A Pre-Methodological Theology for Biblically Proper Ecclesiological Health

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DOCTOR OF MINISTRY

by
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The American church is in a dramatically noticeable decline, with many resources offering superficial remedies and solutions but rarely digging below the surface to evaluate the structural integrity of the foundation. This paper will evaluate the foundation as to how it has been altered over the last two thousand years, as well as identifying three main foundational attributes of the first century church that must be in place for the twenty-first century church to be on target biblically.

The thesis will be corroborated by utilizing two different, yet related surveys administered to both pastors and congregants, as well as by accompanying academic research. The desire herein is that the provided information will influence seminaries and churches in both church health dialogue as well as implemented actions which will poise the church to be influential in holistically fulfilling the Great Commission in America.
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James R. Woods
Chapter 1
Introduction

The church has endured numerous paradigm shifts in its two millennia existence. What started in Acts 2 as a dramatic movement altering the traditions of the Jewish religion, later evolved into Hellenistic Jewish and Gentile believer inclusivity; a radical departure from traditional Judaism. This homogeny of Christians was so prevalent in the early church that it functioned as a large family “bearing one another’s burdens.” Temples had been the focus of worship under Judaism as well as the surrounding pagan religions. However, the teachings of Jesus and those who followed both Him and His teachings were rejected by the Jewish religious establishment, and the early church met in various locations—the homes of its members being referenced most often in Scripture. The temple had now moved from a man-made physical building to the actual church members themselves (i.e. their bodies: I. Corinthians 6:19; c.f. Acts 17:24)\(^1\), thus permanently changing the worship paradigm (Ephesians 2:21-22 and I. Corinthians 3:16-17). Furthermore, the Levitical priesthood had been replaced by the priesthood of all believers as the Great High Priest, Jesus, had provided a means of direct access to the Father (Hebrews 7:11 ff.; I. Peter 2:5, 9; and I. Timothy 2:5). As Christianity spread into the Gentile

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world, its refusal to acknowledge Caesar as God incurred Rome’s wrath, drove it to subsist as an underground religion, all the while thriving in a religiously pluralistic, “tolerant” society. Not until the fourth century when Christianity was proclaimed by the Roman Empire as the official religion, did it abandon houses for ornate buildings as their gathering places. Thus ended the era of the house church, and the era of the building-oriented church began.

Currently, the church in North America is in its latest paradigm shift as culture is rapidly abandoning the moorings of modernism and is fully embracing the multifarious philosophies of postmodernism. The initial reaction of much of what is often called the conservative church has been to fight postmodernism in an effort to thwart the negative effects of this philosophical movement. Unprepared for change, large segments of the church have been left behind as postmodernism has enveloped the thinking patterns of the Western Hemisphere. At one extreme, some churches have fully embraced postmodernism and are redefining Christianity. At the other extreme, demonstrated by their responses to it, the unprepared churches have attempted to reach postmoderns via methods reminiscent of the modern era, or have sought to persist as if postmodernism does not exist. These churches, whether by choice or by natural response

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6 Ibid., 117.

7 Ibid., 113.

8 Ibid., 117.
mechanisms, tend to find security in their traditions and are often marked by a resistance to change. In the middle of this confusion are those who have already implemented methods of co-existing in a postmodern context while safeguarding the foundational beliefs of orthodox Christianity. These leaders and their churches are redefining themselves by abandoning the barriers to church growth while remaining distinctively and biblically Christian. These churches tend to be more balanced in their approach to existing in the 21st Century, though there are tough challenges for them to thrive.

Terry Woychowski, Chief Engineer for the Chevrolet full-sized pickup trucks in 2007, stated: “If you start with a solid foundation you can build a great structure upon it. If you start with a weak foundation you’re hurting right from the beginning.” The wisdom of this simple statement is the real crux of the issue. There are transcendent foundational characteristics which contribute to churches thriving successfully anywhere regardless of cultural, economic, educational, and denominational differences. These foundational characteristics are often missing in today’s churches but are easily built into a small house church design, and to a lesser extent, a building-oriented church made up of small groups.

The leitmotiv being presented herein is to demonstrate that: 1) the Primacy of Jesus, 2) the Family/Community bond, and 3) the implementation of Empowered Leadership are essential to starting, maturing, and replicating biblically healthy churches anywhere in the world. Any church built upon these three foundational principles will be much better able to succeed, both

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9 Orthodox Christianity can also be somewhat defined as Fundamentalism: a definition that has become antiquated due to its more modern rendering of radical, separatist Evangelical Christianity.


11 Terry Woychowski, pamphlet promoting the 2007 Silverado, (Detroit: General Motors, 2006).
spiritually and numerically. Any church currently in existence, regardless of age, can embrace these foundational principles and make the necessary changes to become successful as well.

The church’s primary foundation rests on Jesus first (the Great Commandment, with the understanding that Jesus is God (Philippians 2:6), and then on what James 2:8 calls the Royal Law (loving others as ourselves). The third part of the foundation is the Great Commission which allows all believers to go forth and preach the Gospel, teach (i.e. disciple), baptize, and directly influence the multiplication of believers. These are so crucial that all other foundational aspects must be based on these. For example, the primary purposes of the church (i.e. what it is to be doing) as defined by Rick Warren, begins with worshipping God (the Great Commandment), and then ministering to others, evangelizing the lost, engaging in fellowship

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12 William Hendriksen, *New Testament Commentary*, 105. “What Paul is saying then here in Phil. 2:6, is that Christ Jesus had always been (and always continues to be) God by nature, the express image of the Deity. The specific character of the Godhead as this is expressed in all the divine attributes was and is his eternally. Cf. Col 1:15, 17 (also John 1:1; 8:58; 17:24).”
with fellow believers, and discipling the saved\textsuperscript{13} (all aspects of the Great Commandment and the Royal Law). For Chandler, Patterson, and Geiger, the foundation of the church is based on theology (i.e. the Word of God and the Gospel of Jesus, which in the context of their book, \textit{Creature of the Word}, relates primarily to the Great Commandment) with ministry philosophy and practice laid upon said theology.\textsuperscript{14} Likewise, the \textit{practice} of the church (how it is structured organizationally) as presented herein is based on a focus on Jesus (the Great Commandment—namely Jesus as the chief cornerstone of the foundation per Ephesians 2:20), and then Family/Community and Empowered Leadership (the Royal Law being implemented to fulfill the Great Commandment and Great Commission as a church).

While the following are essential within a church, this writer’s contention is that what does not appear as the foundation for a church’s operational structure include: 1) The Gospel, 2) The Word of God, 3) Prayer, 4) The Holy Spirit, 5) Doctrine, 6) Kingdom focus, and 7) Holiness. This writer’s conclusion is that Jesus supersedes those very important aspects of the church. Remember, the Gospel is about Him. He is the Living Word as revealed in the written Word.\textsuperscript{15} Prayer is talking to Him. The Holy Spirit is to point us to Jesus. Doctrine is built on Him and His teachings. The Kingdom is His Kingdom and He reigns over it. Holiness is His standard. In other words, it is all about Jesus, and He is the primary foundation of the church, as the old

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{13} Rick Warren, \textit{The Purpose Driven Church}, 103-106.
\item \textsuperscript{15} Leonard Sweet and Frank Viola, \textit{Jesus Manifesto: Restoring the Supremacy and Sovereignty of Jesus Christ}, (Nashville, Tennessee: Thomas Nelson, 2010), 137. It has been brought to this writer’s attention that there are versions of Christianity in America that teach that the infallibility of the Bible is idolatry and that to fully exalt Jesus one must deny the infallibility of Scripture. This writer’s position is that Jesus is the Word, thus the Word of God is infallible. The two are inseparable. As such, the Jesus of the Word is the Jesus that should be exalted, and His life and teachings should be followed as demonstrated in the Bible.
\end{itemize}
hymn states. When Jesus is truly the foundation, the congregation will be naturally motivated to pray to Him, to study His Word, to tell others about Him, to live righteously, and to give unrestrainedly.

The second necessary layer is built upon Jesus, and that is the Family/Community connection that the church is to embody. Jesus is the Bridegroom, the church is His Bride. The Father is the perfect father, and we are adopted children. The imagery of the church as a family is pronounced in the Word of God, and demonstrates the intricate relationship that Jesus has with us. As such, a Jesus-focused family will be unified, will disciple (teach its members), and encourage. It will also correct errors and sin in its members’ lives. It is naturally attractive to the lost, even when they are confused by its practices, and will be evangelistic without coercion. Lastly, it meets its own needs (spiritual, physical, social, etc.) because of its servant-orientation.

The third layer is the action layer. Empowered Leadership is the demonstrated by fact that the Great Commission was issued to the church as a whole, that the Word of God is to be handled by the congregation, that the Holy Spirit indwells each believer and has empowered each believer with spiritual gifts. Through His direct leading and guiding, each member is part of the priesthood of believers and does not need permission from any person to serve as such. It is not just the pastor’s job to lead people to Christ, but rather the job of all Christians. When each believer understands that regardless of race, gender, or social status, that each is a part of the

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18 This statement is not made without recognizing that the New Testament reinforces that living for Jesus will bring persecution. The world hates our righteous standard and King, so it will naturally hate us. Nevertheless, a loving, coherent, nurturing family fellowship is attractive to the world as most people do not have those traits in their physical families.
whole, and each contributes through his spiritual gifts, and each has the biblical authority to
serve God, then the body of Christ is realized. Empowered Leadership will also lead to a
plurality of elders who decentralize the control since their primary duty as overseers is to ensure
everything stays on target.

The Problem

The American church is struggling to reach the lost, disciple believers to maturity, grow,
impact culture, engage younger generations, and ultimately to survive. In the Western world
today there is a major disconnect between churches and postmodern culture. It has been noted
that there are less people attending church, being saved, serving, tithing, and growing spiritually.
Some Baby Boomers are attending church, but almost none of the younger generations attend at
all. It is significant to advert that there are no significant church movements occurring today; a
scary thought for the future of the church in North America.

Many churches respond by blaming this condition on an array of perceived issues such as
a lack of biblical preaching, or the presence of rock music (to include contemporary Christian

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19 Julia Duin, *Quitting Church: Why the Faithful are Fleeing and What to do About It*, Grand Rapids,
Michigan: Baker Books, 2008), 11-14. Duin cites various studies and polls which demonstrate the decline of the
church in America, as well as the decline of its influence.

20 George Barna, *Revolution: Finding Vibrant Faith Beyond the Walls of the Sanctuary*, (Carol Stream,
the younger generations do not care about buildings and performance/image-based religion.

21 Neil Cole, “Are There Church Planting Movements in North America?” *CMA Resources*, (March 2,
January 25, 2012). Cole references this data from Ed Stetzer and Warren Bird as found in *Viral Churches*.

22 John Flowers and Karen Vannoy, *10 Temptations of Church: Why Churches Decline & What to Do
About It*, (Nashville, Tennessee: Abingdon Press, 2012), xv. The authors note that many churches resort to more
preaching to inhibit decline. See also Richard J. Krejcir, “Statistics and Reasons for Church Decline” Francis A.
music and worship music), or the influences of television, or the humanism found in public schools, and even left-wing politics (all real issues, but there is no consistent consensus as to which of these are most prominent or influential). This writer has come across many opinions of the source of America’s spiritual woes. While research demonstrates that the church is successfully dying in a vacuum of tradition and apathy, a lost and dying world is growing exponentially outside of the doors of church buildings and sadly many congregations could care less, and those that do care often do not know how to make a difference. Meanwhile, America has slipped into the status of being a post-Christian society while Asia and South America are multiplying churches at a breakneck speed.

Many churches are revamping their images, hosting contemporary websites, utilizing strategic marketing, and are using “every available lure in the tackle box” with hopes that they will not become a statistic themselves. Some of these are seeker-sensitive, or utilize

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exceptional praise and worship music.\textsuperscript{31} Many offer an array of classes for their congregants as well as to the community,\textsuperscript{32} all with the hopes of meeting the needs and interests of those they are trying to reach. Nevertheless, these churches are often finding themselves cash strapped in a twenty-first century recession as they continually attempt to change their image to match the changing culture. It is noteworthy that statistics show that they are not reaching the lost as much as shuffling the flock from someone else’s herd to theirs.\textsuperscript{33} Many of these are mega-churches which are also struggling to survive in a rough economy are showing limited postmodern growth.\textsuperscript{34} In addition, estimates show that it costs the average church $1,700 per year per attendee to operate, and at an average rate of three conversions per every one hundred people, the building-oriented church will annually expend about $50,000 per conversion.\textsuperscript{35}

In response to these and many other problems, numerous books have been published that are dealing with the problems within the American church today. House church, small group, and cell group books abound with a very strong consensus that the problems are symptomatic to the errant design of the Western church (i.e. that the Western church’s design is not biblical, but

\begin{footnotesize}
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\item \textsuperscript{31} Elmer Towns, 10 of Today’s Most Innovative Churches: What They’re Doing, How They’re Doing It & How You can Apply Their Ideas in Your Church, (Ventura, California: Regal Books, 1990), 60-72.
\item \textsuperscript{32} Elmer Towns, 10 Sunday Schools that Dared to Change, 62.
\item \textsuperscript{33} Barna Group, Grow Your Church from the Inside In, http://www.barna.org/component/virtuemart/?page=shop.product_details&flypage=flypage.tpl&category_id=1&product_id=14&q=transfer+growth Accessed 21 February, 2012. The statistic is that approximately 80% of church growth is biological or transfer growth versus conversion growth.
\item \textsuperscript{34} Eric Swanson and Rick Rusaw, The Externally Focused Quest: Becoming the Best Church for the Community, (San Francisco, California: Jossey-Bass, 2010), 20-22. Postmodern growth deals with the church’s ability to reach the postmodern generation with the Gospel and grow the church through their addition to it. Alvin L. Reid, Radically Unchurched, 31, notes that: “not all radically unchurched are postmodern, although virtually all postmoderns are unchurched.”
\end{itemize}
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pagan). Many program-oriented churches believe that the right programs are the key. Others want the church to return to its Europeanized traditions. An emphasis on doctrine and expository preaching has been the focus for some. The list of suggestions and remedies offered is almost endless.

