in the setting. By redesigning the process to include more people, especially those who have a recognizable leadership position, individuals will feel more drawn to get involved.

The second conclusion one can draw from the research is that the existing assimilation method is effective in helping people understand two vital areas of their Christian walk. In order to grow in the grace and knowledge of the Lord Jesus, people need to be challenged to take responsibility for their relationship with God. How can people grow in grace without having an understanding of the spiritual gifts made possible through His grace? The assimilation process successfully (100%) gives participants a way to begin to explore this wonderful endowment. These gifts not only give a path for unifying and building up the body, but also praising His name. The facilitation method using the assessment tools allows the adult to do a "self-discovery."

The facilitated method, using the assessment tools, also is a key component to the effectiveness rating of discovering and setting goals in regard to spiritual growth needs. The pattern of evaluating one's relationship to God should be a life-long process. Having the experience of being able to identify and
then to establish an action plan to address weaknesses in that relationship is something that people can look back on and repeat when necessary. The challenge will be to keep resources, written and interactive, available for people to use to address the issues identified.

One adjustment in the process, relating to this aspect, is the updating of the resource listing given to the participants. The original listing came from a survey of the Calvary Church staff targeting books, which they would recommend, to address the specific areas identified by the assessment tool. Another adjustment associated with this part of the process is the creation of training courses provided by the church to expand one's understanding of the topic in question. The creation of a program called "CrossTraining" in the fall of 2001 gives the church a platform to provide extended and more detailed information about these crucial areas effecting our relationship with God.

A third and final conclusion, born out of this project, is that the assimilation process is effectively helping people absorb the cultural values of the church as set by the leadership. Although the sheer size of the church makes the process of full assimilation a long and sometimes confusing one, the process has established itself as a needful element of the ministry. The follow up conversations brought out many
compliments, even from those on whom the process had no effect. The referral process from both those who have gone through the process and leaders, speaks well to the original intent of having assimilation as the number one priority. The establishment of a good assimilation process can aid the church in communicating to its people the crucial nature of the values it has written down on paper.

As one faculty advisor has mentioned, the assimilation process set up at Calvary may be a modern day example of the Hawthorne efficiency study of the 1920's. The positive response to the values of gifts, groups, and growth may not only be tied to the effectiveness of the process, but also to the perception that the church really cares about them. Thus, the motivation to follow through is activated by a deeper sense of commitment to those values, which again relates back to the important issue of community represented by the value of groups. In this case, the Spiritual Growth and Assimilation group is using its spiritual gifts in service to reach out to the broader community to spur them on to good works in these three specific areas of the Christian life.

Obviously, these adjustments and additions to the original process open the door for further study and research. Do these revisions increase the percentage of assimilation participants in using their gifts and involving themselves with
a small group? What effect will the CrossTraining classes have on those who have or have not completed the process? An annual assimilation questionnaire focusing on the participants of the assimilation process can provide the needed statistical data to evaluate the effectiveness of the process changes.

Another question for further study when looking at the whole is whether the term assimilation deters people from engaging in the process. Would another term such as the word "enfoldment" be perceived as a more understandable and attractive word to people of this culture?

Another possible study for the future would focus on the long-term results of the process in the lives of those who make changes. Does the process need to be repeated every so often to rekindle the importance of the attention given to gifts, groups and spiritual growth? How often would an assimilation review be acceptable or helpful for the people involved? If repeated, can the process be revised to allow for the individual to focus on just the area (gifts, groups, growth) of his/her choosing? Would the process be more effective if the three separate emphases were approached independently? These are just a few questions and avenues of further study from the method set up at Calvary Church.

Other possibilities of further inquiry occur when one transfers the basic structure of this method into another church.
setting. Depending on the culture and goals set by the leadership of the church, would this assimilation approach enable the church to prompt individuals to be unified and carry out the goals? Some Willow Creek-style churches have adopted the "Five G's" as goals for their congregations. Would this system work in these churches where the goals are the same? What types of systems do these churches use to help their members fulfill these goals? In churches that have a different set of goals, are there assessment tools that could be found or designed to engage the participants in thinking through the issues deemed important to that specific church? Whatever the goals or measurement standard a church sets for itself in regards to the spiritual health of its members, it is crucial that there be an avenue by which those goals can be assessed, prompted and realized.
Appendixes

A-Priorities for Calvary Church
B-SGA Board Proposal
C-Assimilation Phone Scripts
D-Assimilation Packet
   (Letter, Christian Life Profile, Spiritual Gifts Inventory, and Spiritual Growth Questionnaire)
E-Goal Worksheets for facilitation meeting
F-Follow-up letter from facilitator
G-New Members Application and Study Guide
H-Connections Newsletter
I-Membership Acceptance Letter
J-Assimilation Project Questionnaire
K-Assimilation Project Cover Letter
L-Follow up Questions
M-Spiritual Gifts worksheet
N-Follow-up greeting card
O-Follow-up postcard for ministry leader (phone reminder)
P-Follow-up postcard for ministry leader (mail reminder)
Appendix A

PRIORITIES FOR CALVARY CHURCH Oct 1997 - Sept 1998

1. Assimilation/Disciple/Shepherd Calvary Church Attendees
   **Definition:** To move Calvary Church attendees toward personal spiritual maturity and personal involvement in ministry.
   **Outcomes:** 1. Every person identified with a worship service and Sunday School Class or Youth Ministry Class or Adult Congregation.
   2. Every adult experiences a small group for Bible study or prayer or accountability or ministry experience. 3. Increase in membership and baptisms.
   4. Increase the volunteer work force (utilizing spiritual gifts). 5. Increase in personal evangelism.
   6. Increase in personal care and shepherding.
   7. Expedite the four morning services, providing space for church growth by maximizing space and **fixing the crunch**.
      a. Plan for a second hour Sunday School and Youth Ministry to be expedited in the Fall of 1998.
      b. Recommendations by 4198 for ongoing development.

2. Outreach Focus On Grand Rapids
   **Definition:** To more effectively reach out with the Gospel of Jesus Christ and cups of cold water to the people of Grand Rapids.
   **Outcomes:** 1. Identification of several significant outreach ministries that impact (certain) areas of Grand Rapids.
   2. Recruitment/training and involvement of Calvary people serving in the above identified ministries.
   3. Every Adult Congregation and possibly youth/kids ministries identified with one community outreach ministry.
   4. Evaluation and recommendation for future development of GR Outreach ministries by 4198.

3. Church Planting In The Community
   **Definition:** To reach the community for Jesus Christ and reproduce the values of Calvary Church by starting new churches.
   **Outcomes:** 1. Develop a written strategy for Church plants. 2. Identify key personnel for Church plants.
   3. Successfully design and develop a viable plan to begin at least one new Church in the Grand Rapids area.

9 September, 1997
Long Range Planning:

A process for growth & change.

A little history. Under the capable leadership of outside consultant Tom Patterson, Calvary Church leadership has worked long and hard at developing a plan to meet the ever-growing needs of growth and ongoing change. In 1996, twelve teams were formed from board, staff, and congregation to listen to people’s needs and recommend a long-range set of initiatives. This report is a summary of various team’s recommendations and actions taken by the board of elders and deacons. Your prayers are vital for each initiative. Your involvement is welcomed and encouraged.

For further questions or clarification, be sure to contact the following leaders from the long range planning process:

Chair of the Design Process: Dick Doyle
Core Leaders: Jamie Buffing
Jim Buick
Carlos Hidalgo
Cari Veenstra
Pulpit Ministries: Bill Bonteke
Mass Media: Steve DeJonge
Leadership: Bruce Bradford
Expanded View of Ministry: Fred Langland
Worldwide Missions: Diane Munson
Evangelism: Bill Skinner
Spiritual Maturity: Rob Bell Sr.
Assimilation: Paul Veenstra
Staff Capacity: Russ Slater
Plant Capacity: Mike Yoder
Untapped Resources: Ted Vesti
Larry VenderWal

A Word of Thanks & Appreciation

We praise God for the resources, leadership, and scores of team members who devoted thousands of hours of service to enable the church board to make decisions on the resources and opportunities the Lord has given us at Calvary Church.

for Personal Involvement

Your ideas and comments are valuable. If you would like to have input on any of the recommendations or initiatives in this brochure, please contact one of the following members of the ongoing Long Range Planning Committee:

Clare D’Craad, Chairman
Jim Buick
Ed Dobson
Dick Doyle
Doug Fagerness
Carlos Hidalgo
Jay Link
Tom Sink
Carol Veenstra

Looking Forward

Calvary Church 1998 and beyond

Our Values

Biblical Truth
Evangelism
Missions
Preaching
Teaching
Worship
Service

“Let God be the glory!
Great Things He has done.”
Recommendations

The Long Range Planning Committee proposed to the Church Board the following 10 recommendations. These have been approved and action initiatives are currently being developed.

1. Develop a process involving the congregation, discipleship and care ministries.
2. Provide teacher training and certification program with prescribed curriculum.
3. Develop ongoing methods to ensure biblical knowledge.
4. Provide a systematic structure to spiritually equip the youth and adults at Calvary Church.
5. Incorporate lifestyle evangelism training through the educational ministries.
6. Educate and involve the congregation in missions.
7. Build strong families at all ages of life.
8. Equip men to assume their God given responsibilities.
10. Begin a church planting process.

Action Initiatives

The following initiatives have been approved by the Deacons and Elders with a strong emphasis on discipleship and assimilation of members and regular attendees. Please pray for the following.

1. Hire a full-time Director of Spiritual Growth to recruit and equip believers in the process of spiritual growth and assimilation.
2. Hire a full-time administrative assistant and part-time Director of Volunteer Network to support the Director of Spiritual Growth.
3. Change Phil Brower's title and job description to Director of Outreach to further develop evangelism ministries.
4. Hire part-time assistants in Missions and Single Adult Ministry to promote discipleship while equipping believers for ministry.
5. Examine and explore opportunities to enhance and further develop the teaching curriculum in our educational ministries.
6. Identify a person to encourage prayer at every level.
7. The elders will explore improvements in membership and the congregational care process.
8. Expand involvement with the EEC and additional inner-city outreach opportunities.
9. Identify a team of men and women committed to planting a new church.
10. Encourage the Adult Ministries and Christian Education committees to consider proposals to build stronger families.
11. Continue to explore the best utilization of space and staff resources.
12. In June of 1998, review the need for a full-time Director of Men's Ministries.

Future Initiatives

Recognizing the Church Board's priority of discipleship and assimilation of believers into the life and ministry of Calvary Church, the following initiatives have been recommended by the various Long Range Planning Teams for future consideration. The Long Range Planning Committee will continue meeting in order to provide ongoing evaluation of present and future ministry initiatives.

- Move toward digital media.
- Expand TV broadcast areas.
- Improve print communications.
- Explore internet capabilities.
- Develop a ministry training institute.
- Expand the internship program.
- Develop various growth opportunities for staff and volunteer leaders.
- Continue developing the four service format.
- Encourage the relationship and partnership with Cornerstone College and other ministries.
- Complete the East parking lot.
- Expand present office, classroom and narthex facilities.

He is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine. According to His power that is at work within us. — Eph. 3:20
Office of Spiritual Growth and Assimilation

Helping People Grow Spiritually while Building Up the Calvary Church Community
Office of Spiritual Growth and Assimilation

Helping People Grow Spiritually while Building Up the Calvary Church Community

Purpose of the Network System

The Long Range Planning Committee realized the need for the people of Calvary Church to grow spiritually. Calvary Church has growth groups and ministry opportunities. Our weakness has been connecting people to these groups and ministries. This network system is designed to help people get connected and take the next step in their spiritual walk.
Appendix B

"Growing and Belonging" in the Calvary Church Community

- A - Attending an Adult Congregation
- B - Being a member of a Small Group
- C - Contributing through Ministry Involvement

Church Structure

- Calvary Church Board
- Adult Ministry Committee
  - Associate Pastor
  - Doug Ferguson
- Office of Spiritual Growth & Assimilation
  - Karen Davis
  - Tad Yager
- Administrative Assistant
- Adult Congregation Director
  - Jim DeWitt
- Discipleship Director
  - Dennis Stock
- Small Group Directors
  - Delores DeFoff

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Appendix B

Network Structure

Spiritual Growth/ Networking

David Nemitz
Network Director

Administrative Assistant

Spiritual Growth Facilitator

New Members

Adult Congregation  Small Group  Ministry
Appendix B

Networking Process- Initiating

- Individuals are identified by the Administrative Assistant.
- Individuals are assigned to Spiritual Growth Facilitators.
- Spiritual Growth Facilitators contact individuals.

Networking Process- Meeting

- Spiritual Growth Facilitators will lead individuals through a self-assessment of their spiritual journey, giftedness and current spiritual growth needs.
- Facilitators will help match needs with opportunities.
Network Process - Follow up

- Adult Congregation Leaders, Small Group Leaders, Discipleship and/or Ministry Directors will be notified by S.G.F.
- S.G.F. will make a personal contact after 30 days and 6 months.
- Database system continues follow up.

Network Team Members

- Network Director
- Administrative Assistant
- Spiritual Growth Facilitators
- Discipleship and Ministry Directors
- Adult Congregation Leaders
- Small Group Leaders
Appendix B

ADULT CONGREGATIONS

Director - Jim DeWeerd

- Twenty-Six (26) Sunday Morning Congregations
- Three (3) Wednesday Evening Congregations
- Two (2) Saturday Evening Congregations
- Adult Congregations provide an opportunity to grow spiritually, develop relationships, and serve others.
- Other key staff include Dale & Jane DeKorne, Paul Claesson, Casey Boersma, & Joy Gillette
Small Group Opportunities

- Support Groups
- Ministry Groups
- Prayer Groups
- Fellowship Groups
- Bible Study Groups
- Discipleship Groups
Appendix B

Current Ministries with Small Group Opportunities

- Discipleship - Darlene Dykstra
- Women - Patty McGinnis & Lee Content
- Men - Jerry Holmes
- Single - Doug Peterson
- Collegiate - Randy Smith

- Family - Jerry Schreur
- Saturday Night - Rob Bell Jr.
- Missions
- Music
- Leadership
- Prayer
Appendix B

Ministries

MINISTRY OPPORTUNITIES

- One time events (e.g. Thanksgiving Baskets, Christmas Caroling Team)
- Short term ministries (e.g. Missions Trip, Music Ensembles, etc)
- Long term ministries (e.g. Awana, Sunday School, Choir, etc.)
Appendix B

How do we begin?

- Hire an Administrative Assistant.
- Recruit, hire & train two Spiritual Growth Facilitators - targeting New Believers & New Members.
- Develop Database system.
- Design Assessment tool & database questionnaire.
- Begin visits and evaluation.
- Network and communicate with ministry leadership in Calvary Church.

Impact of Network

- Contact 1000 families (3000 people) per year (Four SGF @ 5 contacts per week X 50 weeks).
- People encouraged to join A/C, Small Groups and/or One-on-One discipleship.
- People are recruited for ministries (one time, short term or long term positions).
- Personal Spiritual Growth has increased value for members and attendees at Calvary.
- The Calvary Church Community is strengthened.
Appendix B

Where do we go from here?

- Recruit, hire & train two additional S.G.F. targeting regular attendees and regular members.
- Design & develop spiritual gifts seminars & tools.
- Identify and develop ongoing ministry training.
- Ongoing challenge to A/C, Small Groups, etc.
- Design & develop personal spiritual growth tools (Devotional Guide Example - Darlene Dykstra).
- Design a communication system of quality assurance for all areas of spiritual growth ministries.
Appendix C

**NEW MEMBER PHONE SCRIPT**

**Background Information** – (for those who ask for/need more info or a little prodding)

A number of years ago the Calvary Long-Range Planning Committee did a number of surveys and research as to the direction Calvary would take for future growth and spiritual development of its members. One of the areas the Board wanted to focus on was the spiritual growth and assimilation of our members. Hence, the Spiritual Growth & Assimilation Ministry was established. Part of the work of this ministry is to meet one-on-one with each member and attendee at Calvary ("as you can see this is quite an undertaking"). As a new member this appointment will complete the membership process for you. Thus the reason for my call. (Then proceed with the "script" and have them commit to a date/time to meet with a facilitator.)

"Hi, this is ______ from the Assimilation Ministry at Calvary Church. Recently Pastor Nemitz sent you, as a new member, a packet of information which included a Spiritual Gifts Inventory, a Christian Life Profile and a SG&A Questionnaire and I am following up to schedule an appointment for you to meet with a facilitator.

We try to make this as convenient for you as possible – Do you have your material completed yet?? " [then, if necessary, offer suggestions for a meeting time that allows for them to complete their material – at least a week and a half out – or sooner if they have it completed already]. "Are there particular days or times that are better for you than others? The time with your facilitator will be about an hour and a half to two hours, depending on how chatty you all get when you get together. We're now scheduling in the month(s) of [ tell them what month you'd like to schedule them]. Do you need a daytime or an evening appointment? Would [suggest a date and time] work for you? " MAKE APPOINTMENT. "This should give you time enough to complete the material before your appointment."

"Be sure to bring your **completed** material with you when you come for your appointment – this material is what you and your facilitator will go over together, then you will take the material back home with you for future reference."

You will be meeting with [Facilitator's Name] – Come to the expressway side of the building, Entrance H – make a right in the hallway and the first door on the right is the Adult Ministries Office. There are a couple of chairs there – please have a seat and [Facilitator's Name] will meet you there. Thanks so much for your time."
MEMBER/ATTENDEE PHONE SCRIPT –

Background Information – (for those who ask for more info or a little prodding):

A number of years ago the Calvary Church Long-Range Planning Committee did a number of surveys and research as to the direction Calvary would take for future growth and spiritual development of its members. One of the areas the Board wanted to focus on was the spiritual growth and assimilation of our members. Hence, the Spiritual Growth & Assimilation Ministry was established. Part of the work of this ministry is to meet one-on-one with each member and attendee at Calvary ("as you can see this is quite an undertaking"). We have been working with the membership for over two and a half years now and have completed meeting with over 800 individuals. In the course of scheduling these meetings we have received requests from members who want to go through the Assimilation process now instead of later. So we’ve decided to open it up to give more of our members the opportunity to participate and not have to wait for a membership specific date. Thus the reason for the letter from Pastor Nemitz and for my call. [Then proceed with the “script” and have them commit to a date/time to meet with a facilitator.]

“Hi, this is _________ from Calvary Church – I’m calling for the Assimilation Ministry. In January Pastor David Nemitz sent you an informational letter which included a Spiritual Growth & Assimilation Brochure and a Response Postcard. . . . do you recall that? . . . Have you had an opportunity to review that material? I’m following up to encourage you to receive the “gifts/growth” packet and to set a meeting to review the completed material. We try to make appointment times as convenient for you as possible. Meeting time with a facilitator will be about an hour and a half to two hours, depending on how talkative you all get.” [Then offer suggestions for meeting times that allow for them to receive and complete the materials – allow at least two weeks. We are now scheduling in the month(s) of [tell them the month you’d like to schedule them in] “Do you need a daytime or an evening appointment? . . . Are there particular days or times that are better for you than others? . . . Would [give a date and time] work for you? MAKE APPOINTMENT. This should give you time enough to complete the gifts/growth material before the appointment.” (Note: it usually takes 30-45 minutes to complete the material)

“Be sure to bring the completed material with you when you come for your appointment – this is what you and your facilitator will go over together, then you will take the material back home with you for future reference. When you come for your meeting – come to the highway side – Entrance H – take a right in the hallway and go to the first door on the right, Adult Ministries Office. There are a couple of chairs there – please have a seat – your facilitator, [facilitator’s name] will meet you there. Thanks so much for your time.”
Appendix C

REMINDER:

You are scheduled to meet with ____________________________ our

Spiritual Growth & Assimilation Facilitator, on

__________________________

In your home  a.m.

Plan to meet – In the church office  At________________p.m.

Please bring these completed forms with you:  • Spiritual Growth

Questionnaire  • Christian Life Profile  • Spiritual Gifts Inventory

We look forward to seeing you then.
January 30, 2002

Dear [FirstName]:

Welcome to Calvary Church! We are so glad God has led you to join our community of believers. Having gone through the membership process you already know and agree with the values that characterize our church community. We are committed to living by grace, growing in our relationship with God, developing and using our spiritual gifts, finding and participating in a small group, and faithfully giving to the work of the church. Together, not only are we committed to these values, but we also desire to make them a reality in our lives.

The Office of Spiritual Growth & Assimilation has been established to help you fulfill three of these commitments: growth, giftedness, and groups. We desire to assist you in accomplishing your goals in these areas. This packet is designed to begin that process. Upon receipt of this letter, please call Sidney Crooks, Assimilation Coordinator at Calvary Church, 956-9377 ext. 211, to arrange a convenient time (approximately an hour) to meet with our Spiritual Growth Facilitator for New Members, Bill Crooks. Bill’s ministry focuses on sharing, together with you, areas of small group involvement, which will assist you in accomplishing your spiritual growth goals and to explore possible areas of service, related to your spiritual giftedness.