While many Christians in America can sense something is wrong, and have seen the church’s decline and the cultural shift away from Christianity, the many nostrums and prescriptions that are being offered are merely hitting the surface issues. These might occasionally dip below the surface, but often fail to detect the foundational problems. The foundation is where the issue lies and this is where the church needs to change. The real problem is that the foundation has deteriorated. After two thousand years of alterations, the church of the New Testament that was founded on Christ now has many additions and alterations that distract believers to take their focus off of Christ alone.

In the early 1990’s, Rick Warren brought to the American public a foundational remedy for the purpose of the church (i.e. reason for existence, and thus reason for all that the church should do and how it should live). His Five Purposes of the Church were to church leaders one of the largest revelations of the decade. However, much of what he said was often lost to the

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39 Michael A. Milton, *Finding a Vision for Your Church: Assembly Required*, (Phillipsburg, New Jersey: P&R Publishing, 2012), 143-155. Milton’s chapter focuses on expository preaching, and while it deals with the need to preach for evangelism, he also lumps it into the health of the church body and believes it necessary for the church’s health.

criticisms of his seeker-oriented church services, his preference for various Bible versions, his unconventional approach to evangelism, and his Hawaiian shirts. Many missed the most important issues (the Five Purposes) as they criticized him and his methods. Still for others, the 40 Days of Purpose campaigns became a program for a fast church growth rather than a process for permanent church-life change.

Similarly, the secular world has developed foundational ideals for businesses. One gauge that is used to measure a business’ foundation is a system named Total Quality Management. It is significant to note that the secular ideals of Total Quality Management focus on the foundation of a process since quality has to be built into the process as well as into the final product. When there is an error in the process, it procreates more errors until finally, down the line, the end product is messed up. Frick indicates that TQM teaches that when something goes wrong, it is usually a fault of the system rather than of a person. Conversely, in traditional management styles, people get blamed when the system breaks, and the system never gets fixed. Furthermore, if the system error is discovered, usually a single person (he notes it is usually a manager) will be the one who will fix it.

While adopting Total Quality Management’s or any other’s philosophies is not being advocated, it is suggested that an actively and repetitively honest evaluation of a church’s foundation and its quality components should be made. Furthermore, many of the concepts of

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43 Total Quality Management has many ideals and even evaluations that may be successfully applied to the church to evaluate its foundation. However, the church should never adopt TQM as a system since it is a secular invention that will have in its foundation secular errors. Nevertheless, the ideals of constant and continual improvement seem to echo of practical sanctification and of examining one’s self. Furthermore, inspecting one’s foundation to ensure that it is built fully on Christ is worthy of one’s attention.
Total Quality Management, so long as they do not contradict Scripture, should be utilized to evaluate the health of a church and its foundation.

Sin is often defined as missing the mark. How far does a person have to miss the mark to be considered sinning? A person facing a target 10 feet away can angle himself one millimeter off of the target and will still hit it, though not in the center. However, if the target is moved out further away, he will eventually miss it altogether. Now take the church which has modified and altered the biblical foundation of the church. While small deviations were dealt with by the Apostles and leadership within the early church, two thousand years later and the compilation of uncorrected small deviations have in time become drastic deviations, and the church is missing its target on many levels. A few will hit it in some places, and others will hit it quite a bit, not unlike the Book of Revelation’s letters to the seven churches where God commended them for where they were on target, but condemned them for where they were off target. The church needs to honestly and candidly evaluate where it is at with regards to its foundation, and then make the necessary steps to correct itself.

History demonstrates that the evolutionary influences of the Roman Catholic Church, the European Reformation, and the American Greek-modeled democratic/republic form of government coupled with the phenomenon of personal individualism, have altered the church’s foundation and ultimately handicapped the Western church from being the church and

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naturally doing the functions that a church is supposed to do. The scores of books being written to bring the church back to its mission, to fight humanism, and to encourage evangelism in a consumeristic society all bear witness to the effects of many of these primary influences.\footnote{David E. Fitch, \textit{The Great Giveaway: Reclaiming the Mission of the Church from Big Business, Parachurch Organizations, Psychotherapy, Consumer Capitalism, and Other Modern Maladies}, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Books, 2005), 13. This is one example of these books, wherein the author is targeting a Christianity that looks no different than what the secular world offers.}

The First Century New Testament churches were founded directly on Jesus’ teachings and being closest to His existence on earth, were developed heavily on the lifestyle He presented to His Apostles and described in the Gospels. The Roman Catholic Church became, in time, a mixture of Jesus’ teachings with mystical traditions and political power.\footnote{Robert Banks, \textit{Paul’s Idea of Community}, Rev. ed., (Peabody, Massachusetts: Hendrickson, 1994), 108. Banks notes that Catholicism followed the cults and made the rite the center of its activities with the Spirit left out of the mix.} The Reformation brought a pendulum swing in the other direction (essentially concurrent with the start of the Modern Era) and for the Protestants, eliminated mysticism by replacing it with scientific logic (thus sending the Holy Spirit, miracles, prophecies, and the supernatural nature of God to the back burner of theology and church teaching).\footnote{Ibid., 108. For Protestants, Banks asserts that they have followed the way of the synagogues and put a book (i.e. the Bible) in the center of their services, and still left the Spirit out of the mix.} The Modern Era had many different church movements including the Great Awakening, Fundamentalism, the Social Gospel, Charismatic Revival, etc. As the Modern Era has given way the Postmodern Era, the church in America has been unprepared to change and very few have transitioned well or at all. The problem is that instead of getting the church back onto the correct foundation (the teachings of Jesus and the practices of the New Testament church), most (e.g. Luther) have tried to correct (i.e. reform) the church many years removed from its foundation by addressing its outward (external) problems while barely touching or even totally missing the foundational issues. This is akin to the
European and American car manufacturing problems of the past when they would build substandard cars and then have a rework station to fix their mistakes.\textsuperscript{51} The principle of Total Quality Management of building quality from the ground up, is much more biblical and logical. This was the legacy of Toyota, which believed that a bad foundation would lead to a bad product, and that reworking it was a waste of time, energy, and money.

As America has entered into a post-Christian era, the church must alter its “business as usual” mindset, deconstruct itself (to use a postmodern term carefully), and build itself from the ground up with a biblically-based foundation that will influence any future expressions in an ever increasingly hostile world. It is difficult to imagine the church existing in twenty years the way it has for the last few decades, especially when its influence is waning, church doors are closing at alarming rates, and the government is not interested in supporting the church’s Constitutional heritage and rights.

Holistic health has been found in such teachings as the YMCA whose goal is to develop a healthy mind, body and spirit.\textsuperscript{52} Rick Warren noted how churches were often out of balance and how that lack of balance translated into that church’s emphasis (e.g. an evangelistic church focused on evangelism often to the exclusion of discipleship, worship, ministry and fellowship).\textsuperscript{53} Eric Geiger and Thom Rainer demonstrated how bureaucratic the church has become and how its complexity has created an imbalance which has inhibited it from being


\textsuperscript{52} http://www.ymca.net/healthy-living/ “Being healthy means more than simply being physically active. It’s about maintaining a balanced spirit, mind and body.” Note, the YMCA was originally founded as an organization for Christian men, but has become secular in over the last century.

\textsuperscript{53} Rick Warren, The Purpose Driven Church, 122-124.
effective and responsive to a lost world, and how this complexity is directly contributing to its death.  

Limitations

One limitation of this research will be that this work will not provide surfactant solutions (i.e. methods, programs, liturgical suggestions). The primary purpose is to get to the foundational levels—the building blocks. Even though this writer’s preference, and even biblically supported ideal is for the American church to abandon buildings and to meet in homes, the various house church designs will not be the focus, nor will methods for transitioning a church from traditional to house. There are many books in the marketplace today describing methods of church practices, but few focus on the foundational aspects. A church built on the wrong foundation will have the wrong purpose for its existence, and therefore will have the wrong results. The house church is no different in this regards.

Furthermore, while it is not the primary purpose of this work to serve as an apologetic for the house church, this thesis will propose the house church as the most logical and viable option for fulfilling the foundational requirements for a church in a later chapter. The enormity of an apologetic would be well outside the scope and size limitations of this paper. The immensely growing house church book field and the many house church websites that are springing up often address this. Additionally, as the anti-church sentiment and focus grows in America, and as traditional-styled churches continue dying out, it is this writer’s belief that an apologetic will not

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be needed within twenty years as it is more than likely that cultural and legal shifts will ensure
the house church’s viability as the visible church becomes silenced.

While this thesis will demonstrate that the Western church is in a critical state and needs
major overhauling, acceptance of this fact may be hindered by the BIAS of many readers. BIAS
is an acronym used in business that evaluates one’s 1) Beliefs: what one believes about himself,
others, the state of things, etc.; 2) Interpretations: no matter what others may have deduced
through research and surveys, many will interpret the results differently and often inaccurately;
3) Assumptions: usually people assume results predicated on limited or faulty data, and the
improper interpretations of data, even if logically and historically these results are unlikely to
occur; 4) Strategy: because one has a strong set of beliefs, interpretations and assumptions, his
strategy will be enforced and not allowed to be challenged, even if doomed from the start.\footnote{55}

Referencing the massive decline of Sears under its current leadership, Adam Hartung
states: “What is your BIAS? Are you managing for the needs of changing markets, or working
hard to defend doing more of what worked in a bygone era? As a leader, are you targeting the
future, or trying to recapture the past? Have market shifts made your beliefs outdated, your
interpretations of what happens around you faulty, your assumptions inaccurate and your
strategies hurting results?”\footnote{56} Hartung challenges organizations and leaders to evaluate their
BIAS and determine if they have faulty assumptions and are headed in the same negative
direction as Sears.

Last, at the Doctor of Ministry level, a truly broad scientific research sample is less than
achievable (as one might find in a Doctor of Philosophy program). This writer will be soliciting


\footnote{56} Ibid.
as large a sample as possible which should serve this paper well. The research questions will be limited and will target the primary goals of this paper specifically.

Theoretical Basis

The primary premise of this thesis is that the foundation needs to be proper before the building can be erected. The ideals of Total Quality Management are the basis for this concept. Kaizen, or the concept of continual and constant improvement, should not be the credo for the lost alone, but for the Christian who has a mandate from the New Testament to grow spiritually and to become more (practically) sanctified.

Jon Miller, speaking of Toyota’s automobile manufacturing process, states: “The first pillar requires that we build quality in at the source. Reliable processes produce reliable results, and processes are the sum of their inputs.”57 This is counter to the current beliefs by many in Christendom today that the current church “system” just merely needs to be corrected and tweaked. This writer is arguing for a re-creation of the church based on certain foundational values that he has found prevalent in the New Testament but lacking in most current churches today. The church is about two thousand years old, and thus two thousand years removed from the source: Jesus.58 Meanwhile, the church has had a two thousand year history fraught with violence, immorality, political maneuvering, micromanagement, corporate influences, and many more marked deviations from its foundation.


58 The genesis of the church began with Jesus while He was on earth, and was directly propagated by His followers whom He had taught directly (and were thus closest to Him as the source). Acts 20:28-31 and II. Peter 2:1-3 warn of those who will sneak in and begin to pervert the church with false teachings and requirements. Evidence of these deviations (and many of them quite large, such as Gnosticism) were found in the early church. Additional deviations continued to be applied to the church in the course of the last two thousand years, some appearing innocent, and others as blatant heresies.
Michael Lant, a software developer, notes that all “software has defects of some sort… If left unresolved, some defects can have cataclysmic consequences while others are so minor that they go unnoticed by virtually everyone. Like most things in this universe there is a law of diminishing returns when it applies to the correction of software defects.”\(^{59}\) He indicates that the goal is to determine which defects have the greatest return on investment. Lant’s statement is where the church in America is today. It is working feverishly to ascertain which defects are the most serious and then how to fix them, yet never resolving the fact that the defects have been built into the church system over two thousand years and will continue to surface unless the foundation is adjusted to match the foundation of the New Testament’s churches. Until this is done, the current efforts to readjust the church are merely scratching the surface and are never getting below it.

Statement of Methodology

The argument herein is that the foundation of any church should be based on the Primacy of Jesus, followed by the Family/Community relationship, and then enfranchised for service through Empowered Leadership. Moreover, the implication is that those three elemental requirements are either missing or out of balance in most American churches. Ergo, to determine if these assumptions are true, the direction that will be peregrinated will be to 1) analyze the historical basis for the aforementioned problem (Chapter 2), 2) survey pastors and congregations separately with questions directly relating to the three foundational issues (Chapter 3), 3) research various scholars and authors to provide documented validation of these suggestions

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(Chapter 4), 4) coalesce the information into a suggested course of action for churches (Chapter 5), and 5) Conclude the study (Chapter 5).

Review of Literature

Extrabiblical

House church and small group books are increasing in popularity and are finding more prominence on library shelves. However, the plethora of topics in this category are all numerous. The scope of books reviewed herein primarily relate to those that are most impacting in the development of house churches and small groups within a Western orientation where house churches have been slowest to develop. Furthermore, these books were chosen for their contribution to an elevated promotion of community and family within the church body.

Another category of books included herein are dealing with theology. A house church is not an instant solution to the issues at hand, but rather, the best vehicle to help the church move forward. Yet, without balance and proper goals, the church will continue down its self-destructive path until the house church is no more than a novel idea repeating the same mistakes that the building-oriented church has for the last five hundred years.

Before proceeding to the works reviewed, it should be noted that journal articles tend to be sparse on this topic, thus relegating the research to books.

Ralph Neighbour, Jr. has been on the cutting edge of small group theory for over forty years, writing many books along the way. His early work was extremely foreign to the Southern Baptist mindset and caused many problems for him as well as others who wished to integrate small groups into their churches. Now in his eighties, Neighbour has continued to influence church methodology by insisting that a true biblical community is paramount for a group of believers to be named a “church.” Christ’s Basic Bodies represents a strong appeal from the
historical New Testament church, a focused hermeneutic of New Testament passages, and the example of how a human body functions to create a compelling apologetic for churches to be formed around small groups. This book presents a solid theology defining church as a small group, and provides many good examples of how community within a church is necessary, yet will only exist with the centrality of Jesus.