Enclosed with this letter are three items: Spiritual Growth Questionnaire, Spiritual Gifts Inventory, and Christian Life Profile. We would appreciate you taking the time before your meeting with Bill to review and complete each of these items. We anticipate your meeting with Bill will be encouraging as you discover how God will use you in building up the body of Christ and at the same time grow your relationship with our God and Savior Jesus Christ. May God bless you: we look forward to your call.

In His service,

David D. Nemitz
Pastor of Spiritual Growth

DDN/sec

Enclosures
Appendix D

SPIRITUAL GROWTH QUESTIONNAIRE

FirstName LastName
Address 1
City State PostalCode

Member Date: MemberDate
Attending Calvary Since:
Birth Date:
Spiritual Birth Date:
Anniversary Date:
Spouse:

Marital Status (Circle One): Married
Divorced Separated Widowed Single

Phone Numbers:
Home: HomePhone
Business: WorkPhone
Cell:
FAX: 
E-mail: 

Dependent Children: Birth Date M/F

Occupation:

Current Worship Involvement:
(Please mark how frequently per month you attend which service(s).)

Sat. PM
Sun. 1st
Sun. 2nd

Freq./Month

Current Adult Congregation:

Current Small Group:

Current Ministry Area:

*Spiritual Gifts: 1. 2. 3.

*Spiritual Growth Need:

*Use results of Spiritual Gifts Inventory & Christian Life Profile

Contact Date: S.G.F.

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Spiritual Gifts Inventory

Discover your spiritual gifts in only 20 minutes!

LARRY GILBERT

QUESTIONNAIRE
WITH COMPANION 2-PART SELF-GRADING ANSWER SHEET
Appendix D

The Christian Life Profile
A discipleship tool to assess Christian Beliefs, Practices and Virtues

PERSONAL ASSESSMENT
Appendix E

Goal Worksheet

A. My lowest Broad Category score is: (circle one) Love God / Love Neighbor
B. My lowest Core Competency inside the Broad Category listed above is:

C. I am going to focus on the area of:

D. I am going to study the following statements that form the content of this area:
   Q#    Q#    Q#    Q#

E. The reason I believe I struggle in this area (and with these statements) is:


My Goal

1. My Spiritual Life Goal is to:

2. Specific measurable action step(s) I will take and supporting task(s) I will create:

3. Date I plan to accomplish this goal:

   People who will support me in achieving my goal:
   1. 
   2. 
   3. 
   4. 

Calvary Church  •  www.calvary-church.net
### Appendix E

**Key Scriptures Relating to Our Beliefs, Practices, and Virtues**

#### Loving God

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Beliefs</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Trinity</td>
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<td>Salvation by Grace</td>
<td>II Timothy 3:16-17</td>
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<td>Authority of the Bible</td>
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<td>God is Personal</td>
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<td>Single-mindedness</td>
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<td>Bible Study</td>
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<tr>
<td>Peace</td>
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<td>Faithfulness</td>
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#### Loving Neighbor

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<td>Psalm 82:3-4</td>
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<td>Compassion</td>
<td>John 14:1-4</td>
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<td>Eternity</td>
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<td>Give Away My Time</td>
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<td>Give Away My Money</td>
<td>Ephesians 6:19-20</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sharing My Faith</td>
<td>Romans 12:1-2</td>
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<td>Give Away My Life</td>
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Appendix E

Spiritual Growth Resources

The following books are designed, as individual resources, to help people focus and learn about the areas highlighted in the Christian Life Profile. Many things, including the books one chooses to read, can influence one’s spiritual journey. The resources focus on the three categories (Beliefs, Practices, and Virtues) assessed in the Christian Life Profile used by the Spiritual Growth Office in the assimilation process.

BASIC CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE (Beliefs)

**Know What You Believe** by Paul E. Little.

A wonderfully, brief overview of the basic truths regarding the Christian faith. It reviews topics such as God, Christ, Holy Spirit, The Bible, Coming Events, Salvation, Angels, etc. A must for people wanting to refresh their understanding of the foundational beliefs of their faith. Includes study questions for each topic.

**Decide for Yourself** by Gordon R. Lewis.

A concise, yet complete, survey of the major truths of the Christian faith. The unique format allows the reader to interactively draw conclusions regarding what scripture tells us about God, Jesus, the church, etc.

**The Rest of Your Life** by Patrick Morley.

This book is more of a philosophical approach to the major truths of scripture. The author not only gives a “road map” of what a believer should know about the Christian faith, but also how to live it everyday.

**Growing Deep in the Christian Life** by Charles Swindoll.

What are the essentials of building yourself up in the knowledge of God’s Word? In the classic Swindoll style the book takes Bible doctrine and makes it practical.

**Basic Theology** by Charles Ryrie.

The author of this book has long been considered one of the great thinkers in systematic theology. Theology is basically “thinking about God.” This is wonderful reference book as you explore God’s Word day by day.

**Knowing God** by J.I. Packer

For the last twenty years, this book has given individuals all over the world opportunity to understand the greatness of God. Updated from the original “old English” version, it plainly communicates the qualities and majesty of our heavenly Father.

**The Jesus I Never Knew** by Philip Yancey.

If we indeed are to become more like Christ, how can we accomplish that if our knowledge of Him is limited? You will come away after reading this book with a new appreciation of the love God had for mankind demonstrated by the life and work of Jesus Christ.
Appendix E

SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES (Practices)

Success God's Way by Charles Stanley.

A wonderful resource regarding achieving contentment and following through with God's design for your life. Has two chapters dedicated to reviewing using one's money and one's time to fulfill God's purposes.

Living By The Book by Howard Hendricks.

A straightforward, step-by-step approach to how to study the Bible, written in the very practical style of Howard Hendricks (along with his son, Bill).

Fresh Wind, Fresh Fire by Jim Cymbala.

What happens when the Holy Spirit is at work in your heart? An inspirational book about how prayer and God's Word can revitalize your spiritual journey.

The Spirit of the Disciplines by Dallas Willard

A classic look at how God uses the various disciplines of the Christian walk to bring us in closer communion with Himself. The appendix has an interesting challenge regarding discipleship.

Descending Into Greatness by Bill Hybels.

An easy to read volume focusing on key qualities that should mark each believer. Each quality is highlighted by a modern day example of the virtue.

Sense and Nonsense about Prayer by Lehman Strauss.

One of the basic building blocks of the Christian walk is described in this book with clarity. Your prayer life will never be the same after reading this volume.

What's so Amazing About Grace? by Philip Yancey

In our world of Americanized Christianity it is easy to get caught up in a works based relationship with God. We are saved by grace and need to live by grace. The author of the book will help you capture the true meaning of grace and how we can make it a reality in our lives.

Balancing the Christian Life by Charles Ryrie.

For twenty-five years believers have used this book to help them make sense of issues that have taken them "off-course" in their spiritual journey. Dr. Ryrie uses Biblical concepts as they relate to one's personal responsibilities and practical problems faced along the way.
PRACTICES (continued)

A Hunger for God by John Piper.

How does fasting relate to my relationship with God? This book helps the reader understand the connection of glorifying God by magnifying your desire for Him.

The Pursuit of Holiness by Jerry Bridges.

What is our responsibility in the area of becoming more like Jesus Christ? God has commanded us to be holy and this book begins to give us a way to fulfill that command by learning how to deal with sin in our lives.

FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT (Virtues)

The Practice of Godliness by Jerry Bridges

Building a foundation and a structure that moves us toward Godliness is the outgrowth of the fruit of the Spirit in our lives. The sequel to The Pursuit of Holiness focuses on the growing of character that pleases God.

The Promise by Tony Evans

How can we expect to live lives pleasing to God if we are afraid to open ourselves up to the fullness of His Spirit? Tony Evans captures the power of what the Spirit can and will do in our lives for the glory of God.

Understanding the Spiritual Gifts within You by Larry Gilbert

One of the best ways to demonstrate the fruit of the Spirit is to practice the gifts of the Spirit. This text includes a spiritual gift inventory that is self-scoring.

Discovering Your Natural Talents by John Bradley and Jay Carty.

The same God who endowed us with Spiritual gifts also gave us natural talents. Learn, through this text, how you can love what you do and do what you love at home, work church and play.

Copies of these books can be purchased at Calvary Church through the Office of Spiritual Growth and Assimilation. Contact David Nemitz or Sidney Crooks for more details at 956-9377.
Appendix F

January 30, 2002

FirstName LastName
Address1
City State PostalCode

Dear FirstName:

It was a pleasure to visit and share with you about what you are doing personally and in ministry at Calvary Church.

We are grateful for your willingness to share your life with others and know that you are seeking to use your God-given gifts to glorify Him. May God bless you richly as you seek His direction for your own personal spiritual growth as well as in your outreach to those around you.

Thank you for the time you shared with me. I really enjoyed our time together.

In His service,

Facilitator
Spiritual Growth & Assimilation Ministry

BC/sc
New Members Study Guide

Calvary Church
Appendix G

Welcome New Member Class Participant!

Thank you for signing up for an upcoming new members class. We at Calvary Church are excited about having the opportunity to minister to you in the class by providing instruction about our church and her beliefs and by giving you opportunity to interact with us with your questions and comments. But first let me give you a brief overview of the four main purposes of Calvary Church as are stated in the Constitution:

1. To stand unequivocally for the fundamentals of the Faith as contained in the Holy Scriptures.
2. To present the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ at home and abroad.
3. To teach the Holy Scriptures for the edification of those who have accepted the Lord Jesus Christ as their personal Savior.
4. To do all things in the name of and for the honor and glory of our God, the King of Kings and Lords of Lords, and our Savior Jesus Christ.

These purposes are achieved through an understanding of and submission to God and His inerrant Word, the Bible. Therefore it is essential that we as Christians grow in our knowledge of and obedience to the Bible by the enabling grace of God. To be a biblical church family, we cannot be just a local church organization. We must also recognize that all genuine believers are a part of an organism, the Body of Christ. Therefore we are called to function as a body and be interdependent rather than independent believers. This body life of interdependence can happen only if each person uses the spiritual gifts, natural talents, time, and resources which God has given to every believer to serve Him and one another.

We are encouraged that you have a desire to enter the membership process of Calvary Church. To help you better understand what it means to be a member and to help you understand the vision God has given Calvary Church, your first step is to attend the Calvary New Member Classes. The Saturday classes are held from 8:30a to 4:20p and all the requirements for membership classes are met in one day. The Wednesday classes meet from 6:30p to 8:15p on four consecutive Wednesday nights. When you sign up for a class, you will be notified of the place where the class is to be held when class materials are mailed to you. You may choose to attend any of the Classes in 2002:

Saturday Classes January 19, May 4, July 13, and November 2.
Wednesday Classes March 6, 13, 20, 27 and September 4, 11, 18, 25.

The first two hours of the class is an orientation portion of the membership class. In preparation for this segment of the Class, we have enclosed a Calvary New Member's Study Guide. This guide will serve as an outline for orientation. Completion of all the questions is not required for membership, but for a much better understanding of what will be covered in the class, we recommend that you to take the time now and go over the material in the Study Guide. It will help you to understand the biblical basis for what we believe doctrinally at Calvary Church. You may find it most helpful to divide up the time for this study by completing one "G" section each day so you can fully absorb the biblical truths. The Study Guide is designed to be a help and a challenge for you whether you are a new believer or one who has trusted Christ many years ago.

In the class we will cover the Statement of Doctrine included in the Constitution of the church (enclosed). One of the questions on the application for membership is whether you have read and agree with the doctrinal statement of Calvary Church 'in its entirety.' So be sure to examine it carefully. Among the questions on the application you will be asked: "Have you read the Constitution of Calvary Church?" "Can you say 'I believe' to each of the doctrinal statements in the Constitution, owning them for yourself?" and "Do you agree to be governed by this Constitution, church policies, and church leadership?" Thus it is necessary to familiarize yourself with the Constitution and policies of the church.
Appendix G

Also included in this mailing are several taped messages presented by Pastor Ed Dobson. Please listen to these tapes prior to the classes for better understanding of the material which will be presented. You'll find included too the "Biblical Beliefs of Calvary Church" booklet which will give you a more in depth look at the beliefs of Calvary Church. Studying these truths will help you to participate better in the class sessions.

Please turn in your completed application to the church office and an interview with an Elder Care Team will be scheduled at your convenience. The goal of this interview is to encourage you on your spiritual journey by helping you to relate to your Elder Care Team your personal relationship with Jesus. It is also another opportunity to ask any remaining questions you may have about membership at Calvary. Please do not fold your application as this makes it difficult to run copies of them. Also choose a small picture for attachment to the application and attach it temporarily with a paper clip. We will attach it to the application permanently before copies are made. Thank you.

Following your membership interview, the information will be brought to the next regularly scheduled elders meeting which is held on the first Tuesday of each month. Upon approval of the elders, the recommendation for membership will go before the Church Board which meets regularly on the second Tuesday of each month and is composed of the elders and the deacons. The Church Board is the final place of approval for membership. Upon approval, a letter will be sent to you from Pastor Ed with a certificate of membership and notification of the time of your formal reception on a Sunday evening. This is a time of recognition in the evening service with a time of fellowship afterwards with you our honored guest. These receptions are held quarterly.

Becoming a member of Calvary Church is the culmination of a series of important steps. But we must not think that membership is an end in itself, any more than being hired on a job means your work is finished. To become a member of Calvary is to affirm both where you are presently in your spiritual journey with a goal to lifelong growth and maturity. It is a major step in your personal walk of discipleship with the Lord Jesus.

This is an exciting time! It is a time to anticipate belonging to a church family who will help you to grow in the Lord and a time when you can also serve Him with your natural talents and spiritual gift(s). We look forward to mutual blessings.

God bless you as you prepare for the class,

Donald G. Matheny
Membership Director of Calvary Church
Appendix G

Why Membership?

“So we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another.”

Romans 12:5

One might assume that, as long as you profess Christ, what is the need for any further identification with a local church? Isn’t it enough simply to call yourself a Christian and attend services somewhere regularly? What is the point of formal membership?

Three Reasons

We believe there are at least three reasons for having formal membership. First, we believe the concept of membership is biblical. While the term “church member” is never used in the Scriptures, the concept is implicit throughout the New Testament. Believers clearly identified themselves with a specific local body and were challenged to become devoted participants.

Second, formal membership is valuable to the church as it seeks to fulfill its God-given task of shepherding. Calvary, by its very design, attracts a wide variety of people from mature believers to seekers. We hope that will always be the case. But at some point it is important to identify those who truly comprise the “flock” at Calvary - the core that are willing to build and sustain the ministries of the church. These are also the committed “family members” who should receive priority in the allocation of finite church resources (as commanded in Galatians 6:10).

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, experience shows that membership benefits the individual. In a culture where commitment is no longer highly valued, recognizable membership is an important step that moves each of us out of the vague clouds of our good intentions and into the clear light of committed participation. It presents a challenge to “step out of the stands” and publicly affirm a commitment to Christ and to a specific local body. In this sense, membership can be a significant “defining moment” in one’s lifelong discipleship journey.

What is a Member?

But how exactly do you define a “member”? This is a legitimate question, and it needs some clarification, since the Bible actually describes two kinds of “membership”. Scripture is full of references to the once-and-for-all union with Christ and His body which happens at the instant of your conversion through the baptism of the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 12:13; Ephesians 2:19-22; 4:5-6; Colossians 1:13-22). At that moment, you become both a believer and a member in the universal Church of Jesus Christ based solely on His merit and grace. That “membership” is eternal and unchanging. But then the Bible also urges believers to continue growing by becoming members in a specific local assembly (Romans 12:4-8; 1 Corinthians 12:25-31; 14:12, 16; Hebrews 10:24-25; 1 Timothy 3:14-15). This local representation of the worldwide organism of the Body of Christ has church officers, elders and deacons, pastors, and other servants.
Appendix G

The Five G’s

How can membership in a local church or assembly be described biblically? We have attempted to summarize it in an outline form using what we call “The Five G’s”.

**Grace**

*The individual appropriation of the saving work of Christ; the New Birth relationship with God.*
*(Ephesians 2:8-9; Titus 3:5)*

**Growth**

*The ongoing evidence of a life of spiritual growth in fellowship with Christ.*
*(Galatians 2:20; 2 Peter 3:18)*

**Gifts**

*Serving Christ’s body according to spiritual giftedness and natural talent.*
*(Romans 12:6-8; Acts 9:39)*

**Group**

*Participation in the body of Christ and connection with others in significant relationships.*
*(Acts 2:46)*

**Generosity**

*Honoring God with one’s material resources and supporting the church as God prospers.*
*(2 Corinthians 9:7; Philippians 4:11-19)*

We believe these statements capture the essential traits of someone devoted to Christ and His Church. These characteristics are biblical - they are not the work of man. As such, we believe they provide the criteria for a spiritually healthy member of a local church such as Calvary. With the exception of the first “G,” Grace, the last four G’s are not requirements for church membership. However, it’s our desire that Calvary members understand what the Bible teaches about each of these areas and their importance for the church and every believer. As a church, we value membership. It’s not like joining any other organization on earth. It’s much closer to being a part of a committed, loving family whose members all recognize they are imperfect, falling short of God’s perfection, who have accepted Christ’s gift of redemption through His blood and desire to grow.

*Privileges of Membership*

The word “membership” implies that there are benefits. Specifically, being a member means that you now have the right to influence the key decisions of the church, including the selection of elders and deacons. Only members may vote at congregational or annual business meetings. Members also receive priority for facility usage and staff members’ time (such as weddings, funerals, benevolence needs, personal support in your area of ministry, etc.). From time to time, meetings or other functions are held which are for “members only.” These events are usually called to either inform the core of the church of a major concern or to garner input from the body. Finally, all leadership and teaching positions in the church require membership as a prerequisite. The primary reason to become a member, however, is not to gain a personal advantage, but to identify ourselves with those who believe the Bible, love the Lord, and wish to serve Him. Since we’re all growing in Him, we ought to be pursuing these qualities as a way to be pleasing to Him as first and foremost.
Appendix G

Where Do I Go From Here?

If you would like to explore membership at Calvary, all you need to do is continue what you’re doing now - read and complete the study materials in the next chapter. These materials were written to give you a deeper understanding and Biblical explanation for the five G’s. Use these materials as you would any Bible study program, as a tool to understand who God is and what He desires of us.

Next, call the church office to find the dates and times for the next Calvary New Members Classes. In this class, you will get an overview of Calvary and we’ll discuss in details the five G’s. You will find this class much more helpful, if you’ve completed the studies.

Following the orientation portion of the class, we would urge you continue with the instruction portion of the class, whether you intend to be a member or not. (However, this class is required for membership). In it you will learn about the biblical beliefs of Calvary Church.

Following the completion of these New Members classes, you may make application for membership and an interview will be scheduled with you by an Elder Care Team Member upon assignment of your application. Once the Church Board has reviewed your application, if accepted, your name will appear in the bulletin and you will be sent a packet from the Office of Spiritual Growth & Assimilation. The packet includes a Spiritual Gifts Inventory, Christian Life Profile, and Spiritual Growth Questionnaire. You will be asked to complete the materials and set up a meeting at your convenience with a Spiritual Growth Facilitator. The focus of the meeting with the facilitator is to review the results of the materials to help you connect with your new church family. You will also be invited to participate at a formal New Member’s Reception held on an upcoming Sunday evening welcoming you into the membership of Calvary Church.

Qualifications For Calvary Church Membership

Persons desiring to unite with Calvary Church will qualify for membership by:

1. Confessing and possessing the Lord Jesus Christ as their personal Savior.
2. Accepting in its entirety the statement of doctrine contained in Article III of the Constitution.
3. Agreeing to be governed by the Constitution of Calvary Church.
4. Attending the membership classes and each person completing an application for membership.
5. Being interviewed by an Elder Care Team and approved by the Church Board as to their Christian experience and the basis of their salvation.
Appendix G

THE MISSION, PURPOSE, AND STRATEGY OF CALVARY CHURCH

"The Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost."
Luke 19:10

A Mission, a Vision, a Plan

Jesus Christ had a mission. He came to earth from heaven and grew in the wisdom of His purpose (Luke 2:52). Even at the age of 12, He told His parents, "Did you not know I had to be about My Father's business?" (Luke 2:49). His single-mindedness, determination, and reliance on His heavenly Father's guidance ensured that at the end of His ministry, He could pray confidently, "I have accomplished the work which You gave me to do" (John 17:4).