*Megashift: Igniting Spiritual Power* by James H. Rutz, is written from a Charismatic position that emphasizes many dramatic miracles in today’s generation (to include people being raised from the dead). While this is not a part of this writer’s tradition, he does find that many of Rutz’s insights on building-oriented churches and how they have handcuffed the church to be very insightful. Rutz covers many historical church traditions that have been synonymously paired with the idea of being biblically inspired, yet have their roots in paganism. His passion is for Spirit-led churches to dramatically change the world; so despite the heavy emphasis on miracles, he never fails to emphasize that giving Jesus glory is the true focus of believers, and that ministry needs to be in the hands of those believers. What makes this idea notable is that the majority of Protestant churches seem to be banging their heads trying to discover new ways to motivate their members to actually do something more than sit at church on Sunday. Eliminating the lecture format in churches, and turning them over to smaller groups led predominantly by the actual church members, changes the results in a handsome fashion. Rutz describes churches around the world that are growing and serving while following this design.

House churches have found their greatest modern success in the Orient, India, and in South America. Thus far they have failed to make a major impact on American culture. *Sticky Church*, by Larry Osborne, is an example of how small groups can be formed around sermon-based discussions. Osborne still maintains a traditional-type Sunday service, but the church is
heavily infused with cells which meet each week to dig deeper into the Sunday sermon topic. Osborne’s focus is to stop the back door losses of people that so many churches experience. The multiplication-focused small group model tends to aim at growing a group to a certain level, and the splitting it (although refusing to use that term because it has negative connotations). Meanwhile, new leaders are developed to break away and take over the new group that split off. Osborne refutes this design since the idea of building intimacy with other people is destroyed by the constant divisions those groups go through. Furthermore, he describes what he calls “relational overload” as being a deterrent to small group success because people can really only build a very limited number of relationships, and continual group splitting will cause people to withdraw due to the overload all those relationships cause. With this emphasis, Osborne places people at the forefront of the ministry, not the mission itself. By doing this, his church fulfills its biblical duty to nurture and grow the members, and they in turn naturally fulfill the mission to multiply. The success of this small group design can be measured by how well his church has grown (to megachurch status) without the use of marketing or programs.

Writing from a much more scientific standpoint than those previously mentioned, Alan Hirsch’s contribution to Christian thought and missions is quite dynamic. *The Forgotten Ways* exemplifies his detail-oriented research into church dynamics as he focuses on the missional church that existed in the New Testament and that has not been seen for almost two millennia. He provides some applications of anthropologist Victor Turner’s work on *liminality* and *communitas*. The former deals with drastic situations that transition a person whereas the latter deals with the elimination of self-orientation for a community-mindedness that comes from a hard situation that requires people to become codependent. Hirsch discusses how the Christian

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community develops through *liminality* and *communitas*, yet how much of middle-class America does not fully develop in these areas due to its comfortable lifestyle.\(^{61}\)

The primacy of mission becomes the fuel for *communitas* to develop and thrive. Missional churches thus fulfill the Great Commission and create true community because they are unified around a biblical mission.\(^{62}\) Yet, the mission is not the ultimate centrality of that true community, its Founder is.\(^{63}\) Hirsch elevates the centrality of Jesus for the church and then advocates for the mission of Jesus to be bonded with that centrality. The church in America does not experience this fully as it sits comfortably today, but the early church did and churches all across the world in anti-Christian environments do. Hirsch calls for the church to come together around Jesus and His mission to thus activate its missional appointment once again.

*Jesus Manifesto: Restoring the Supremacy and Sovereignty of Jesus Christ*, is a book by Leonard Sweet and Frank Viola that calls for the church to put Jesus back where He belongs as the focus of the church. Their belief is that “Christians have made the gospel about so many things—things other than Christ.”\(^{64}\) Thus, the existence of Christians is meaningless as they tread through life without a focus on Jesus. While community/family is an essential part of the church, it is missing in most churches because it does not engage in the community/family of Jesus Christ. The authors point out that from God’s viewpoint, “your biography is Jesus Christ.”\(^{65}\) Thus, the relationship we have with Him is paramount to any other relationships the church could ever hope to have. This exaltation of the supremacy of Christ becomes the driving

\(^{61}\) Ibid., 221.

\(^{62}\) Ibid., 235.

\(^{63}\) Ibid., 94.

\(^{64}\) Leonard Sweet and Frank Viola, *Jesus Manifesto*, xvii.

\(^{65}\) Ibid., 60.
motivator for Christian living and mission. Furthermore, this supremacy creates the lost sense of community and family that a Christian should be realizing.

Focusing on community, Robert and Julia Banks’ book, *The Church Comes Home: Building Community and Mission through Home Churches*, the authors provide a historical basis for doing house churching, as well as applicative information. The writer’s also provide a useful chapter that focuses on eight hindrances to house churches. Yet, the largest benefit of their material is in the marriage of community and mission, and in the apologetic for house churches. One should also note that Robert Banks’ earlier work, *Paul’s Idea of Community: The Early House Churches in their Historical Setting* helped pave the way for the advancement of the ideas he and his wife share in *The Church Comes Home*.

*House Church and Mission: The Importance of Household Structures in Early Christianity* is authored by Roger Gehring and served as his Th.D. dissertation in 1998. Gehring traces the history of house gatherings from before Easter (highlighting Jesus’ use of them), to post-Easter. He emphasizes the *oikos* relationship to the church’s identity and function, and how household structures exist as community. Gehring investigates the ecclesiological significance of house churches as well. Gehring’s book contributes heavily to an understanding of how the church functioned in its first three centuries, as well as discusses its importance and contributions today.

Gilbert Bilezikian’s *Community 101: Reclaiming the Local Church as Community of Oneness* comes from his long history as a New Testament professor as well as a founding church planter of Willow Creek Community Church. Bilezikian deals with unity and community, both as real concepts as well as symbolic concepts of the Trinity. He discusses the issues that have come against community and how they have negatively impacted the church. The tone is one of
theological analysis as he investigates church history, yet he also spends time with practical applications of community within our present day era. Lastly, he does an exposé on the importance of leadership within the church community, especially the biblical support for a plurality of leaders. He demonstrates convincingly that there are absolutely no biblical instructions ever allowing the leadership to come under one pastor, however, the Bible often teaches (both Old and New Testament) on the plurality of leadership within Jewish and Christian circles.

Written to combat the superficial and impersonal building-oriented church issues prevalent in the 1970’s, *The House Church* by Philip and Phoebe Anderson is written to offer the hope of close-knit loving community that most churches lack even today. Written after the heyday of the hippie era, *The House Church* is a bit less analytical than many of the books from the 1980’s onward. Yet, it presents its theology around the wholeness of man (thinking, feeling, acting) and how these are important aspects for a person to be healthy spiritually and personally. Furthermore, a Christian coming from a building church model will rarely have a sense of openness that a house church demands. So, in light of this, the Andersons evaluate and offer ideas (often anecdotal) on how to create a community of trust wherein the house church members can bear their deepest burdens. From a functional standpoint, this book provides some very useful information, especially in our postmodern age which mimics in part the Vietnam/Hippie Era concerns. The greatest drawback of this book is that it speaks at great lengths on the church being a means of creating a holistic life for the Christian while minimizing the fact that a Christian’s life will never be holistically healthy if God is not the center point.

Except possibly in small communities, most churches in America do not look, act, or function like a family. Joseph H. Hellerman, in *When the Church was a Family: Recapturing
Jesus’ Vision for Authentic Christian Community, calls the church back to its roots as a close-knit family. He attacks the American philosophy (which, sadly, is often promoted as theological) of individualism. He notes that many of our society’s ills are due to what social scientists have named “radical individualism”, and undermines the biblical model of the group coming first. Hellerman investigates the family unit in ancient Mediterranean societies to ascertain what the common mindsets were during the time of the New Testament. Another very interesting and useful analysis is done of all of Paul’s epistles to point out the frequency in which Paul referred to believers using familial terms (i.e. *adelph-*, *pater-*, *kleronom-*, *huio-*, and *tekn-*). Hellerman notes the astounding frequency that Paul uses to address his surrogate church family applies to the church’s: 1) Affective Solidarity, 2) Family Unity, 3) Material Solidarity, and 4) Family Loyalty, and thus indicates that Paul’s behavioral expectations for the church were based on this family mentality. Other areas that Hellerman treats are those of the churches during the Roman Empire, the use of plural possessive pronouns versus single possessive pronouns within Paul’s writings (the precedence being on the plural “group” usages), and leadership within the family of God (which historically would have been understood in the New Testament to have been a plurality of leaders as only God is the Father of the church). Ultimately, Hellerman’s detailed research is quite impressive and compelling as he presents his concepts in light of Scripture and history.

Edited by Steve Atkerson and written by eleven contributors, Toward a House Church Theology is purposely written to provide a biblical basis for a house church as well as to provide house churches with a theological foundation. Furthermore, as noted by them, the focus of these men is on Jesus as their God and Savior and the core of their house church theology is that the

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relationship of people with the Lord directly impacts their relationship with the church. Thus, they are writing to ultimately help people know Jesus. *Toward a House Church Theology* visits many of the common practices and beliefs in building-oriented churches and then demonstrates how the Bible either promotes a different idea, or was not understood to be defined by current traditional trends. The writers attack the way and frequency the Lord’s Supper is practiced and show that it was actually, according to I. Corinthians 11:18ff, observed every time the church met, and based on the Greek it was denoted as a feast, not a snack. The writers also demonstrate that the Scriptures tell the church what to do when they meet, and that actually involves everyone contributing and rarely if ever having someone do modern “preaching.” Also, the church meets “unto edifying”, not for “worship” which was an Old Testament focal point. While this book covers many points of theology, the writers’ basis for rejecting many of modern church practices is that they run counter to the traditions that churches were to observe (I. Corinthians 11:1-2).

Ultimately, *Toward a House Church Theology* is a compelling work that digs deeply into the biblical practices of a church and compares them against modern practices, thus illuminating many of the theological shortfalls of the modern church.

*The Global House Church Movement* is written by Rad Zdero. His book begins with his personal involvement in church and how he grew up in the Serbian Orthodox Church but came to Christ through a Gideon Bible that his sister had brought home. As such, Zdero never attended an evangelical church seeing that his parents were afraid he would become fanatical. Once out of the house and in college, Zdero did not fit into the traditional Christian scene nor in traditional evangelical churches, but instead was mentored at college and was a part of Campus Crusade for Christ as well as Navigators. The smaller meetings were the foundation to his growth as a Christian.
Zdero writes about the biblical reasons for his preference of the house church over the traditional model. These are similar to what many of the other aforementioned writers have covered. From this point he continues through historical house church movements such as Waldo, Schwenckfeld, Labadie, Fox, and Wesley. This period covers almost 1,800 years, and emphasizes that after Constantine, the house church was mostly a forbidden and underground form. He also describes the various house church movements occurring in China, India, and Ethiopia, and the millions that are coming to Christ through them.

The last portion of Zdero’s book is mostly made up of ideas for planting house churches and house church networks. He carefully explains that he does not denounce what he calls “cathedral” churches, and finds that many of them may be instrumental in sending out house church missionaries.

The evolution of George Barna’s Christian journey is fairly well summarized in Revolution: Finding Vibrant Faith Beyond the Walls of the Sanctuary. This seems to have been influenced by his earlier research in Pagan Christianity? Exploring the Roots of our Church Practices (co-authored with Frank Viola in 2002). Barna has successfully documented various trends with regards to Christian thought and practice over the course of the last few decades. His statistical research is well known and often quoted in churches. But, some areas of Christianity were noticeably missing regardless of the efforts of building oriented churches to forcibly implement these elements. Ultimately, Barna has found that the traditions and practices of churches end up offering very little in terms of true spiritual formation, vigor, or interest. Most churches do not provide effective outlets for their members to use their gifts and talents, and despite quasi-entertaining preaching, most attendees are bored and de-motivated. Barna has found that Christians want deeper, more vibrant walks with God that have meaning and purpose.
In the end, he supports micro-congregations rather than macro-congregations, and sees the smaller, house church styles dominating the Christian landscape in the years to come as millions leave congregational based churches to actually live out their Christian walks. These issues are summarized in his seven trends: 1) The Changing of the Guard (Baby Busters and Mosaics are increasing while Baby Boomers and Builders are dying off), 2) The Rise of a New View of Life (postmodernism), 3) Dismissing the Irrelevant (post-Boomers do not care about excellence in everything, but do care about relevance), 4) The Impact of Technology (which is evolving at an alarming rate and holds with it societal alterations with each new major advancement), 5) Genuine Relationships (a key issue missing from congregational churches, and artificially infused into them, Busters and Mosaics want deeper, real relationships that their previous generations wanted or are comfortable with), 6) Participation in Reality (the newer generations tend to want to be involved in activities that directly impact their “reality” of a personally satisfying life. Small groups allow a better chance for experiencing life with others and offering contributions), 7) Finding True Meaning (the newer generations are trying to understand themselves in the areas of sacrifice and surrender; two areas that the previous generations have mostly ignored).  

A very complex book that promotes a church organization that can respond the ever-changing needs of communities within society, Kester Brewin’s Signs of Emergence: A Vision for Church that is Organic/Networked/Decentralized/Bottom-up/Communal/Flexible/Always Evolving is a call to churches to eliminate the heavy structures that so encumbers them. He focuses his book on the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus, and then proceeds to promote a church that is as free to change as Jesus had offered two thousand years ago when He interrupted the accepted Jewish standards. Brewin does not want the church to catch up to the current era,

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67 George Barna, Revolution, 42-47.
but rather to be the church and to be free to alter and change as it desires without having society or church culture dictate its future. He also does a nice contrasting critique between the traditional “Rigid” church, the “Emergent/Conjunctive” church, and the ultra-organic “Anarchic” church, demonstrating the freedom from micromanaged organization (the Rigid church) and the positive contrast from the lack of organization (Anarchic church). It is Brewin’s proposal that the Emergent/Conjunctive church is best designed to change with the ever changing times, and that the rigid church is dying out. He proposes that the church waits on God for these changes.

*Jesus has Left the Building* is Paul Vieira’s affirmation that the church is not nor was ever to be a building and place to go on Sundays, but rather, that the people of Christ *are* the church. He points out that historically, the church in the first few hundred years did not do much public preaching (due to persecution), but definitely lived their faith out in their communities and preached privately (he also relates that to some friends of his who are missionaries to the Muslim nation of Indonesia). However, while in America there is much Christian chatter, the unsaved world isn’t listening to the message, especially since they don’t see it being lived. Many of these problems stem from the fact that people have been duped into thinking the focus is on being the church when in fact, the focus is all about Jesus. When He becomes the church’s priority, then everything else begins to fall into place. Because Jesus has left so many churches (many who have taken their eyes off of Him and are not looking at historical structures and traditions instead), the writer calls for Christians to follow Him wherever He leads, not where the church says He is leading.

Larry Crabb is a noted author and Christian counselor who has gotten bored with church. He notes that the more he has gotten closer to Christ, the less he has been interested in church. He has fielded comments from numerous big-name preachers who out of the blue stated that they
were bored of church, or not finding anything in it. He has had pastors tell him that they are bored of pastoring. In context, these were not men who were bored with God, but were bored with serving the system. Thus, his journey becomes the framework for his book, *Real Church: Does it Exist? Can I Find it?*, a book that challenges why people go to church, whether the form is biblical and God-honoring, and that maybe the American versions of church (with the reasons people go) may actually offend God. Here on out Crabb describes various types of churches in our culture today, and weighs them and their philosophies against the Word. He then compiles a list of things that he is hungry for from a church. He concludes his book with a focus that has been developing in other writers; namely Jesus being the reason church meets. He challenges the church to move forward on its journey to please God.

One of the seminal books on natural house churching is *Organic Church: Growing Faith where Life Happens* by Neil Cole. Originally working within the traditional church format, Cole began to see that the church is not a program or a process, but rather a naturally developed entity that Jesus grows (Matthew 16:13-20). Drawing from farming and biological metaphors, Cole presents a church mentality that he scripturally proves is effective, God-blessed, and simplified. However, he emphasizes that nothing about the church matters if Jesus is not the One behind it all. He also highlights the effectiveness of smaller churches (quoting Christian Schwarz’s research) that shows that mega churches are actually detrimental to spreading the Gospel, but small churches are exceptionally more effective. Cole’s anecdotes serve to visualize the effectiveness of letting the church grow naturally without church growth programs or micromanaged planning.
Biblical

Primacy of Jesus:

The primary focus of evangelism, discipleship, and leadership is Jesus. These passages demonstrate that He is the One Whom the church needs to keep its eyes on, and its heart seeking:

1. Acts 5:42 “And every day, in the temple and from house to house, they did not cease teaching and preaching Jesus as the Christ.”

2. Acts 17:2-3 “And Paul went in, as was his custom, and on three Sabbath days he reasoned with them from the Scriptures, explaining and proving that it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead, and saying, ‘This Jesus, whom I proclaim to you, is the Christ.’”

3. Romans 13:14 “But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires.”

4. I. Corinthians 2:2 “For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified.”

5. I. Corinthians 3:11 “For no one can lay a foundation other than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ.”

6. I. Corinthians 16:22 “If anyone has no love for the Lord, let him be accursed. Our Lord, come!”

7. II. Corinthians 4:5 “For what we proclaim is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, with ourselves as your servants for Jesus’ sake.”

8. II. Corinthians 4:7-11 “But we have this treasure in jars of clay, to show that the surpassing power belongs to God and not to us. We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be manifested in our bodies. For we who live are always being given over to death for Jesus’ sake, so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh.”

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68 Unless otherwise noted, all biblical passages referenced are in the English Standard Bible (Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway Bibles, 2003).
9. Philippians 2:5-11 “Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”

10. Philippians 2:21 “For they all seek their own interests, not those of Jesus Christ.”

11. 1. Timothy 6:3 “If anyone teaches a different doctrine and does not agree with the sound words of our Lord Jesus Christ and the teaching that accords with godliness, he is puffed up with conceit and understands nothing. He has an unhealthy craving for controversy and for quarrels about words, which produce envy, dissension, slander, evil suspicions, and constant friction among people who are depraved in mind and deprived of the truth, imagining that godliness is a means of gain.”

12. Colossians 1:27-28 “To them God chose to make known how great among the Gentiles are the riches of the glory of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory. Him we proclaim, warning everyone and teaching everyone with all wisdom, that we may present everyone mature in Christ.”

Family/Community:

Churches talk about community and being a family. However, calling each other “brother” and “sister” is not the same as being a true family. Meeting on Sunday and at occasional potlucks is not the same as being a true community. The lack of unity amongst Christians has become not only a negative image for the lost and dying world, but repels many church attenders as well.

1. Galatians 3:26-29 “for in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ

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69 Community of some level may exist in these gatherings, but the idea of community in the Bible has a fuller sense of interdependency and with deep involvement in the lives of one another. Loren B. Mead, *Five Challenges of the Once and Future Church*, (Herndon, Virginia: The Alban Institute, 1996), 55-59, discusses how churches can seek to create a deeper community within Sunday School, choirs, and other established groups within the church.
Jesus. And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to promise.”

2. Ephesians 2:19-22 “So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, in whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord. In him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit.”

3. Ephesians 4:1-6 “I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call—one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.”

4. Col 3:11-15 “Here there is not Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave, free; but Christ is all, and in all. Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body. And be thankful.”

5. I. Peter 2:5 “you yourselves like living stones are being built up as a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.”


“I am the true vine and my Father is the gardener. He takes away every branch that does not bear fruit in me. He prunes every branch that bears fruit so that it will bear more fruit. You are clean already because of the word that I have spoken to you. Remain in me, and I will remain in you. Just as the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it remains in the vine, so neither can you unless you remain in me.

“I am the vine; you are the branches. The one who remains in me – and I in him – bears much fruit, because apart from me you can accomplish nothing. If anyone does not remain in me, he is thrown out like a branch, and dries up; and such branches are gathered up and thrown into the fire, and are burned up. If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you want, and it will be done for you. My Father is honored by this, that you bear much fruit and show that you are my disciples.”
“Just as the Father has loved me, I have also loved you; remain in my love. If you obey my commandments, you will remain in my love, just as I have obeyed my Father’s commandments and remain in his love. I have told you these things so that my joy may be in you, and your joy may be complete. My commandment is this – to love one another just as I have loved you. No one has greater love than this – that one lays down his life for his friends. You are my friends if you do what I command you. I no longer call you slaves, because the slave does not understand what his master is doing. But I have called you friends, because I have revealed to you everything I heard from my Father. You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit, fruit that remains, so that whatever you ask the Father in my name he will give you. This I command you – to love one another.”

This passage offers two interesting dynamics: 1) Fellowship with Jesus, and 2) Fellowship with each other. These two points are interrelated, so much so, that John states in his first epistle: “If we say we have fellowship with him and yet keep on walking in the darkness, we are lying and not practicing the truth. But if we walk in the light as he himself is in the light, we have fellowship with one another…” (I. John 1:6-7a). Couple this with I. John 2:9-11: “The one who says he is in the light but still hates his fellow Christian is still in the darkness. The one who loves his fellow Christian resides in the light, and there is no cause for stumbling in him. But the one who hates his fellow Christian is in the darkness, walks in the darkness, and does not know where he is going, because the darkness has blinded his eyes.” The fellowship of believers must be vertical (between Christians and God), and horizontal (between Christians and other Christians). Without this balance, a Christian’s walk is suspect since he cannot love God and hate his fellow Christians.
The 59 “One Another’s”. Carl George has presented a list of fifty-nine “One Anothers” as found in the New Testament. These statements demonstrate the Scripture’s focus on community and family which is quite juxtaposed to the individualistic nature of American ecclesiology. These further highlight the emphasis on family and community.

1. “… Be at peace with each other” (Mark 9:50).
2. “…Wash one another’s feet” (John 13:14).
3. “… Love one another…” (John 13:34).
4. “…Love one another” (John 13:34).
5. “…Love one another” (John 13:35).
6. “…Love each other…” (John 15:12).
7. “…Love each other” (John 15:17).
8. “Be devoted to one another in brotherly love…” (Romans 12:10).
9. “…Honor one another above yourselves” (Romans 12:10).
10. “Live in harmony with one another…” (Romans 12:16).
11. “…Love one another…” (Romans 13:8).
12. “…Stop passing judgment on ne another” (Romans 14:13).
13. “…Accept one another, then, just as Christ accepted you…” (Romans 15:7).
14. “…Instruct one another” (Romans 15:14).
15. “Greet one another with a holy kiss…” (Romans 16:16).
16. “…When you come together to eat, wait for each other” (1 Corinthians 11:33).
17. “…Have equal concern for each other” (1 Corinthians 12:25).
18. “…Greet one another with a holy kiss” (1 Corinthians 16:20).
19. “…Greet one another with a holy kiss” (2 Corinthians 13:12).
20. “…Serve one another in love” (Galatians 5:13).
21. “If you keep biting and devouring each other…you will be destroyed by each other” (Galatians 5:15).

22. “Let us not become conceited, provoking and envying each other” (Galatians 5:26).

23. “Carry each other’s burdens…” (Galatians 6:2).

24. “…Be patient, bearing with one another in love” (Ephesians 4:2).

25. “Be kind and compassionate to one another…” (Ephesians 4:32).

26. “…Forgiving each other…” (Ephesians 4:32).

27. “Speak to one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs” (Ephesians 5:19).

28. “Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ” (Ephesians 5:21).

29. “…In humility consider others better than yourselves” (Philippians 2:3).

30. “Do not lie to each other…” (Colossians 3:9).

31. “Bear with each other…” (Colossians 3:13).

32. “…Forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another” (Colossians 3:13).

33. “Teach… (one another)” (Colossians 3:16).

34. “…Admonish one another” (Colossians 3:16).

35. “…Make your love increase and overflow for each other” (1 Thessalonians 3:12).

36. “…Love each other” (1 Thessalonians 4:9).

37. “…Encourage each other…” (1 Thessalonians 4:18).

38. “…Encourage one another…” (1 Thessalonians 5:11).

39. “…Build each other up…” (1 Thessalonians 5:11).

40. “Encourage one another daily…” (Hebrews 3:13).

41. “…Spur one another on toward love and good deeds” (Hebrews 10:24).

42. “…Encourage one another” (Hebrews 10:25).

43. “…Do not slander one another” (James 4:11).

44. “Don’t grumble against each other…” (James 5:9).

45. “Confess your sins to each other…” (James 5:16).
46. “…Pray for each other” (James 5:16).
47. “…Love one another deeply, from the heart” (1 Peter 1:22).
48. “…Live in harmony with each other…” (1 Peter 3:8).
49. “…Love each other deeply…” (1 Peter 4:8).
50. “Offer hospitality to one another without grumbling” (1 Peter 4:9).
51. “Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others…” (1 Peter 4:10).
52. “…Clothe yourselves with humility toward one another…” (1 Peter 5:5).
53. “Greet one another with a kiss of love” (1 Peter 5:14).
54. “…Love each other” (1 John 3:11).
55. “…Love each other…” (1 John 3:23).
56. “…Love each other…” (1 John 4:7).
57. “…Love each other…” (1 John 4:11).
58. “…Love each other…” (1 John 4:12).
59. “…Love each other…” 2 John 5).

Empowered Leadership:

This writer once had a discussion with a pastor about church planting. When it was conveyed that this writer’s church planting structure would be team-oriented, the pastor expressed his disagreement and emphasized his belief that the church’s leadership and existence comes down to “one man!” This top-down management style that finds its root in traditional business theory and bad theology, is exactly the reason that pastors are begging for laborers but cannot find many. The laborers in the New Testament church were also the leaders. Any who


71 Joe Burress, former pastor of Victory Baptist Church in Rochester, NY.
were pastors were not the sockdolagers of the church’s existence. The church had definitive Apostolic leadership early on, but the crux of the multitudinous house congregations found their primary leadership in Jesus, the One Who empowered them to be world changers. Elders functioned more as leader/guides to ensure biblical principles were followed (even the term for bishop in I. Timothy 3 means “overseer”, not “micromanager”), and it would appear that churches were to have a plurality of elders. This vast empowerment did not beg or threaten the people to do the work of the Lord, but rather, equipped and motivated them to do that work.

1. Ephesians 4:7, 8, 10, and 11 “But grace was given to each one of us according to the measure of Christ's gift. Therefore it says, ‘When he ascended on high he led a host of captives, and he gave gifts to men.’… And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ.”

2. I. Timothy 5:17 “Let the elders who rule well be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in preaching and teaching.” Note that the word “rule” means protector.

3. Titus 1:5 “This is why I left you in Crete, so that you might put what remained into order, and appoint elders in every town as I directed you—”

4. I. Peter 2:9 “But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.”

5. James 5:14 “Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord.”

6. Revelation 1:6 “and made us a kingdom, priests to his God and Father, to him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.”

The last thing to note about the New Testament is that the Epistles, (save the Pastoral Epistles), were not written to the leadership of the various churches, but to the congregants. The general practice of the early churches was to read the letters and then pass them around, and everyone was allowed to handle the message and expected to live by it.
Chapter 2
The Historical Deterioration of the Foundation

History shows that calibration has been utilized throughout many societies for at least 5,000 years. Graeme Payne states: “Calibration is essentially a process of comparison. An instrument is used to measure or is measured by a calibration standard, and the result is compared to two things: the known value and uncertainty of the standard and the performance specifications required by the customer. The concept is simple…” Furthermore, he points out the importance of calibration in peoples’ lives, ranging from standardized weights and measures, to safety and environmental equipment. Any deviation from the standard will skew the results and ultimately all future outputs and performance.

To demonstrate the importance of this concept, while in the Marines, this writer was responsible for quality control for radio repairs. All repaired radio units were brought to the writer who would subsequently test each unit on calibrated equipment to ensure the accuracy of the repairs. Those that did not meet the required thresholds were instantly failed and returned. At all times, but especially during a war, military radio communications are vital. Allowing a radio to pass that was not meeting the testing standards could have had detrimental results to the troops using the communication device. Should their transmission not reach an intended destination, their very lives and the mission they were on could be at stake.

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73 Ibid., 72.
Calibration requires a standard. For the church, the primary standard is Jesus and what the Bible teaches about His church. All things about the church must be measured against the model demonstrated in the Bible. When one looks at Revelation 2-3, Jesus is found to be proclaiming a strong, mostly negative critique towards seven churches which were at various degrees off of being calibrated. The further away a church was, the stronger the rebuke. His instruction to them is to correct their problems or face some drastic consequences.

As mentioned earlier, the church is just about two thousand years removed from its genesis. The foundation by which it was built has been deviated from quite substantially, and holistic calibration is lacking. This is especially true for the American church which has never experienced the purification that comes from suffering extreme opposition. The American church has had it very good and even today as it is losing favor in its culture, still fails to correct itself. Granted, there are pockets of churches who are striving to remain on target, but by and large the American church is off-course does not seem to realize it. Instead, when confronted with the various areas that are not healthy, it resorts to justifying its actions and attitudes.