Jesus also had a goal, a new humanity His mission would make possible. He knew the life He would have to live to accomplish His goal. He knew the goal He had for His followers, a goal of holiness and conformity to His image. He built a community of believers - only eleven at first - that would be the foundation of a vast network of followers who would fulfill His vision. Knowing His disciples' exciting potential but feeble strength, Jesus prayed, "As You have sent Me into the world, I also send them into the world" (John 17:18). He prayed that God would be their source of life and strength.

Jesus also had a plan. His ministry unfolded in stages, and He said "No" to many opportunities when they were the right things at the wrong time. With no shortage of need, He had to be selective about the people and possibilities in which He invested. Disciples had to be chosen from among many interested volunteers (and sometimes He called people right out of their preoccupation with other interests!). Workers needed to be trained before being sent. Jesus sometimes moved on to new ministry opportunities even when people wanted Him to stay. The control He exercised in relation to His ministry was always in response to the leading of His heavenly Father - and as the appropriate way to facilitate His mission and vision in accordance with His values.

His Life in Our Lives

We who call ourselves Jesus' followers at Calvary Church desire to carry on His mission. We also want to identify our core values and act consistent with them. While the message of Jesus Christ is timeless, the forms and programs we use to further His work are flexible - they must be servants, not masters. We claim no infallibility for any of our ideas, but we believe we’ll be more fruitful if we follow a well-defined strategic plan, always remaining open to how the Spirit may take us in new, unexpected directions. Our common imperatives will require mid-course corrections as we face future challenges.

The goal for us, however, is simply to abide in the Lord Jesus (John 15:1-5). He is the Head of the Church and without Him we can do nothing. He is the Vine and we are the branches. The branch cannot bear fruit of itself. Nor can Calvary Church. We want Him to live His life in us and produce the fruit of the Spirit to glorify Himself. We want to please Him.

We often say at Calvary Church, "People matter to God." We humbly recognize that we were among the "lost" whom Jesus came to seek and save. Many still wander unreached by His love. Because of Jesus, we too now live "to seek and save that which was lost." By the grace of God we will seek to reach them.
OUR MISSION

Calvary is committed to a balanced ministry of biblical teaching, worship, prayer, personal caring, and opportunities to be equipped for personal and family growth and service. It is a place where you are loved, accepted, strengthened and encouraged. The ultimate mission of Calvary Church is to communicate the gospel and disciple believers here and around the world.

OUR PURPOSE

Communicate the gospel in a culturally relevant way to every person in Grand Rapids and around the world

Encourage all believers in their unique journey toward maturity.

Enable all believers to discover and exercise their spiritual giftedness.

Enable all believers to reproduce themselves in the lives of others.

OUR STRATEGY

a. Identify and pray for people groups.
b. Train people for evangelism.
c. Mobilize people by encouraging the development of ministries that will reach people for Christ.
d. Provide public expressions of evangelism.

a. Enable all believers to study, understand, and apply the Word of God (II Tim. 2:15).
b. Enable all believers to engage in a life of personal and community prayer (Heb. 4:16; Acts 4:31; Eph. 6:18-20; I Thess. 5:17).
c. Enable all believers to worship God in Spirit and in truth (John 4:23).
d. Enable all believers to identify with at least one small group within the church.
e. Enable all believers to demonstrate the Lordship of Christ in every area of life (Rom. 12:1-2).

a. Help all believers to discover their spiritual giftedness (I Cor. 12:7).
b. Provide training for all believers to develop their spiritual giftedness.
c. Mobilize all believers in areas of ministry connected to their spiritual giftedness.

a. Provide instruction and training in the principles of servant leadership (II Tim. 3:16-17).
b. Provide opportunities to mobilize people in areas of servant leadership (Matt. 47:18-20).
FROM SEEKER TO SERVER
CALVARY CHURCH

A Descriptive Model of the Stages of Maturity in Spiritual Development in the Believer's Life.

- Need Gospel
- Basics of Theology
- Position in Christ
- Relation to Christ
- Role
- Spiritual Gifts

Saturday Night
Festival of Lights
Easter Celebration
Back Yard Bible Clubs
Campus Safari
Division Street/Degage/Lost Sheep
Etc.

Celebration
Sunday/Wednesday Night
Congregation/Community
Sunday Congregation/Bible Studies
Weekday Communities/Support Groups
Music Groups/Men's Groups/Women's Groups
Youth Teams
Cell
Small Group Studies/Events
Within Other Communities
Separate Group Activity

A. Making Your Mark
One-on-one Discipleship
Personal Evangelism
B. Contributing Through Others
Teaching a Bible study
Guiding a Small Group
Youth Ministry Team Member
C. Leading Through Vision
Director of Ministry/Team Planning/Committee Participant
Board/Staff Member

SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT MODEL
Appendix G

THE FIVE G'S

A farmer has no power to make his crop grow. He prepares the field, sows the seed, fertilizes the soil, and protects the plants from parasites, but he cannot create life. Yet every good farmer cultivates his crop because he knows he must do the right things even if he can't do the most important thing. Most of all, he pays attention to the health of his field. He analyzes it constantly, observing the important indicators of life: seedlings that break through the soil, green color which denotes health, and changes that show growth. If those things are absent, he works to reverse the detrimental effects of whatever threatens his crop. He takes all of this action, yet remains utterly dependent on something other than what he can do to make his crop successful. Such is the life of a farmer.

And such is the life of the church! The apostle Paul said “You are God's field” in 1 Corinthians 3:9. We are completely dependent on God, yet we must look for the signs of life and combat the presence of what threatens our spiritual health both individually and collectively. We must look for the characteristics of a healthy church, and see if we have them. We must note the symptoms of spiritual blight, and fend it off. We do this with the humble admission that God is in our midst, providing life and growth. We are caretakers, not creators.

What are the signs of spiritual life and health? Specifically, how can we look at our church as a whole and know that “These signs indicate we are doing well in the will of God” or “This situation is a problem and we must work for change”? We need a diagnostic tool, an indicator of spiritual health.

The Five G's are our attempt to draw, in broad strokes, the picture of a healthy church. If we have members living out these characteristics, we're probably moving in the right direction for spiritual health. If people aren't progressing along these lines, there would be indication that something has to improve.

Characteristics of Church Members

As you delve into this study, realize it is intended to be a tool not just for our church, but for you. How often do you take a look - an intense look - at your current spiritual life and discuss your findings with someone committed to helping you? Our whole reason for meeting with you is to offer a supportive perspective on where you are and where you're going in relation to God and His will for you. That opportunity is just around the corner after you complete this study.

A Note of Thanks

The concept of the Five G’s were developed by Willow Creek Ministries and we gratefully acknowledge their contribution to Calvary Church by sharing them with us. They have been altered to meet our particular needs here at Calvary Church.

Five G’s Study: p. 1
Appendix G

Grace

The Basis of Our Salvation

There is nothing of greater importance than an individual’s personal relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ. When the elder team interviews you for membership, they will be asking you to relate to them your personal relationship to Jesus Christ. They will ask if you have received Him as your own personal Lord and Savior, and if you are enjoying a life of fellowship with Him daily.

The Spirit of God enables sinners through grace to understand and believe the truth of the Bible regarding sin, self, God, Christ, and other important truths. Grace is the unmerited favor of God toward sinners. It is the gift of God to those who believe. We must realize that salvation is not something that is earned by works or in any other way. Salvation is the gift of God by means of His grace to lost and hopeless sinners.

God the Father sent His eternal Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, to earth to live as the God-man a perfect life of holiness. As payment for the sins of the world, Jesus died on the cross at Calvary so that sinners could be redeemed by His blood. He paid the sin debt for all men. God now by His grace has sent the Holy Spirit into the world to convict humankind of sin, righteousness, and judgment, bringing lost sinners to Jesus Christ for salvation. That is grace!

Under this heading of “Grace,” please take a few moments and respond to the following questions. As you look up the Scriptures involved in each answer, please allow God to speak to you through them so that you might have a better understanding of His amazing grace.

What happened in the story of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden? (Genesis 2:17; 3:1-6)

Why are all people lost and in need of salvation? (Romans 5:12; 3:10-18; 23; 6:23)

What happens to those people who remain only ‘in Adam’? (1. Corinthians 15:22a). (Note the other group in the second part of this verse (15:22b) are those termed ‘in Christ.’ What happens to them?)

What has God done to provide salvation for sinners? (John 3:16; Romans 5:8; 1 Peter 3:18)

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What do we sinners contribute toward salvation? (Ephesians 2:8-9 (note 'grace' here); Titus 3:5)

What did Jesus say sinners must do? (John 3:3,5) What does the expression 'born again' mean?

What is the invitation Jesus gives to lost sinners? (Matthew 11:28-30; Isaiah 1:18)

Can we be sure of having eternal life once we have confessed our sinfulness and asked Jesus to be our Savior? (1 John 5:13; John 10:28; Romans 8:38-39)

Is Jesus the only way to heaven or could there be other ways? (John 14:6; Acts 4:12; 16:31)

If you have never received Christ as you personal Savior, why not trust Him now? If you would like to do that, write Him a note and tell Him your need and your desire at this time. If you have already asked Him to be your personal Savior, then give a brief testimony of the time you received Him into your life.

The Elders’ Statement on “Grace”

True believers are those persons who are relying only and completely on the finished work of the Lord Jesus Christ on the cross of Calvary when He shed His blood for sinners. This is their only hope of eternal life. True believers have entered into a personal relationship of grace, love, forgiveness, and fellowship with God. We believe that the blood of Jesus Christ takes away forever the sins of those who trust in Him. The reception of salvation in Christ is by grace through faith alone and is received only as a free gift. Good works cannot in any way save a person from their sins, but are to follow receiving Christ as Savior. Assurance of eternal life is based on the promise of the Scriptures which prompt a corresponding conduct in the daily life of the believer. Believers who are walking by the power of the Spirit will desire that Christ be Lord of their lives. They are to realize that they have been bought with a price and now belong to God.

Helpful Hints
1. Read C. S. Lewis’ book Mere Christianity.
2. Read the RBC booklets “The Forgiveness of God,” “Do I Have the Right Kind of Faith?” “What is a Personal Relationship with God?” “Religion or Christ: What’s the Difference?” and “What We Believe.” Call RBC at 616-942-6770 to order booklets or see if they are available in the prayer room or other locations at church.

Five G’s Study: p. 3
Appendix G

Growth

Progressing As a Christian

“But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and forever! Amen.” 2 Peter 3:18.

“Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.” 2 Timothy 2:15.