Looking at Israel, their biblical history demonstrates a pendulum swing which was mostly disobedient to God’s Law, even to the point of intermarriages with pagan cultures, child sacrifices, and outright immorality. God, via the prophets, dealt with their infractions quite severely, and ensured they knew why they were being punished. However, realizing their problems were due to their moral deviations, the Israelites swung the pendulum in the other direction so that a short while before Jesus’ Advent, the sect known as the Pharisees was

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75 Lloyd Perry, Getting the Church on Target, (Chicago, Illinois: Moody Press, 1977), 7. Here Perry states, “These are dangerous days for the organized church. If it continues just to try to preserve society rather than to redeem it, to give its blessing to questionable enterprises, to substitute fellowship for service, and to prize man’s opinion more than God’s revealed truth, then it should give heed to the parable of the unfortunate frog.” He then describes the story of the frog in the kettle with the temperature slowly increased, but the frog not sensing the heat and eventually boiling to death.
thriving. The goal of the Pharisees, unlike their disobedient forefathers, was to maintain a strict obedience to the Law in hopes of gaining God’s favor and ushering in the Messiah.\(^{76}\) To ensure their righteousness, they even went so far as to create rules that defined the rules they were keeping, thus adding more rules into their lives than the approximately 613 laws in the Torah.\(^{77}\) Yet, Jesus attacks them quite often in the Gospels since they have missed the spirit of the Law. They had done a great job in cleaning up their outward moral act, but had failed to have a heart for God, a love for people, and a desire for inner righteousness (Matthew 23:25-26).

Similarly, in its own way, the church has followed the pattern of Israel. The New Testament demonstrates that after Pentecost arrived, the church exploded in growth. Occasionally there were isolated issues that Peter, John, and Paul addressed in their letters, but such were the results of sinful human beings and early church growth pains being prevalent. Nevertheless, with limited resources, limited training, and limited access to the Bible (especially for the Gentile converts), the early church began to multiply massively. The warnings in Revelation are just a picture of the early issues the church was facing.\(^{78}\) Gnosticism,\(^{79}\) opposition to the Apostle John,\(^{80}\) and accepted immorality\(^{81}\) were also creeping in to the church. In time, the church began to envy the paganism of the cultures around them, wanting its own temples,

\(^{76}\) R. Travers Herford, *The Pharisees*, (Boston, Massachusetts: Beacon Press, 1924), 172. Herford discusses the Pharisees’ emphasis on obedience and receiving rewards while waiting for the Messiah to arrive and usher in the Golden Age.


\(^{78}\) Rutz, *Megashift*, 214.

\(^{79}\) Ibid., 215.

\(^{80}\) III. John 1:9.

\(^{81}\) I. Corinthians 5:1.
wanting an exalted priesthood, developing its own music and language, and creating its own subculture.

Neil Cole has popularized the idea of the organic church. In simple terms, the idea is that the church with its weekly lecture and show called “church services” is not natural, nor does it really grow or multiply when it is in an artificial environment. The natural, organic church of the New Testament is quite foreign to the design experienced by most in Westernized countries today. There were no central buildings (churches met primarily in homes throughout the Roman Empire, or at the Temple in Jerusalem for those in that vicinity), few if any pastors, no order of service (their meetings were spontaneous and prayer-oriented), no noted sermons (though teaching did quite often occur), a frequent observance of the Lord’s Supper (most meetings were anchored by a meal), and little compelling to evangelize (yet the church multiplied rapidly). Every believer in the early church was part of the priesthood and was

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82 The church by definition is an assembly, but in reality has become a business that hosts religious functions. See James H. Rutz, The Open Church, 150.


84 Gene Edwards, How to Meet in Homes, xvi-xvii, 26-27. Edwards cites how Albania, an atheistic country, was opened up to Christianity and how American and English missionaries rushed in and instead of using normal missional practices of developing Christianity within the culture of the people, instead imported Westernized church services and practices that were foreign to Albanians.

85 Ibid., 38, 43, 46, 51 and 111.

86 Ibid., 43, 54, 63, 72, and 76. Edwards traces the churches Paul planted and notes that he rarely set up pastors or elders. In fact, he notes that the Holy Spirit raised up leaders and Paul and Silas even took off with one new minister (Timothy) instead of leaving him to the churches in the region.

87 James Rutz, The Open Church, 9

88 Ibid., 50-51.

89 Ibid., 9.

90 Gene Edwards, How to Meet in Homes, 75-76. Edwards notes that Paul’s focus was not soul winning, but on establishing local churches. Edwards then states that evangelism is designed around establishing and (spiritually) growing churches (see also Robert J. Banks, Paul’s Idea of Community, 26-27 where Banks echoes this Gospel-
authoritatively allowed to handle the Word of God, baptize, and celebrate the Lord’s Table.\textsuperscript{91}

Each assembly of believers was semi-autonomous in that it had the freedom to worship and meet as it pleased, but was under the tutelage and overseeing direction of the Apostles or of city/regional pastors (the pastor being an overseer, not a priest renamed as a pastor) when appointed. The church was not a business, and was not formally organized. In all reality, any number of Christians getting together in the name of Jesus, and fulfilling Rick Warren’s Five Purposes of the Church would be considered to be “doing” church.\textsuperscript{92}

Revisiting calibration, Rutz refers to Gall’s \textit{Non-Additivey Theorom}: “A Large System, Produced by Expanding the Dimensions of a Smaller System, Does Not Behave Like the Smaller System.”\textsuperscript{93} In essence, the exponential growth of the church with the world being evangelized and discipled, stagnated and declined once the church got larger and larger. History substantiates that after Constantine legalized the church, and placed its meetings into pagan-inspired buildings, that the church has struggled to impact the world.\textsuperscript{94}

To substantiate the deviation from the foundation, Rutz has researched many Catholic, Baptist, and other sources which have gone into the following compilation that lists many changes (from its original format) that the church has experienced:

\begin{itemize}
  \item The authors note that before Constantine, evangelism was spontaneous, but after Constantine embraced Christianity, “the life of the average Christian and the structure of church life were altered radically.”
\end{itemize}

\textsuperscript{91} Ibid., 74.

\textsuperscript{92} Dennis McCallum, \textit{Members of One Another: How to Build a Biblical Ethos in Your Church}, (Columbus, Ohio: New Paradigm Publishing, 2010), 22.

\textsuperscript{93} James Rutz, \textit{The Open Church}, 24.

\textsuperscript{94} C. Kirk Hadaway, Francis M. DuBose, and Stuart A. Wright, \textit{Home Cell Groups and House Churches}, (Nashville, Tennessee: Broadman Press, 1987), 45. The authors note that before Constantine, evangelism was spontaneous, but after Constantine embraced Christianity, “the life of the average Christian and the structure of church life were altered radically.”
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Tradition</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>140</td>
<td>Pope Hyginus declares clergy distinct from laity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>150</td>
<td>Sprinkling instead of immersion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>200</td>
<td>Clergy called “priests”</td>
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<tr>
<td>200</td>
<td>Origen brings in Greek syllogistic theology, starting with Plato</td>
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<tr>
<td>200</td>
<td>Former pagan orators bring sermons into the church</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>211</td>
<td>Prayers for the dead mentioned by Tertullian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>250</td>
<td>The perpetual virginty of Mary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>250</td>
<td>Infant baptism (becomes dogma in 416)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>258</td>
<td>Holy water mentioned by Cyprian</td>
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<tr>
<td>270</td>
<td>Monasticism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>320</td>
<td>Wax candles and incense</td>
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<td>320</td>
<td>Pastors salaried (by the state)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>375</td>
<td>Veneration of angels and dead “saints”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>375</td>
<td>Use of images and icons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>378</td>
<td>Damascus I becomes “Pontifex Maximus.” In 451, Leo I takes the title of “pope” and confers it on all previous bishops of Rome posthumously. In 606, Boniface III becomes “Universal Bishop.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>380</td>
<td>Christianity compulsory</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
394  The mass

402  Innocent I calls himself “Ruler of the Church of God”

405  List of forbidden books (the most formal list published in 1559)

420  Purgatory proposed

431  Exaltation of Mary as “the Mother of God”

476  Indulgences for the dead

500  Priestly dress

526  Extreme unction

590  Purgatory confirmed

600  Prayers directed to Mary, dead saints, and angels

709  People begin kissing the pope’s foot

787  Veneration/worship of images and relics authorized

819  Feast of the assumption of Mary

858  Wearing of papal crown (Nicolas I)

859  Pesudo-Isidorian Decretals (forged documents used to establish papal claims to temporal powers)

869  Western and Eastern churches (Rome and Constantinople) mutually excommunicate each other

995  Dead “saints” canonized
1045  Gregory VI elected pope after paying Pope Benedict IX to resign

1074  Celibacy of the priesthood

1080  Reading of the Bible in a common language first forbidden (other actions: 1199, 1229, 1233, 1408, 1564, 1816, etc.)

1184  The Inquisition begins, eventually killing many millions

1190  Indulgences sold

1208  The Rosary—praying with beads

1215  Transubstantiation (wafer and wine changed into body and blood of Christ by priestly incantation)

1215  Confession to a priest instead of God

1220  Adoration of the wafer (host)

1245  Limbo invented for dead, unbaptized infants

1300  Stained glass becomes popular

1342  Treasury of Merits (credit for good deeds made transferable)

1414  The cup forbidden to the people at communion

1484  Innocent VIII orders extermination of the Waldenses

1546  Council of Trent affirms Latin as language of the mass, decrees absolute power of the pope over the whole earth, gives tradition equal authority with the Scriptures, proposes seminaries
1547  Rejection of justification by faith alone

1564  Immorality in southern Europe deemed to be caused by nude statues, so orders issued to retrofit fig leaves everywhere

1572  Solemn mass celebrated for the St. Bartholomew’s Day massacre of 60,000 Huguenots

1854  Immaculate Conception (Mary born sinless)

1870  Papal infallibility

1931  Mary named “mediatrix” (gives favors not granted by God—and faster than Jesus!)

1950  Assumption of Mary to heaven

1954  Mary named Queen of Heaven

It is easy at this point to state that this is definitively a Catholic history and not a Protestant history; that the American church is primarily Protestant and does not share such a “negative” history. However, the evidence is that Protestant Christianity is essentially a modified version of Catholicism. Granted, there are some very different core theological beliefs, but the historical foundations of Protestantism (i.e. its practices and many of its doctrines) do not find their roots in the New Testament, but rather in a modified Catholicism. Keep in mind that Luther did not originally attempt to start a new denomination, but instead, attempted to correct

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96 Frank Viola and George Barna, *Pagan Christianity?*, 51-56.
areas that he found to be off target within his own (Catholic) tradition.\textsuperscript{97} Calvin even copied the brutal practices of the Catholic church and magnified them within his church in Geneva, stating: “When the Catholics are so harsh and violent in their defense of their superstitions, are not Christ’s magistrates shamed to do less in defense of the truth.”\textsuperscript{98}

The root of these issues stems from a bemired history within the church. Until Christianity became authorized and official within the Roman Empire, it had existed for over three hundred years in peoples’ homes wherein each believer was actively part of the work. In fact, while Jesus went to Temple and synagogue faithfully, the bulk of His ministry was done with people in the real world within their immediate contexts. He was often found in common people’s homes having meals with them, so much so that He was called a drunk and a glutton (Matthew 11:19). He served the poor and needy, and taught about the Kingdom of God. He proclaimed that He was going to build an assembly that the gates of Hell could not attack and could not win a battle over (Matthew 16:18). After His resurrection, this newfound church exploded with membership and power. However, while the initial growth was via apostolic preaching (most notably Peter in the first few chapters of Acts), the remainder of it was member-driven (the majority of churches started by Paul were left to themselves to grow on their own). Within the Roman Empire the church experienced various persecutions that made the house church format ideal, but much of the time the church existed in relative peace and continued to grow regardless of the circumstances.

As noted, the true growth of the early church was halted by its legalization (via Constantine). Once it became the State religion, many came from paganism and directly

\textsuperscript{97}Ibid., 55.

\textsuperscript{98}Gene Edwards, \textit{How to Meet in Homes}, 108.
introduced their religious practices into the church. Much of the Roman Catholic Church’s practices were taken from paganism, and again Protestantism’s practices are directly descended from the Catholic Church. A distinct clergy-laity rift was created, giving the priesthood (and authority) to an elite group of men who were also the only ones qualified to read or interpret the Scriptures, to baptize or even administer the Lord’s Supper. The so-called laity now only served the church building and its spiritual leaders (i.e. the system). Under Constantine, churches became auditorium buildings that were modeled after the Roman theatres, placing one man in front of congregants who were spoken to rather than who interactively participated in the gathering. John Crysostom (A.D. 347-407), the Archbishop of Constantinople, was trained in pagan Greek rhetoric and directly applied Aristotle’s ideas (introduction, three main points, and a conclusion) to his sermons/lectures and this structure was followed by the Roman Catholic Church. This later became the basis for “authentic, biblical preaching” in the Protestant traditions, despite the fact that Jesus changed the world without any such “preaching.”

Meanwhile, objects and buildings became exalted, similar to the Temple of the Old Testament. The church building was regarded as holy ground. The church utilized “holy” water. The auditorium became a “sanctuary” (i.e. sanctified). The priest was closer to God than


100 Ibid., 126-129.


102 Frank Viola and George Barna, *Pagan Christianity?*, 97-100.

103 James Rutz, *The Open Church*, 50-51.


105 Ibid., 26-27.
the common people\textsuperscript{106} (and confession was proof that he was now a mediator between Jesus and man). This Catholic priest tradition carried over to Protestantism and kept the pastors separated from their congregants.\textsuperscript{107} The Word became mystical. The functions of the church communities were forcibly taken away from those communities and bottled up into a structure (e.g. confessing one’s faults to one another was now only practiced within the confessional booth).

The Protestant Revolution did nothing to truly change these problems. Luther’s and Calvin’s influences on the emerging Protestant movement helped solidify these same Catholic traditions, ideals, and concepts but with a new packaging and language.\textsuperscript{108} Sometimes they even helped to introduce new traditions and practices that were foreign to the original Roman Catholic structure. Nevertheless, their instituted format became the common practice of churches for the next 500 years, continuing to this day.

Selective Issues of Church History in Greater Detail

**The Historical Hindrance of the Building**

The beauty of Christianity is that it is based on having an intimate relationship with the King of kings in such a way that the people are viewed as “adopted” (Ephesians 1:5), “sons of God” (I. John 3:2), and as Christ’s “friends” (John 15:15). As children, we have the privilege to go boldly to the throne of grace (Hebrews 4:16), and to no longer need to go through an imperfect priest to offer atonement for one’s sin since Jesus is the perfect Priest and continually offers atonement (Hebrews 7:27). These major changes to how people were to relate to God were

\textsuperscript{106} Ibid., 126.

\textsuperscript{107} Ibid., 135.

in direct contrast to the three primary elements of Judaism: “temples, priests, and sacrifices.”

Within the New Testament one can trace the history of the church’s genesis in Acts and see that everything liturgical and convoluted within Judaism or any other religion was totally absent from the early church. Granted, the early church was made up of Jews who still met at the temple due to their strong cultural connection with it. However, as Christianity spread out, and the temple was destroyed in 70 A.D., the new emphasis was that the church was an assembly of people who were now “in Christ”, not a call to a corporate worship ceremony or sacrificial observance. Everything about the early church was relationally focused, as can be attested by the fact that they met in each other’s homes, celebrated the Lord’s Supper together constantly, and utilized their spiritual gifts to edify the body.

The word “church” has become a hindrance within our English since it has become synonymous with a building or an organization. Its true meaning is being a called-out assembly. An assembly is people. In contrast, in the mindset of English-speaking people, the church is a building. Moreover, ninety-five percent of all Protestants consider “going to church” to be the single most significant act that they engage in as Christians. The church building is not conducive to family gatherings, but to large, informal gatherings. Constantine would build pagan temples in cities. In those same cities (and often across the street from the temples), he would build churches patterned after government civic auditoriums and, following

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111 When people drive by a building with a steeple, they call it a church. Every Sunday everyone goes to church. However, a group of believers congregated in prayer and Bible teaching are not usually identified as being a church since the definition of assembly has been replaced by being a business or a building.

the pagan practice of naming temples after various gods, named the church buildings after the Apostles. Yet Wallis states: “In the Old Testament, God had a sanctuary for His people; in the New, God has His people as a sanctuary.”

Ralph Neighbor emphasizes that there is nothing wrong with an auditorium for lecturing, but that the aspects of church fellowship and community are not served by the building structure originally designed by Constantine. When congregants are seated in rows staring at the heads of other people, listening to the “master teacher”, and then going home, there is not much room for any members of the body to serve each other’s needs (Philippians 2:3) or to be intimate with each other. Because intimacy was so prevalent in the early church, the house churches provided the opposite results: A) believers shared all things in common, B) they were together constantly, C) they shared financially with each other, D) they prayed with each other, E) they encouraged one another to keep doing good, and F) they rebuked each other. One would be hard-pressed to find these attributes within most of America’s building-oriented churches, and whatever degree they might be found, they would be severely lacking from the ideals and practices of the first century church. The building-oriented structures naturally inhibit most of these functions.

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113 James Rutz, *The Open Church*, 47.
116 Ibid., 112. See also Frank Viola and George Barna, *Pagan Christianity?*, 40.
Another problem of the church building is that it becomes the object of service for congregations. People, especially Postmoderns, want to serve people, not programs, systems or buildings. When the majority of one’s tithe goes to a building, is it any wonder that congregants do not give their money? A church building a hundred years ago was often a simple wood or brick structure, often had a wood stove for heat, and required periodical low-cost maintenance. As America progressed, so also did church buildings and their requirements. Today, church buildings are extremely costly to build and much more costly to maintain. They have alarm systems, insurance, utilities, grounds maintenance, paved parking lots, carpeting, padded seats or pews, and various codes with which to comply.

Atkerson’s view of church buildings echoes this problem. He states that:

The church building is not ‘morally neutral.’ It is not an adventitious piece of technology that can be used for good or evil. If church buildings are not important, why have Christians sunk 180 billion dollars into building them? If you don’t think they are important, go ask a traditional church pastor to sell his church building and give the money to the poor in the name of Jesus, and see what kind of response you’ll get. Of all the money Christians faithfully put in the plate, how much of it goes to the gospel, or to the needy, and how much goes to the parking lots, the steeples, the carpets? How many church splits are generated by disputes over the color of carpets, the placement of church furniture, and other momentous issues? Everyone reading this knows as well as I do that the church building today is nothing more than a holy shrine, a phony substitute temple for the true temple of God, which is the body of Christ. People don’t fight over computers automobiles, and printing presses. But they will fight over a church building. Why? Because the church building has become an idolatrous object of worship.

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120 Frank Viola and George Barna, *Pagan Christianity?*, 41.

121 While pastoring between 2002-2007, the majority of the weekly tithes went to this writer’s church building and mortgage. Little tith money went to missions, to helping the poor locally, or to purchasing ministry supplies. Overwhelmingly, it was hard to get the congregation to serve the system, but it was never that hard to get them to serve people. Virtually every outreach we did for the community, from Easter Egg Hunts to community breakfasts, saw the majority of this writer’s congregation participating and even bringing food and items.

122 Steve Atkerson, ed., *Toward a House Church Theology*, 43.
While it can be contested that some community was maintained within the defective structure of building-oriented churches due to the fact that most communities throughout the churched world were smaller, or were broken down into smaller units, today it is apparent more than ever before that community is not easily found in our mobile and individualistic culture. In the past, the same people who went to a church building on Sunday interacted with each other every day in between. Community was much more common and important within society, as was family. Individuality was not yet the god that it has become in the United States. At this point it should be noted that while the building-oriented church system of the last 1,700 years is inadequate and has in many ways handcuffed the church from fulfilling its full calling, God has blessed it despite its inadequacies because leaders and people at various times and places have sought God with their whole hearts and have taught the Word, preached the Good News, spent time seeking God in prayer, loved each other, worshipped God, and loved righteousness. Towns calls this the Law of Blessability wherein: “God does not necessarily bless doctrine, programs, methods or avoidance of sin. He blesses those who are close to His heart in love, faith, and hope.”

The system may not be perfect, as no system ever is, but the system is now at a point where it is no longer a viable option for the effective future of the church. For the church to become a fully committed community of loving and sharing believers, it needs to strip the hindrance that is the building. More than likely this will be most effective in urban communities since rural communities are spread out and not as likely to abandon the building quite as easily.

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123 Elmer Towns, *The 8 Laws of Leadership*, (Elkton, Maryland: Church Growth Institute, 1992), 60.


125 C. Kirk Hadaway, Francis M. DuBose, and Stuart Wright, *Home Cell Groups and House Churches*, 39. The authors note that Christianity was founded primarily as an urban religion.
the case of rural communities, supplemental home groups would probably be of benefit to help offset the need for a corporate meeting place.

**The Problem of Clergy & Laity**

“In America the church is owned by its clergy …That is what clericalism is,” states Loren Mead.126

The initial design of the church as seen in Acts is one of self-guided congregations under the headship of the Apostles (Acts 6:1-7), or elders (Acts 15:6). This did not mean that there was no leadership in the church,127 but that the leadership was not centralized into a micromanaging group of professional leaders who were revered or lifted above the congregation. The new design for God’s program was that all believers, regardless of race, gender, or nationality, were now part of the priesthood. All were allowed to handle the Word of God and to pray directly to Him without confessing through a designated human priest. All were actively involved in their weekly gatherings.128 The leaders were fairly hands-off as they attended to the Scriptures and praying (Acts 6:4), delegating (Acts 6:3), and hearing tough matters that required prayerful responses (Acts 15:6 and 28). In fact, the Pastoral Epistle of I. Timothy (chapter 3 in particular) is often used to emphasize the qualifications of a pastor, yet rarely is the term “bishop” (i.e. overseer)

126 Loren B. Mead, *Five Challenges for the Once and Future Church*, 1.

127 Gene Edwards, *How to Meet in Homes*, 119-121. A trend of many writers supporting an “organic” church structure is to eliminate leadership altogether. This author understands their point of view, but finds that even as the Holy Spirit was leading the early church, He tended to require human leadership whether it was the Apostles, or the elders. Thus, this author does not believe in the elimination of leadership, just the elimination of the exaltation thereof. See Tony and Felicity Dale, *Simply Church*, 66-78 for their discussion on churches without leadership and the biblical necessity of having leadership.

128 James Rutz, *Megashift*, 157. He is citing a study done by a Fuller Seminary student for his doctorate: Jeffrey Edward Short, *A Strategy for Planting an Interactive Church in Las Vegas, Nevada*. Short’s research ascertained that there is absolutely no biblical basis for restricting the interactive participation of members, yet this is the practice of the majority of churches. Essentially, interactive participation is the only model promoted in Scripture.
ever held up as a requirement for a pastor. Pastor-led churches tend to place micromanagement levels of leadership onto the pastor rather than the biblically-based overseeing (i.e. delegating) qualities.

In A.D. 140, Pope Hyginus declared that clergy was distinct from laity, and around A.D. 200, clergy began to be called “priests”.129 At this point the priesthood of believers was taken away from the masses (men and women alike) and conferred on a select group of men. Then, when Constantine issued the Edict of Milan (A.D. 313), Christianity changed overnight from an underground and persecuted religion to a state-sponsored religion.130 Religious leaders began to get involved in politics and open control of communities, and found a new position of power. Since up to this point Christianity had been loosely banded together, many parts of the church were not so directly influenced until these events. Church-wide leadership had now begun to lord their power over the people (in contrast to I. Peter 5:3’s instruction).

There is no biblical evidence that a designated group of religious leaders, called “pastors”, controlled (and performed) baptisms, administered the Lord’s Supper, led church services, “preached” on Sundays, were the designated visitors of all who were sick and dying, performed marriage and funeral ceremonies, performed church counseling, were the only ones who could study and interpret the Bible, were the primary evangelists for the church, wore special clothing, or were spiritually elite.131 Yet, as the schism grew via the likes of Ignatius of Antioch and Clement of Rome, the only ones allowed to perform these things were the

129 Ibid., 221.

130 James Rutz, Open Church, 9.

131 Frank Viola and George Barna, Pagan Christianity?, 110. The authors note that the modern version of a “pastor” is never found in the Bible.
“priests”. Thus, the clergy had taken over all of the responsibilities and then turned around and gave orders to the congregation—the same ones who had relinquished their authority and positions. Again, Protestants have embraced and endorsed these concepts, but with some alterations. Yet, the spirit of control and power still prevails within their churches.

Statistics show that churches are struggling more than ever to get their congregants to serve, tithe, witness, and take spiritual initiative. And, why should they? When the pastor does all the studying, gives a lecture each Sunday, is the primary evangelizer, and must lead every aspect of church ministry, the people have resigned to let him be a paid hireling. This could be easily called “Surrogate Christianity.” Furthermore, when the pastor’s livelihood depends on performing these tasks to remain employed, his job security is threatened if he resorts to a biblical model for church leadership. Bilezikian points out that the professional clergy, replacing the priesthood of believers, has been devastating to the church, and that common members are primarily marginalized servants.

The supremacy of the pastor has led to leadership exaltation, a practice which has permeated the church for almost 1,700 years, and is often demonstrated by the use (and defense) of titles. Reverend is still used by many today in both Catholic and Protestant churches to designate the priest or pastor. Many black churches in America parade the title of Bishop or Apostle for their pastors. Other titles abound as well such as Vicar, Parson, Minister, Preacher,

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132 Ibid., 109-123.
134 Ibid., 227.
Pastor, Elder, Father, and Your Holiness. Etymologically, many of these words trace their roots to the pagan influences on the early church, while others are deviations of biblical words used to describe servant-leaders. Jesus’ warning on the use of titles in Matthew 23:8 is clear that this was to be avoided. Clearly titles are used to separate the common people from those who have been exalted to positions of supposed spiritual enlightenment and authority.

Rutz points out that the word “office” as found in I. Timothy 3:1 is not in the Greek. He asserts that this term was placed there by the King James interpreters, who, led by the Archbishop of Canterbury Richard Bancroft, ensured that the Puritans, (whom Bancroft despised), were never translating any portion of Scripture as a majority. Because the bishopric was an exalted position in the Church of England, its position in Scripture was misinterpreted as being an office. Getz confirms that “office” is not in the Greek either. Oddly enough, most commentators seem to state that “bishop” is an office but spend no time defining why (as if it were assumed), even though it is not supported in the Greek. Yet, two interlinears show clearly that in the Greek the item spoken of is of being an overseer, not an office of overseer. While it


138 Frank Viola, *Who is Your Covering?*, (Brandon, Florida: Present Testimony Ministry, 1998), 28. Viola points out that “pastor” appears only once in the New Testament, “Overseer” four times, “Elder” five times, but “Brothers” appears three hundred forty six times! The church had leadership, but the congregation was fairly self-governed in most areas.

139 Rutz, *Megashift*, 122. Rutz points out other areas of the A.V. where the ordained domination of clergy has been placed into the English translation because of the Church of England’s control of the translation. This writer spoke to a friend of his who is seminary trained (Baptist Bible Seminary in Springfield, MO), and he even looked into it with another friend of his and could not find any conclusive evidence for the insertion of “office”.


is not in the scope of this paper to perform a complete exegetical study of “bishop,” it does challenge the reader to question why the term “office” is so easily inserted and assumed by English scholars, and to question its validity. Power and prestige, it could be suggested, are inwardly desired by pastors (in fact, all humans as part of our sin nature) and that they are willing to defend their positions to secure it. More than likely, as house churches spread throughout the Roman Empire, elders were present throughout (the Bible indicates a plurality of elders), and I. Timothy 3 was not written to advocate officers, but to promote righteous, Christ-honoring lifestyles among the leaders (elders) and among the congregations (all were to be servants, hence the term “deacon” is used). The begging of pastors for their congregations to be serving, witnessing, reading the Word, etc., would never fall on deaf ears if the congregations were integrally involved in church life rather than sitting in pews mere spectators. Eliminating the spectator nature of church begins with the elimination of exalted, professional leadership. Instead, the church should equalize all members, and place its leadership in a group of elders who have demonstrated godly character and spiritual acumen.

Bilezikian also he states that another disastrous consequence of the replacement of the priesthood of believers is that it takes a toll on the clergy. He notes that no individual can possess all of the spiritual gifts, and thus clergy is incapable of handling the complexities of demanding ministries. He adds that the congregation working together is what ministry is biblically about. Warningly, by taking the ministerial responsibilities away from the people, exalting the pastoral position through the use of I. Timothy 3 and Titus, creating an artificial expectation of a perfect

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142 Steve Atkerson, ed., *Toward a House Church Theology*, 68-73.