“We ought always to thank God for you, brothers, and rightly so, because your faith is growing more and more, and the love every one of you has for each other is increasing.” 2 Thessalonians 1:3.

“Like newborn babies, crave pure spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up in your salvation...” 1 Peter 2:2.

“Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ.” Ephesians 4:15.

“I think we need to throw out this plant - it’s all withered and brown.”

“The company is in trouble - our net sales have leveled off for the last four quarters.”

“Christina is already two months old but hasn’t grown beyond her birth weight - we’ve got to do something, Doctor!”

What do the above statements have in common? They all presume it’s in the nature of living things to grow. All living organisms are programmed by their DNA to go through stages of growth until they eventually reach maturity. To be alive, by God’s design, is to change and to grow. All who have received Jesus Christ as personal Savior are also programmed to grow.

Why then do some Christians not seem to grow spiritually? We would rush a child to the hospital if she failed to grow. How can we take similar steps to protect our own inner health when we stagnate and stop “gaining weight” spiritually speaking?

The first “G”, Grace, emphasized our beginning the Christian life - our first encounter with God’s grace. The second “G”, Growth, is about our ongoing response to God’s grace over a lifetime. Our walk with God begins by grace, and it also continues by grace. Unfortunately, just as people misunderstand the extent of God’s work to initiate our Christian life, they fall into the trap of thinking their work - their following the rules - automatically produces spiritual maturity. To try to grow through one’s own efforts alone is as much out of harmony with God’s plan as not growing at all. Both lead to spiritual frustration.

The purpose of this study is to discover a coordination between owning the personal responsibility to grow which includes resisting what keeps us from growing and trusting in the help and power of the Holy Spirit to bring about Christ’s very life in us in a moment by moment by abiding in Him. That tension will be with us all of our lives. But if we’ll commit to move forward, we will experience the blessings of God’s grace active in our everyday lives and rest in the resultant miracle of spiritual growth into conformity to Christ.

Five G’s Study: p. 4
Appendix G

Progressing as A Christian in Spiritual Growth

In Colossians 2:6-7, Paul uses several different words or phrases to describe the quality of faith the people had. List below as many terms as you can find from those verses.

__

__

TOOLS FOR GROWTH

The Bible
What do the following verses teach about the importance of Scripture in the life of a growing Christian?

Psalm 1:2-3

__

Hebrews 4:12

__

Psalm 119:9-24

__

According to 2 Timothy 3:16, who is the actual author of the Scriptures?

__

What are the different ways you are equipping yourself with the Word of God (v.17)?

__

How would you put in your own words the warning in James 1:22-25? What specific ways might you tempted in this area?

__

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Appendix G

Prayer/Solitude/Worship

What does Luke 5:16 and 6:12-13 tell us about Jesus' prayer life and His need to get alone periodically? What are the implications for you personally?

Discuss what can be learned from Philippians 4:4-7.

The Elders' Statement on "Growth"

Believers must know that the grace of God that saved them is only the beginning of His work in them. They are to gratefully respond by actively pursuing a lifelong process of spiritual growth in Christ and are to seek to become conformed to His image. To this end, they must consistently nurture their spiritual development through prayer, worship, Bible study, and other spiritual exercises. Genuine believers regard the Bible as their final authority for faith and life and they desire to be wholly obedient to its teachings. Believers must honestly confront areas of personal sin and engage the Holy Spirit's power in seeking to repent from sin. Believers are to actively share the grace they've received from God to others through personal evangelism and participation in the collective ministry of the Church in their community, their country, and around the world.

Helpful Hints:
1. Consider attending the Discovery Bible Study Class offered through our Discipleship office and usually held on Sunday mornings. This 12-14 week study is for new Christians or mature believers who want to have a tool for evangelism or discipling others.

2. Read the tract Seven Minutes with God developed by the Navigators Ministry. This helpful booklet will guide you in how to begin having a daily quiet time of prayer and Bible study with God.

3. Contact the Singles, Men's, or Women's ministries and the Assimilation office at Calvary Church for help in your growth in the Christian life. Talk with Pastor of Growth, Dave Nemitz.

4. Read the booklet "My Heart, Christ's Home" by Bob Munger available in Christian book stores.

5. Read the booklets from RBC entitled, "How Can I Understand The Bible?" and "Does the Bible Contradict Itself", "Jesus' Blueprint for Prayer", "Time With God", and "When Christians Sin."

Appendix G

Gifts

God-Given Abilities Used for the Common Good

"But to each one of us grace has been given as Christ apportioned it." Ephesians 4:7.

"Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good...All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and he gives them to each one, just as he determines. The body is a unit, though it is made up of many parts; and though all its parts are many, they form one body. So it is with Christ." 1 Corinthians 12:7,11-12.

"And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love." 1 Corinthians 13:13.

"For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do." Ephesians 2:10.

Once upon a time there was a large church, well attended, growing and known in the community as one of the church's where good things were happening. The preaching was inspiring and biblical, the music was uplifting and everything from the parking system to the nursery, worked like a Swiss watch. Thousands of people, many of whom were members, came week after week to worship and because all appeared well, they simply enjoyed the blessings of this wonderful church.

But alas, all was not well. Hundreds of people were wearing themselves out month after month trying to do it all. (You know the old 80-20 rule: 80% of the work is done by 20% of the people!) There was a constant shortage of Sunday school teachers, nursery workers, prayer team members, Stephen's Ministry care givers, choir members, men's ministry leaders - well, you get the point. So while the majority of members were refreshed and uplifted in worship and attended and enjoyed a number of the programs sponsored by the church, a weary army of the faithful carried on. In the end, some burned out or backed off and were replaced by others. The church went on serving the many, but at a great expense spiritually, emotionally and physically to the few who made the Swiss watch run so "effortlessly".

Well, you probably guessed by now, that's a picture of Calvary Church and of most churches today. Do you think that was God's design for the church? Of course not!

The passages quoted above say that every believer has been given one or more spiritual gifts, and for what purpose? "For the common good." As a member or prospective member, you bring with you spiritual giftedness from God and a number of natural talents with a diversity of experiences which we need. Your spiritual gifts enable you to use your natural talents and experiences with incredible power and effectiveness.

The Bible teaches that the Holy Spirit not only gives every person spiritual gifts, but gives each church just the right mix of gifts to carry out its ministry. We have in the membership of Calvary every gift we need to carry on this church's ministry. But the problem is, not every person uses their gifts (or even understands them). That's why we've written this section on Gifts and why it is one of the five "G's" of membership. We not only need your giftedness, but we will suffer as a church if we don't use them and you will miss the tremendous blessing of being a blessing to others. We need you and your unique ministry.

The use of our spiritual gifts are a stewardship from God. Their use will be taken into account at the.

Five G's Study: p. 7
Appendix G

Judgment: Seat of Christ (2 Corinthians 5:10). We are to be sure we use them to the glory of God.

The Need for and the Privilege of Serving

What was Paul’s attitude toward working in God’s service in 1 Timothy 1:12?

Do you share that attitude with Paul? Explain.

Do you think we have a “laborer” shortage at Calvary Church today? Explain what you think about this.

What factors or attitudes may hinder your involvement in the use of your spiritual gift(s) and natural talents here at Calvary Church?

Different Parts, One Body

The Bible compares the Church to a human body, with Christ as the Head and all of us as different parts, or members of the body. Summarize in a sentence or two what Paul is conveying in 1 Corinthians 12:14-26.

What do you think is the ultimate reason that we each have differing abilities within the church? (1 Corinthians 12:4-7)

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Appendix G

Every Person a Difference-Maker

What do you think Jesus meant by "bearing fruit" in John 15:8 and 16-17 (see also Galatians 5:22-23)?

What is the application of this truth regarding involvement in a local church?

The following is not a biblical story, but we believe it is worth some thought.

A group of 15 people were carrying a log on their shoulders. One man tripped and fell to the side, but the other 14 continued to carry the log. As the man sat on the ground and watched his teammates march on, he thought to himself, "Why should I get up and keep carrying the log? The other 14 seem to be doing fine without me." It's true the others seemed to get along just as well in his absence. Was he right to quit?

Now for a twist: you are the captain of that team trying to get the log from point A to point B. What reasons would you give the man who quit so that he would get up and continue being part of the team?

What does 1 Corinthians 15:58 have to say about the standard for all believers of participation in ministry? How might this motivate you when you allow other things to crowd out your involvement?

The Elders' Statement on "Gifts"

Believers are to recognize that the Church is composed of interdependent members, each uniquely gifted by the Holy Spirit for the purpose of building up the body and furthering God's ministry through His Church. They therefore are to seek to discover, develop and deploy those God-given gifts and to seek a place of service within the church, with the support and affirmation of the body. Believers wish to earn crowns by their good works so that they can lay these crowns at the feet of Jesus in heaven as a demonstration of their love and thankfulness to Him (Revelation 4:10).

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Appendix G

Helpful Hints:

1. Contact the Calvary Church Volunteer Network Coordinator, Mr. Dave Nemitz. He and his team will help you discover your spiritual gift(s) and where it can best be used in ministry at Calvary.

2. Call the church to see when the next class is being offered on spiritual gifts (956-9377).

3. Begin praying regularly for God to help you realize your spiritual giftedness and give you a ministry using that gift. Also pray that the use of your natural talents will be used of God to glorify Him.

4. Ways to discover your spiritual giftedness:
   a. Through study and understanding. What is involved with the various gifts?
   b. Through ministry. Getting involved in doing some kind of ministry.
   c. Through personal desires and enjoyment. What ministries do I enjoy doing?
   d. Through the help and advice of others. Ask others about what they have observed.
   e. Through open and closed doors. Circumstances should allow the use of your giftedness.

5. We would suggest the following books: The Dynamics of Spiritual Gifts by William McRae; and the RBC booklet, "What About Speaking in Tongues?"

Groups

Relationships That Optimize Life-Change

"They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer...Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts." Acts 2:42,46.

"Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into Him who is the Head, that is, Christ. From Him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work." Ephesians 4:15-16.

"Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching." Hebrews 10:25.

Rapunzel was a beautiful princess and didn't know it. You remember the story. She was locked up in a tower with no one but the ugly witch visiting her daily to give her food. Rapunzel didn't know the truth about herself for two reasons: she was a prisoner of someone ugly - the only other face she saw - and she had no mirrors to see herself.

There are things true about you right now - wonderful things - that you don't know. Or that you have trouble believing. The reason you can't grasp these things is because of the ugliness you see around you, and because you haven't had access to mirrors to show you the truth. So how will you discover the truth about yourself - about what God has done for you, about what He is doing in you, about how far you've come? You need to see something other than the ugliness, and you need a mirror.

Five G's Study: p. 10
Every Person a Difference-Maker

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We've seen in the previous study that God gave us his Word, the Bible where He speaks to us; and prayer, where we can talk with Him; and His Holy Spirit to live in us and help us grow. These are valuable tools. But they aren't all He's given us. He also gave us each other.

In the body of Christ, we serve each other in various ways. This is just how God designed it. For example, we can learn when we listen to gifted teachers. When we worship together in church gatherings, we can enter a special dimension of God's truth experience. When we sit with members of our small group, someone can powerfully remind us of what we can't see - that God is working in us, that we're going to make it, that the affection of God is not just for "the world" - but it's for me too. When we're together as fellow believers, someone can literally say our name and put a voice to it. "You, ______________ (insert your name), matter to God so much that He personalized His plan of salvation so that it included you." Or we can hear, "I know you're going through a tough time, but you're not alone; God is with you, and we're with you too." These are the moments of beauty that give us the hope that we can break free of the tower of sin we've been imprisoned in for so long. They are the mirrors that show us there's another side to the ugliness we're so accustomed to.

The Prince of Peace has come to rescue us from the tower. But He royally decrees that the people around us are His ladders of deliverance and His mirrors of accuracy. That's what "group" is all about.

The Community of Christians: The Church

The early believers in Christ did not want to live the new life they had found alone. What do you learn about their relationships with each other from the following verses?

Acts 2:44-47

Acts 4:32-35

The writer of the Book of Hebrews actually gave a command about community life in Hebrews 10:24-25. How would you rephrase this passage in your own words for today?

In addition to large groups, where else did Christians get together according to Acts 2:46 and 1 Corinthians 16:19?

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What do you suppose they received out of these smaller, house-sized group meetings that they didn’t get out of bigger gatherings?

Why would it be impossible to fulfill the following biblical commands if you were only attending weekend services without having any close relationships?

Galatians 6:1-3

Proverbs 27:17

Colossians 3:16

The Elders’ Statement on “Groups”

A believer is to honor God’s call to participate in community in order to grow in Christlikeness, to express and receive love, and to carry out the ministry of the Church. For this reason, believers need to give priority to attending the meetings of the church for the purpose of worship, teaching, and participation in the observances of Baptism and Communion. They should be connected relationally to a small group of believers for the purpose of mutual encouragement, support, and accountability.

Helpful Hints:

1. Call the church or stop by the Information Booth in the rear of the auditorium to obtain information about any group in the church. They are trained to help you find a group which best fits your age, family status, needs, and spiritual maturity. Also contact Pastor Dave Nemitz for information.

2. Attend an adult congregation (Sunday school class) faithfully. Introduce yourself to the leader before the class. Be friendly. Keep searching until you find the group that God will use in your life.

3. If you have a spiritual need at this time, stop by the Prayer and Share Room just east of the auditorium across from the chapel. There are people there to pray with you and help you. There are also several booklets available to help with a number of situations you many be going through.

4. Calvary also has support groups for particular needs. Contact the office of Dr. Jerry Schreur for more information (956-9377).

5. Fellowship in groups is also available as you minister in such groups as the choir, AWANA, Sunday Congregations or classes, Saturday Night, and other Christian ministries at the church.

6. Read the RBC booklets “Who Needs the Church?” and “How to Recognize a Good Church”.

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Appendix G

Generosity

The Reasonable Response to Our Gracious God

"Each person should give what he or she has decided in the heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver." 2 Corinthians 9:7.

"Now about the collection for God’s people: Do what I told the Galatian churches to do. On the first day of every week, each one of you should set aside a sum of money in keeping with his income, saving it up, so that when I come no collections will have to be made." 1 Corinthians 16:1-2.

"Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; 20 you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your body." 1 Corinthians 6:19-20.

"For who makes you different from anyone else? What do you have that you did not receive? And if you did receive it, why do you boast as though you did not?" 1 Corinthians 4:7.

"Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows." James 1:17

"Mine"

It’s one of the first words a baby learns. By use of that term, a child differentiates between what is common property - what is “out there” - and what is under his or her control. Just as every child must establish “me” concretely in contrast to “you,” healthy development requires “mine” to be distinguished from “yours”. According to some expert’s, is it not selfish for the child to talk this way, though the adamant declaration seems harsh to our adult ears. Social scientists have tried to engineer people - sometimes whole cultures - to reject this mind set. But they have all found there’s something in the human makeup that requires a separation between what has a unique relationship to me and what has the same relationship with everybody - or at least no special relationship with me. It’s a natural and necessary phase of development to draw these boundaries, and if children don’t do so, they become pushovers and doormats and live miserable adult lives.

So what does this have to do with generosity? Just that we cannot call it good management to be foolish with our resources withered by hoarding or by abandoning the responsibility of ownership. We can and should say “mine” as a starting place to knowing how to handle properly what God gave us. Of course, as Paul and James have mentioned in the verses at the beginning of this section, God is the giver of all good gifts, the ultimate source of all that we own.

But we shouldn’t throw all our “stuff” away, as if that proves we’re not mastered by it. We need to manage it. We need to steward it. And we do this not just by releasing a few dollars here and there to a church. We start by surveying all we have and consider in a fresh way how everything that we have everything, kept or released - should be used in the light of eternity.

God is not asking us just to share our "toys". He is asking us to give our "toys" to Him - all of them - and then, in His Name, keep what we need and give the rest away. He dignifies our ownership by asking - not

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demanding - that we consider His ownership of us and that we reconsider how we grasp what we call our own. And so that there's no mistake about it, He gives us the ultimate example in Jesus Christ, who gave His all to save lost sinners. We will share forever in the glorious inheritance of Him, an inheritance He freely gives to every one who trusts in Him.

"His"

Stewardship of Our Resources

In Luke 14:33, Jesus lays out for His followers what percentage of our worldly goods is His, and what is ours. What is your reaction to His teaching in this verse?

What's the moral of the story Jesus summarized in Luke 16:10-13?

In the same passage, verse 12, who do you think is the owner of the property we have been given to use until the time we can become owners ourselves?

Attitudes toward Money and Generosity

What additional lessons about giving can be gleaned from the following passages?

1 Timothy 6:8-10, 17-19

1 Corinthians 16:1-2

2 Corinthians 8:9, 12

What attitudes should characterize giving according to 2 Corinthians 9:6-9?

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2 Corinthians 8:9, 12

What attitudes should characterize giving according to 2 Corinthians 9:6-9?

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Appendix G

In summary, mature Christians are to give:

Generously... They know Christ has given all to them, and they know Christ owns all they have anyway.

Proportionally... They try to give as high a percentage of their income as possible, as God has prospered them.

Regularly... As resources flow in, they offer the “first-fruits” back to God, honoring Him before any others, recognizing the needs of the church go on every week of the year, not just at tax time.

Locally... Knowing that they claim this local church as their spiritual home, they support the ministries from which they derive benefit.

Liberally... As they are able, they go beyond giving to their own church and contribute to the cause of Christ globally to Christ-centered ministries.

Cheerfully... Knowing that God sees the heart, they don’t just give grudgingly to an organization - they give their offering as unto God Himself; they do so willingly, and not under compulsion, but with joyful worship as their resources flow out to serve others.

Anonymously... They don’t call attention to themselves when they give or expect their offering to produce an advantage in the church.

Expectantly... Counting on God’s promise of provision, they anticipate seeing God use their gift and know He’ll work in their own life - including financially - as they give.

The Elders’ Statement on “Generosity”

Believers are to realize that they have been bought with the price of Christ’s blood, and that everything they are and have belongs to Him. In light of this, they are to be responsible caretakers of the material resources that God has entrusted to them. In response to Christ’s abundant giving, they increasingly submit their resources to His Lordship and display a spirit of generosity and cheerfulness in supporting the work of the church.

Helpful Hints:

1. Make your financial commitment to the Lord through Calvary Church a matter of prayer. Decide on what God would have you to do (2 Corinthians 9:7).

2. New Focus Ministries of Calvary Church assists individuals by providing free counsel on budget, credit, and other financial matters. Call the church office if you have need of their services.

3. Crown Ministries in Grand Rapids offers a course on handling finances from a biblical perspective. Contact Steve Rooks at 942-5689. The Larry Burkett ministry has merged with Crown Ministries.

4. Books by Larry Burkett such as Debt Free Living and Using Your Money Wisely are helpful. Also other books by Christian writers such as Dave Ramsey of Financial Peace University fame may be found in your favorite Christian bookstore.

Five G’s Study: p. 15
Appendix H

The Five Gs
As I sit on the platform each week, after week looking into the faces of thousands of people, I wonder where each of them really is in their own personal spiritual journey. Are they growing? Are they involved? Are they sharing their faith with others? Several years ago, the board of Calvary Church adopted the following "Five Gs" as goals for spiritual growth: Grace, Growth, Gifts, Groups, and Generosity. The "Five Gs" is an attempt to draw, in broad strokes, the picture of a healthy Christian. If we have members living out these characteristics, we are probably moving in the right direction as a spiritually healthy church.

Grace — True believers are those who are relying only and completely on the finished work of the Lord Jesus Christ on the cross of Calvary when He shed His blood for sinners. This is their only hope for eternal life (Ephesians 2:8-9).

Growth — Believers must know that the grace of God that saved them is only the beginning of His work in them. They are to gratefully respond by actively pursuing a lifelong process of spiritual growth in Christ and are to seek to become conformed to His image. To this end, they must consistently nurture their spiritual development through prayer, worship, Bible study, and other spiritual exercises (2 Peter 3:18).

Groups — A believer is to honor God’s call to participate in community in order to grow in Christlikeness, to express and receive love, and to carry out the ministry of the Church. For this reason, believers need to give priority to being connected relationally to a small group of believers for the purpose of mutual encouragement, support, and accountability (Acts 2:42-46).

Gifts — Believers are to recognize that the Church is composed of interdependent members, each uniquely gifted by the Holy Spirit for the purpose of building up the body and furthering God’s ministry through His Church. Therefore, they are to seek to discover, develop, and deploy those God-given gifts and to seek a place of service within the church, with the support and affirmation of the body (Ephesians 4:7).

Generosity — Believers are to realize that they have been bought with the price of Christ’s blood, and that everything they are and have belongs to Him. In response to Christ’s abundant giving, they increasingly submit their resources to His Lordship and display a spirit of generosity and cheerfulness in supporting the work of the church (2 Corinthians 9:7).