144 James Rutz, *The Open Church*, 11.

image, plus adding on the current and evolving age of massive responsibilities, exalted pastors are in a great position of danger to their health, their families, their spiritual lives and their ministries as they each attempt to be a CEO of their church.

Anne Jackson grew up with a father who was a Baptist pastor. Her father’s ministry was often challenged by deacons who despised his calls for evangelism, his requests for a vacation to visit his dying father (they considered his missions trips without his family present as synonymous with vacations), and even threatened him and his family if he did not obey their demands to resign. Due to her firsthand witnessing of these abuses, Anne turned her back on church for a while, but God led her back to church and she eventually got involved in active ministry herself. However, due to the high demands of ministry, she herself suffered physical breakdowns and hospitalization which led her to begin studying the effects of ministry leadership on one’s life. She cites research that concluded that: A) most pastors have eating habits and weight issues that are negative, B) the majority of pastors suffer negative physical symptoms from the pastorate, C) most tend to view their relationships with their family as healthy, but view other pastor’s relationships with their families as the opposite, and D) pastors who prayed over an hour each day and were more focused on listening to God were the most satisfied with their prayer lives, but since the average pastor spends only 39 minutes in prayer each day, most pastors do not lead satisfactory prayer lives, and studies showed that petition-oriented pastors were also less satisfied.146

Again, the church is to have leadership, but the leader of the church is to be an overseer, not an over-doer, and is to be working within a plurality of elders. They are merely there to ensure that the church is going in the right direction spiritually, not to ensure that it can fulfill a

146 Anne Jackson, Mad Church Disease: Overcoming the Burnout Epidemic, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 2009), 48-52.
capital building campaign, or break the 200 barrier, or win a church league softball championship. As an overseer, he is to release ministry to the people rather than requiring the people to gain his approval to do ministries. Some churches in the New Testament do not even appear to have elders, but it is noteworthy that those that did always had a plurality of leaders from among the people. Evidence shows that the model of a strong individual pastor was developed by Luther (who borrowed his pastoral job role from Catholicism’s “seven pastoral duties of a priest”), and is not found anywhere within Scripture. The church is to be a mutually submissive family of believer-servants who are empowered to take the Kingdom of God to the world. Finding a church that advocates a limited leadership model that releases ministry to its people is not found often in America. Yet, it has been stated that at the rate which the church was growing before the Edict of Milan, evangelism should have covered the whole world from “Turkey to Tokyo by A.D. 600.” Once everything was reined in, the momentum was lost. Once Ephesians 4:12’s instruction to equip the saints was terminated, the church began a downward spiral and has paid dearly for it.

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147 James Rutz, *The Open Church*, 68. The term “pastor” was emphasized by Pope Gregory the Great in approximately A.D. 550. This term does not show up in Christian writings before then. The assigned pastoral duties for the priest were: A) Visit the sick, B) Teach doctrine, C) Marry the young, D) Sprinkle the babies, E) conduct the Mass, F) Bury the dead, and G) Bless local events. See Gene Edwards, *Beyond Radical*, 18.


149 Ibid., 163.

150 James Rutz, *The Open Church*, 12.
The Problem of Old Testament Christianity

The Old Testament is the primary foundation for Christianity’s genesis.\textsuperscript{151} The writers of the Old Testament did not write to Christians, or to Gentiles; they wrote to Jews. As such, the Old Testament should be treated predominantly as God’s message to the Jews and not as a source for Christian practice.\textsuperscript{152} While Christians today are fighting for the Ten Commandments to be taught and posted in America, the church cannot find any basis for such actions. If the church were responsible to the Law, then it would have to be responsible to the whole Law, not just the Ten Commandments. Although Jesus covered most of the Ten Commandments in His teachings, His command to His followers was not to adhere to the Mosaic Law, but to adhere to the Great Commandment (Matthew 22:36-37) and the Royal Law (James 2:8, Matthew 22:39). These two rules are the Christian’s foundation for obedience to God.\textsuperscript{153} In fact, Christ even stated that if you love Him, you will obey His commandments (John 14:15). One of the greatest dangers to the church is Old Testament-oriented Christianity which emphasizes rules and laws, and then seeks to apply these Old Testament rules to Christians’ lives. The Great Commandment solves those problems (if a person is truly loving God with all his heart, soul, and mind, then he will not commit adultery, or lie, or murder, etc.). Moralism and legalism are idols of “Conservative” churches today. These churches will not verbalize the reality of their beliefs, but their actions proclaim loudly that they would rather force their nation to live morally and look Christian even if it goes to Hell in the process. In turn they pervert what grace is and then do not live it out.


\textsuperscript{152} Ibid., 103-105.

\textsuperscript{153} Matthew 22:40 states, “On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets.”
Why is the Old Testament a hindrance to true Christianity? Because the Law becomes central, not Christ! In fact, the Law becomes a false god to many Christians who worship its teachings rather than the One Who gave them. Early Christianity did not sit around discussing the Law. Notably, those who sought to impose Mosaic rules onto the Gentile Christians were reprimanded by the Apostles (e.g. Acts 15:1-29). Instead, one finds the early church spending its time discussing Jesus. They worshipped, loved, and obeyed Him so fervently that there was no need for any missions organizations, “soul winning” classes, evangelistic crusades, block parties, etc. They simply lived for Jesus and spread His name and message everywhere they went. They no longer needed the Law because they had the indwelling love of God which overrode the need to be rule conscious (see Romans 5:5; 13:8-10).

Legalism can be defined in four ways: 1) keeping the Mosaic Law as a means of salvation or sanctification, 2) keeping the Law’s “letter” without keeping its “spirit”, 3) building a “fence” of unnecessary, extra-biblical laws around biblical laws, and 4) imposing obsolete Old Testament requirements on New Testament believers. The second two points have enslaved many churches and believers to unrealistic sets of rules, and often relate back to dominant pastor-rulled churches.

An imbalanced focus on the Old Testament (and particularly the Law) does not create an environment for the Holy Spirit to write God’s Law on our hearts, but instead creates a church that is rules-oriented, judgmental, harsh, and isolationist (e.g. the Doctrine of Separation that was once so dominant in many churches). The history of the church since Pentecost attests to this. In almost two thousand years, the church has killed (in the name of Jesus) over 25 million people

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155 Tony and Felicity Dale, _Simply Church_, 22-23.
who violated its laws (whether manmade or Mosaic) or did not believe quite the same things as the persecutors did.\textsuperscript{156} In Geneva, Switzerland during the rule of Calvin and the Consistory Committee, if a person was caught in adultery, missing church too often, challenging the teachings of the pastor, pronounced a witch, or caught striking his parents, he was executed (via drowning, beheading, or being burned at the stake). Under Calvin, violators of his “Christian” rules were often tortured, and he even had his own stepson and daughter-in-law executed for their infractions. These rules controlled the music they listened to, the clothes they wore, the books they read, and even required them to name their children after biblical characters.\textsuperscript{157}

Meanwhile, history has continued to repeat itself with many dominating, rules-oriented churches.\textsuperscript{158} The unsaved world rejects Christianity often on this one issue alone and many Christians have abandoned the church on this issue. While sinners, prostitutes, thieving tax collectors, and all manner of sinful people flocked to Jesus, the opposite is true for churches.\textsuperscript{159} Jesus emanated love, with which he attracted the masses. The rules-oriented unloving demonstration of the church towards people has repelled people instead of attracting them. Jesus’ method was to change the heart through evangelism, then to disciple the believer into maturity. The church’s method has been to clean up the outside and one’s act, before even letting that person enter the church building. Churches that tend to be New Testament focused are more embracing of the lost (following Jesus’ Great Commission model) whereas the Old Testament focused churches tend to deride the lifestyles of the lost, chastise them for not being righteous, and proclaim the Gospel as the course of their duty. The loudest and most current example of this

\textsuperscript{156} James Rutz, \textit{Megashift}, 228.

\textsuperscript{157} Gene Edwards, \textit{How to Meet in Homes}, 106-108.

\textsuperscript{158} Philip Yancey, \textit{What’s So Amazing about Grace?}, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 1997), 30.

\textsuperscript{159} Ibid., 11.
perversion is the late “Reverend” Phelps and his Westboro Baptist Church in Topeka, Kansas. Both he and his church verbally attack any that do not live according to selected Old Testament laws. His church’s website is www.godhatesfags.com, and he himself was a lawyer which may account for his love for the Old Testament Law instead of the grace and mercy of Jesus.

Church History In Conclusion

The church has never been perfect, but as it has deviated from its target, it has seen its calibration falter. What was designed as a holistic and “organic” organism has evolved into a business organization that hosts religious functions and meetings. The church in America today is a mere shadow of the effective church of the first three centuries of its existence.

Two primary issues come into play here, the structure and the focus. Organizational structures are persistent in any setting, whether it is a civilization in the jungles of Peru, or a Fortune 100 company. A structure is essentially the underlying way a group of people function, and includes cultural mores, leadership, and functional processes. The focus of the church is different in that it is the deep seeking of the Lord and His Holy Spirit’s internal influence within the body—a unique attribute that only Christianity can experience. The church can function with correct doctrine and practices (the structure) yet not be seeking the Lord and His control. On the converse, a church that seeks the Lord may not necessarily have its structure fully lined up to Scripture (this revisits the Law of Blessability mentioned of earlier). However, a church that not only has the right structures but also seeks the Lord fully, has the ability to make a significant impact on the world. The concern herein is obviously on the structure and realigning it back to Scriptural standards (the Primacy of Jesus, Family/Community, and Empowered Leadership),
but is not without the necessity of humbly submitting to and seeking the Lord. When these two primary issues are lined up, then the church will be holistically on target.
Chapter 3
Pastoral and Congregant Survey Results

The Design of the Two Surveys

Two surveys were created to identify complementary and opposing views between pastors and church members. Detrimental to the church’s ability to being holistic is the long-embraced anti-biblical tradition of the separation of clergy and laity. Many pastors view their existence and of their congregations very differently than congregations view their pastors. Furthermore, another goal herein is to compare ministry and church beliefs against those taught in the Bible, and to see how the Primacy of Jesus, Family/Community, and Empowered Leadership were viewed and implemented.

The Pastoral Survey Results

The pastoral survey was made up of twenty-five questions and garnered responses from twenty-four people. The first set of questions were demographical, asking the person’s gender, age, church affiliation, church location (rural versus urban) and attendance level.

The expectations of the demographic section were that there would be mostly men identifying themselves as pastors, most would be somewhat middle-aged, and most of their churches would be in urban locations. These three expectations panned out to be true. It was somewhat expected that most would identify themselves as Baptists since most of the pastors this writer solicited are such. One pastor is as a house church pastor however, since the survey had already been built and administered, that was not a particular question found here and could not
be delineated. With regards to the denominations represented herein, the preference would have been to have more variety, but such was the limitation being working with.

The church attendance question offers insight into churches that are large and are challenged to create a Family/Community within their larger context versus those that are smaller and more likely to have this attributed by default. While limited church size does not guarantee a Family/Community atmosphere, it does provide a better catalyst for it.

The below graphs and responses demonstrate the demographic tabulation:

1. Please indicate your gender:

Fig. 2
3. Please indicate your church affiliation:

The responses for church affiliation demonstrated that of the pastors, 21 were Baptist, 1 was Anglican, 1 was Assemblies of God, 1 was Methodist Episcopal, 1 was Evangelical Episcopal, and the rest (6) were of independent or unspecified denominations.

4. Is your church located in a rural or urban community?
5. What is the approximate size of your church (attendance)?

Grouping the results together, the breakdown is thus:

- 0-100: 16
- 101-200: 2
- 201-300: 3
- 301-400: 0
- 401-500: 2
- 501-600: 1
- 700 or more: 7

The next survey questions focused on the three primary emphases, being those of the Primacy of Jesus, Family/Community Relationship, and Empowered Leadership. A primary goal of these questions was to compare and contrast pastoral views and attitudes about their congregations which would later be contrasted with the surveys from the congregants.

6. On a scale of 1-10, how would you rate the volunteerism level of your members?

Fig. 5

Focusing on Empowered Leadership, the proactive involvement of members to serve within a church is being cogitated. Those surveyed were instructed to choose between “1= they...
all volunteer willingly” to “10= they utterly refuse to serve”. Since American society is extremely busy today with a demanding list of commitments and responsibilities, many people are finding it hard to take time to serve the church’s programs and systems. While there are always some who categorically refuse to volunteer, the complexity of the postmodern generation poses an even more challenging problem to institutional churches. These congregants are not necessarily opposed to volunteering, but rather, are much more opposed to volunteering to serve a system or business (such as an institutional church) as they would rather serve people or noble pursuits (such as ending poverty).

Fig. 6

A continuation of question 6 (Empowered Leadership), the expected answer was “yes” based on the expectation of having many within the church who do not serve or do not serve very much.\(^\text{160}\) The above pie chart attests to the fact from those pastors surveyed, most would like to see more of their members involved in serving.

\(^{160}\) John C. Maxwell, Developing the Leader within You, (Nashville, Tennessee: Thomas Nelson, 1993), 21-22. The Pareto Principle: “20 percent of the people in an organization will be responsible for 80 percent of the company’s success.”
Somewhat a trick question, but indicative of the way churches have trained people, the expectation was to have mostly “yes” responses. Surprisingly, the response was 100% “yes”. This was also an Empowered Leadership question, of which this writer’s survey notes state: “The question is empowerment. Is the ‘professional’ minister the superstar whose anointing is the magical reason that the lost get saved? Or, does the pastor empower his people to be the hands and feet (and mouth) of Christ and do the witnessing themselves?” This writer believed that the response would be predominantly “yes” because, (again, per his notes): “… either through perpetuated conditioning, insecurity, distrust in the members (ability, willingness, spirituality, etc.) or a heightened view of the position of pastor, most (especially pastors) feel that the best means of winning the lost is to get them under a pastor’s preaching sermon.” While the Bible never indicates that it is the pastor’s job to “win the lost”, it does highly emphasize that every Christian is a participant in the Great Commission. The professionalized pastorate has created a surrogate Christianity where church members pay the pastor do to ministry, and in turn, removes them from any obligation to do ministry themselves.
Fig. 8

Again, an Empowered Leadership question (though it also expands into the Family/Community category somewhat), the expectation was that the majority would say, “no” as is evidenced in the results. Most churches tend to mystically exalt the performance of the Lord’s Supper to an artificially “holy” level whereby congregants are not worthy to celebrate it without church leadership supervising. This is a trend that developed through the early Catholic Church, and seamlessly transferred into Protestantism many centuries later. The Bible demonstrates that normal, average congregants would celebrate the death, burial, and resurrection of the Lord with this fellowship meal on a regular basis. Churches have restricted it to a liturgical ceremony devoid of any fellowship, and often focusing more on a solemn observance than a joyous celebration. When the church handcuffs its congregants and does not allow them to be part of the priesthood which Jesus died to incorporate them into, then the church is failing to fulfill the design God intended.
With 1 representing a very light workload, and 10 being overloaded, the results indicate that the majority of pastors surveyed perceive that their workload is an overburden. Statistics already show that among pastors, health issues, depression and burnout are more rampant than for the average American. Whether pastors feel they cannot delegate work to their congregants (a point that would suggest dangerous micromanagement trends), or feel that congregants will not volunteer to serve and therefore feel they must step in to ensure the duties are performed, the question speaks to the Empowered Leadership focus.