Where are you on the chart of the "Five Gs?" What areas need improvement? What are you going to do about them? I hope and pray you will take the next step.

Ed Dobson
January 11, 2002

Bennett & Andrea Bassette
16911 32nd Ave
Coopersville MI 49404

Dear Bennett & Andrea:

Greetings in the name of the Lord Jesus!

You have been officially accepted as a member of Calvary Church. We rejoice to have you as a part of our fellowship. Please inform your previous church, and ask them to remove your membership from their rolls.

We are a Bible-believing, Bible teaching church, involved in both local ministry and foreign missions. We solicit your attendance at scheduled services, and we anticipate your willingness to support the ministry in prayer, financial giving and service. We hope you will explore the various ministries which operate within the church. Our office of Spiritual Growth and Assimilation will be contacting you in the near future to assist you in this process.

Calvary Church also has a responsibility to nourish and encourage you by teaching the Word, by fellowship and by using your talents and gifts to glorify the Lord and bless others. We shall do our best to make you feel loved, wanted, understood and necessary in the Calvary family.

On Sunday evening, February 3, 2002 we will publicly recognize and welcome you into Calvary's membership. Please sit in the reserved front seats in the sanctuary and we will extend to you the hand of fellowship. There will also be a reception for new members, hosted by the pastors and board, held immediately after the service in Fellowship Hall. If you cannot be present, please call Joy at the church office (655-9377).

Sincerely yours,

Edward G. Dobson
Senior Pastor
Appendix J

CALVARY CHURCH ASSIMILATION QUESTIONNAIRE

1. Male ___  Female ___

2. Age:  
   20-29 ___  
   30-39 ___  
   40-49 ___  
   50-59 ___  
   60-69 ___  
   70-79 ___  

3. Member ___  Regular Attendee ___

4. Before completing the Assimilation Process at Calvary Church…
   a. I was aware of my spiritual gifts ___ yes ___ no ___
   b. I was involved serving in a ministry using my spiritual gifts ___ yes ___ no ___
   c. I was involved in a small group (adult congregation, men’s, women’s, etc) that provided care and accountability ___ yes ___ no ___
   d. I was aware of my current spiritual need ___ yes ___ no ___
   e. I had set goals for myself to strengthen my spiritual life in relationship to God and others ___ yes ___ no ___

5. After completing the Assimilation Process at Calvary Church…
   a. I am aware of my spiritual gifts ___ yes ___ no ___
   b. I am involved serving in a ministry using my spiritual gifts ___ yes ___ no ___
   c. I am involved in small group that provides care and accountability ___ yes ___ no ___
   d. I am aware of my current spiritual need ___ yes ___ no ___
   e. I have set goals for myself to strengthen my spiritual life with God and others ___ yes ___ no ___

6. I would be willing to be interviewed at a later date to discuss the effectiveness of the assimilation process? ___ yes ___ (please fill out info below) 
   Name: ____________________________
   Phone: ____________________________

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Appendix K

January, 2001

To: Members & Regular Attendees at Calvary Church

From: Pastor David Nemitz

Re: Assimilation Process at Calvary Church

In the last year over 300 individuals completed the Assimilation process here at Calvary Church. Thank you for being one of those who responded and followed through with the inventories and the session with the Spiritual Growth facilitator. In any new ministry initiative, there is always a need for review and analysis. The evaluation of the effectiveness of the assimilation process is the reason for this letter.

Some of may know that I am finishing my Doctor of Ministry degree at Grand Rapids Baptist Seminary. The focus of my final project revolves around the effectiveness of the Assimilation Process here at Calvary Church. To gather the needed information for the analysis I would ask you to complete the enclosed one-page survey and return it to me by FEBRUARY 25. Of course the gathering of the information will also help those involved in the Spiritual Growth & Assimilation Office analyze and refine the process.

Let me express my gratitude to you in advance for taking the time to helping me in this effort. I would covet your prayers as I press forward toward the completion of the degree. For those of you who are open to meet with me to discuss the process in more detail, I'll look forward to our conversations.
Appendix L

Interview Questions for Follow Up Conversations

General
1- What part of the SGA process was the most helpful?
2- What part of the SGA process was the confusing?
3- What part of the SGA process would you suggest changing?

For those indicating no change because of the process...
4- Gifts - If you knew them before the process, where did you get the info?
5- Gifts - If you were serving, what prompted you to serve?
6- Groups - If you were part of a group before the process, what type?
7- Growth - How did you determine you greatest spiritual need?
8- Growth - Tell me about your experience in setting goals for spiritual growth?

For those indicating change because of the process...
9- Gifts - where are you serving?
10- Groups - where are you now attending?
11- Growth- what types of things have helped you meet your goals?
Spiritual Gift Characteristics

Evangelist – Spirit-given capacity to lead people to a saving knowledge of Christ
Outgoing, a passion to meet lost people, a burden to memorize scripture, may dominate people, often misunderstood because of aggressiveness, sometimes discouraged when people are not excited to witness.

Prophet – Spirit-given capacity to proclaim God’s truth
Strong sense of duty, burdened to point others to God’s truth, a boldness to do the right thing, may look at things negatively, may be misunderstood because of his demands, discouraged when people don’t “hear” God’s truth.

Teacher – Spirit-given capacity to communicate God’s Word clearly and simply
Creative, burdened to know and study God’s Word, an enthusiasm for seeing others studying God’s Word, may tend to talk more than listen, may be misunderstood because of the emphasis on knowledge, discouraged when people do not value gaining Bible knowledge.

Exhorter – Spirit-given capacity to motivate others to change their conduct
Results oriented, burdened to help others identify their problems and solutions to those problems, desires to see everyone reach their full potential, may not take the time to study, may be misunderstood because of simplistic approach to life, discouraged when suggestions don’t produce results.

Shepherd – Spirit-given capacity to care for the needs of other believers
Patient, burdened to build relationships, sensitive to the needs of others, may become too independent as he focuses on the care of others, may be misunderstood as having all the answers, may become discouraged when the load gets too heavy.

Mercy-Shower – Spirit-given capacity to comfort others who are in distress
Soft-spoken, sympathetic and sensitive, a burden to comfort others, may become depressed because of circumstances, is often misunderstood as being “too emotional”, may become discouraged because of a lack of self-esteem.

Server – Spirit-given capacity to render practical help (physically and spiritually)
Ambitious, loyal, burdened to fill the need, enjoys the challenge of completing a task, may be a workaholic, may neglect spiritual needs for the sake of physical needs, may get discouraged when not appreciated by others, may be misunderstood as being too impatient.

Giver – Spirit-given capacity to give material resources
Well-organized, alert to needs others might overlook, has the ability to make sound financial decisions, may measure spirituality by amount of giving, may be misunderstood as trying to control others with resources, can be discouraged when resources are misused.

Administrator – Spirit-given capacity to organize and lead others in the church
Visionary, goal oriented, burden to move on to the next task once one is completed, skilled in planning and delegating responsibilities to others, may miss smaller details of the tasks, may be misunderstood as too “bossy”, may get discouraged if the process is slow.

For a more detailed and complete listing of characteristics associated with these nine spiritual gifts and how they work together to build up the body of Christ, we recommend purchasing the book How to find meaning and fulfillment through understanding the Spiritual Gifts within you by Larry Gillett. This book can be purchased from the Office of Spiritual Growth. Call Sidney Crooks at 609-837-7 ext. 211 for details.

(SEE OVER)
Understanding Spiritual Gifts

1. Every believer has been given spiritual gifts at their conversion. (Romans 12, I Corinthians 12, Ephesians 4, I Peter 4)

2. Believers cannot lose their giftedness, although they can become ineffective.

3. Definition: “Spirit given ability for Christian service”  
   Leslie Flynn-19 Gifts of the Spirit

4. Spiritual gifts should not be confused with natural abilities, ministry positions, or the fruit of the spirit.

5. Bible scholars categorize the gifts into three groupings:
   1) Sign Gifts (miracles, healing, etc)
   2) Enabling Gifts (faith, wisdom, etc) and
   3) Team Gifts (administration, teaching, serving, etc.)

6. Spiritual gifts are only truly discovered as one exercises them within the body of Christ.
## SPIRITUAL GIFTS WORKSHEET

### A.
The three spiritual gifts that receive the highest totals are:
1. 
2. 
3. 

### B.
After reading the descriptions about these three gifts I am most surprised at:

### C.
After reading the descriptions about these gifts I am most affirmed with:

### D.
I currently use my gifts in relationship to my immediate family by:

### E.
I currently use my gifts in relationship to other believers by:

### F.
If I could do anything I wanted I would enjoy using my gifts the most with:

### MY GOAL

1. Regarding my Spiritual Gifts, my goal is to:

2. Specific measurable action steps I will take to complete this goal:

3. Date I plan to complete this goal:

4. People who will help me achieve my goal:
Dear Bill & Diane Derby:

I am so glad to hear you were able and willing to complete the Spiritual Growth & Assimilation process. I trust you are already seeing how God is using the process to help you realize the goals and commitments you have set. I praise Him for placing you here at Calvary Church at this time. If there is anything we can do to help you in regards to your spiritual walk, please do not hesitate to contact us.

For His glory,

Pastor David D. Nemitz
Appendix O and Appendix P

Dear [ministry leader's name]

Date

Recently I met with [member/attende] in our discussion they expressed the desire to get involved with the [ministry name] ministry as a leader/participant. I have asked them to contact you and have given them your phone number. If you would wish to make the initial contact their phone number is [number]. I have also attached a postcard that you may send to them if you cannot connect with them on the phone.

Thank you for your help in the assimilation process here at Calvary Church!

Sincerely,

[Signature]

Spiritual Growth Facilitator

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Dear [name of individual(s)]

Date

Recently, the Spiritual Growth Facilitator you met with contacted me and indicated your desire to get involved with our ministry. I would love to share with you more about our ministry. I have tried to contact you at [member/attendee's] but I haven't gotten through to talk to you personally. Please let me know when & how is the most convenient time for us to connect. You can reach me at [phone number] most of the time. I trust our conversation will help you accomplish the goals you have set for yourself in the areas of fellowship and/or serving.

Looking forward to speaking with you soon,

[Signature]

[Ministry leader]

[Signature]

[Name of ministry/congregation]
Bibliography


Crabb, Larry; Fong, Ken; Frazee, Randy; Gallup, George; and Willard, Dallas, TX. "Measuring What Matters." Leadership Journal. (Spring 2000): 58-64.