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A Primacy of Jesus question, the four options the survey participants had to choose from were: 1) Teach them to obey because of the fear of judgment/punishment/discipline, 2) Teach them to obey merely because of one’s love for Jesus, 3) Teach them to obey through guilt (that one’s sin is disappointing/disgusting to Jesus), and 4) Teach them to obey so as to receive positive results (i.e. blessings, answered prayer). Surprisingly, none of the negative motivational options were picked. The two positive options were chosen exclusively, although “Teach them to obey so as to receive positive results” is a self-centered motivational tool. However, 87.5 percent state they motivate based on loving Jesus.

Question 12 was broken into three sections:

12. What percentage of your congregation constitutes: your closest friends (i.e. those that you can be/are accountable to for even your most personal issues, sins, ideas, etc.)?

The survey indicated that all but one pastor considered 15% or less of their congregations to be their closest friends, with eight of those signifying that 0% of their congregations represented their closest friends. The contrasting response from the one pastor was that 75% of his congregation represented his closest friends.
12. What percentage of your congregation constitutes: your close friends (i.e. those you would hang out with, ask to pray for you, and who would invite you over to their house to watch a game or watch a movie)?

Dividing these responses into twenty-five percent groupings, the responses were such:

- 0-25%: 15
- 26-50%: 4
- 51-75%: 5
- 75-100%: 1

Thus, the majority of the pastors indicated that their close friends comprised less than 50% of their congregations.

12. What percentage of your congregation constitutes: your acquaintances (i.e. they would say "hi" to you even in public, but you are no closer to them than most anyone else you know)?

Likewise, the responses to this question will be demonstrated in twenty-five percent groups:

- 0-25%: 2
- 26-50%: 4
- 51-75%: 6
- 76-100%: 13

While the majority of these pastors indicated that 76% or more of their congregations were mere acquaintances, seven of those ranged 90% or more with 98% acquaintances representing the highest percentage.

Recognizing the importance of relationships, this Family/Community question shows that the majority of pastors polled have limited and fairly distant relationships with their congregations. Only eight pastors indicated that they did not consider any of their congregants to be close to them at all. The expectation was that the majority percentages would be found in the “close friends” and “acquaintances” categories, which indeed, they were. The purpose of this question was to assess the relationship level of pastors to their congregants. If the church family is not close to its pastor(s), then the resulting dynamic is suboptimal.
Fig. 11

Primarily an Empowered Leadership and Family/Community question, the expected as well as received response was that pastors identify the Sunday service as foundational. Pastors generally believe that church services are ordained of God, paramount to the church’s mission, and are in and of themselves the definition of what Hebrews 10:25 warns against. Furthermore, if the congregation is not at the church building, pastors feel a lack of control and become fearful of cultish and doctrinally errant didactics. Low numbers within a church building also deflate a pastor’s ego. Cho describes how these types of ego and micromanagement ideas are counterproductive to the Great Commission and God’s kingdom purposes.162 The church, biblically speaking, is not a Sunday gathering, or an event, but the body of Christ. The body of Christ is the church and every time it comes together in the name of Jesus it is fulfilling its requirement to assemble. When church members are getting closer to Jesus in an outside Bible study on Sunday, are impacting their communities for the sake of Christ in these studies, then the need for a compulsory Sunday gathering becomes less compelling.

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Once again, this is a question of Empowered Leadership. While the results were just about even, it was surprising to this writer to find that a slight majority were willing to allow ministries to be started without direct pastoral oversight. The anticipation was that this question would have a similar response as did question 9 wherein pastors were less than willing to relinquish control of perceived pastoral duties. Still, the lack of empowerment is noticeable.
Both a Family/Community and Empowered Leadership question, the anticipated majority answer was “The Pastor”. The professional clergy model has subverted the community nature of the church wherein each Christian is to bear each other’s burdens (Galatians 6:2), to confess to each other (James 5:16), and to comfort and edify each other (I. Thessalonians 5:11). The clergy dominated ministry model creates two issues since: 1) pastors have a hard time relinquishing control, and 2) congregants have become apathetic to doing much of the ministry since the pastor role does it for them. Regardless of the reasons why the pastor has been exalted to the position of being best suited to meet the church’s spiritual and personal needs, the biblical model is that the congregation is to take care of the congregation with the love and nurture of a family. Furthermore, it would appear that this model is also a contributing factor to pastoral burnout.

Fig. 14

As a Primacy of Jesus question, the focus of a church is explored. Biblically the focus of a Christian is to be on Jesus, not on a man. Yet, many pastors, whether consciously or subconsciously, view themselves as the mediator between Jesus and men, somewhat in an intermediate capacity (i.e. there is one mediator between God and men, and that is Jesus; and the
mediator between Jesus and men is the pastor). Again, the Catholic model which separates the clergy from the laity is played out here. However, so also is the fact that pastors are supposed to be part of the church community and family, not a step above them. When pastors keep themselves separated from their congregations, they begin to view themselves with a self-imagined preconception of their importance, and ultimately, believe that they are the direct voice to the people for God. Herein the doctrine of the Holy Spirit is reduced, as is the deity of Christ, because the pastor has determined that he speaks for the Lord every time he gets behind the pulpit. Many pastors are not intentionally attempting to take the focus off Jesus, but sincerity does not excuse wrong doctrine.

17. Does your church utilize designed programs to accomplish missional goals, or instead does it leave those goals in the hands of the members to fulfill as they feel led?

Fig. 15

Programs are killing the church, yet churches continue to resort to programs to fulfill ministry. Families don’t have programs to run their daily affairs, to develop their relationships, or to procreate. Yet, the church tries to be a family using business techniques, and then receives diminishing results. The expected answer here was “Programs”, and as is attested by this pie chart, was the predominant answer. While there is a need for programs for certain things in life,
most people do not find comfort or satisfaction in them, and ultimately tend to shy away from them. For Empowered Leadership, releasing ministry into the hands of the congregants offers natural outlets for attaining missional goals.

In Acts 6, a group of men were empowered to serve the church. Stephen did not follow a program, but instead, just went out and preached the Good News. Philip did likewise. They were empowered to follow the leading of the Holy Spirit and then act upon it. However, controls have been implemented within most churches today to ensure that ministry is being performed, and instead of members relying on the Holy Spirit, they instead rely on Lifeway, David C. Cook curriculum, roving “evangelists”, evangelistic programs, etc. While these may be useful tools (in a supplementary fashion), the church’s reliance on them has superseded its reliance on the Holy Spirit whereby Christians should naturally witness to the lost, disciple the saved, minister to each person’s needs.

Figure 16

Question 18 discusses issues within Family/Community as well as Empowered Leadership. While there is much research demonstrating the inadequacy of the preaching
sermon, still, most pastors and even churches do not believe that a church is complete or fulfilling its mission without it. The most sterile option is the pulpit sermon as it is a one way conversation in a lecture format that rarely (or limitedly) impacts the listeners. Meanwhile, practically no interaction or fellowship occurs, and Christians return home to their isolated lives. Discipleship classes tend to be primarily focused on distributing doctrinal facts about the faith, conjoined with some application (such as instructions on tithing, joining a ministry, etc.), but generally provide no other holistic aspects of truly creating community. Sunday School may provide doctrinal training, but unless it is providing a family atmosphere of love and support, it will fail to disciple holistically. Likewise, small groups, which are the most optimal means of discipling, need to extend past mere doctrinal knowledge and truly create a loving atmosphere of support. Doctrinal truths need to have application-focused training as part of this holistic training. The ideal environment for discipleship is through Christians living, working, praying, crying, serving, and living with each other. Hence, small groups offer the most potential as they are more conducive to holistic spiritual health as their members interact with each other much more intimately and frequently.\(^\text{163}\)

\(^{163}\) While outside the scope of this survey, it should be noted that some small groups rotate membership every few months and tend to miss the ideals of long-term relationship building which stable groups provide. The argument herein is for long-term stable groups. See Larry Osborne, *Sticky Church*, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 2008), 81.
Fig. 17

While this was again a limited survey, the expectations of each pastor (as to what a “progressive II. Corinthians 5:17 lifestyle” is) were not solicited. Therefore, this question does not provide the expected results that this writer had in mind. When reading the plethora of current books on motivating one’s congregation, discipling them, guiding them, dealing with a 50% divorce rate, etc., one gets the idea that the church is suffering spiritually. Yet, the pastors polled here believe that their congregants are developing as expected. Either their expectations are low, or there really are vast amounts of spiritual evolvement ensuing. The assumption here was that the majority of these pastors were utilizing classes or the pulpit to accomplish their discipleship (confirmed in question 18), and as such, the expectation was that they would be finding their results to be subpar.164

164 George Barna, Today’s Pastors: A Revealing Look at what Pastors are Saying about Themselves, Their Peers and the Pressures they Face, (Ventura, California: Regal Books, 1993), 86-87. Barna’s research, though twenty years old, suggests the opposite is true and that most pastors do not find their congregants growing spiritually.
The third option for this question was “No: It is understood that they have close circles of friends outside of church and cannot be expected to invest any more time into their church family.” Obviously, this option was not chosen by any of the pastors. Yet, the intended goal of this question was to demonstrate the lack of Family/Community within the church which it indeed did. The majority of pastors did not indicate that their congregants were as close as they would like. There is a need to develop a tightknit church family, and the current structure does not positively contribute to the biblical examples of coherence.
A Primacy of Jesus question, the survey result was not as dramatic as expected, but still demonstrated that “Other Things” garnered the highest vote. Question 20 showed that most of the pastors felt their congregants were growing spiritually, yet question 21 contradicts this.

Fig. 20

A connecting Primacy of Jesus question to questions 19 and 21, the results show an assortment of answers. Again, not having defined what “Christ-like” means in the distributed survey, some churches may define it by the things their congregants abstain from (alcohol, tobacco, cinema, etc.). Still, some may define it by what their congregants do (witness, read the Word, love each other openly, etc.), with the third option being a mixture of both. The expectations were that most congregants would be in the 0-50% range, which does indeed make up 52% of these pastor’s members. However, this is lower than what was expected as this writer
was anticipating closer to 60% or more to be in this range.

23. Based on question #22, are you finding it hard (or challenging) to get that number to increase/improve?

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

Fig. 21

Here the focus switches back to Family/Community (where discipleship happens) and Empowered Leadership (when the family is allowed to serve each other fully). The assumption was that this expectation would be hard, and as is evident, the pastors surveyed agreed. Motivating people to move out of the status quo, and out of their comfort zones is always a challenge in any environment; not just the spiritual environment. Notably, even if there is a concentration on the Primacy of Jesus, a church that is teaching-oriented (via lectures, Sunday School, discipleship classes, etc.) will find it more difficult to influence its members than a church that is Family/Community-based (due to group influences and expectations, as well as holistic discipleship). Furthermore, this question is still a stark contrast to the answers given for question 19.
No one will ever write a serious book called, *How to Grow your Church through Micromanagement*, yet most pastors still feel compelled to be heavily involved in maintaining control and overworking.\(^{165}\) Since the biblical model is that the pastor is the overseer, not the over-doer, his leadership should be one of equipping the saints “for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ” (Ephesians 4:12). Pastors who cannot let go and delegate are inadvertently disobeying the Bible by not overseeing, and not equipping/releasing. When pastors begin to release ministry back to the people, and allow them to be empowered to do that ministry, then those pastors will find their workloads reduced, and the performance/spiritual growth of the church improve.

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The last question of the survey had three possible answers (the third one being “No: A building is mandatory for a church to exist and fulfill its mission.”). The expectation was that the answers would reside between that question and “Yes: But the building helps the church fulfill its mission.” Nevertheless, the majority of the pastors who were polled agreed that the building is integral to the mission of the church. This is contrary to logic, statistics, and even reality. The church is a family, not a business. A club needs a clubhouse, a fraternity needs a frat house, the Masons need a temple, but the Holy Spirit resides in His people, is where he pours His power out, and that is where the church exists. If the church considered eliminating its building, it would see more opportunities and money for ministry (because less time and money would be spent on the building). The attractional model of ecclesiology is declining, so it stands to reason that the relevance of an outdated method of outreach should be re-examined. Granted, the building is not in and of itself evil, but it has become such a “sacred cow” for most churches that it would be inconceivable to be a church without one.
The Congregational Survey Results

The congregational survey received fifty-seven responses. In parallel to the pastoral survey, the initial set of questions were demographical, asking the person’s gender, age, church affiliation, church location (rural versus urban) and attendance level. The below responses and graphs demonstrate the breakdown:

1. Please indicate your gender:

![Fig. 24]

2. Please indicate your age bracket:

![Fig. 25]
3. Please indicate your church affiliation:

Below demonstrates the affiliation of these congregants, with Baptist being once again the predominant identifier:

Baptist: 37
Calvary Chapel: 2
Church of Christ: 1
Evangelical Free: 2
Reformed Presbyterian: 1
Methodist: 1
Independent/Other: 15

4. Is your church located in a rural or urban community?

Fig. 26

5. What is the approximate size of your church (attendance)?

Again, grouping these by hundreds, the sizes of these congregants’ churches are:

0-100: 16
101-200: 5
201-300: 3
301-400: 1
401-500: 7
501-600: 0
Each of the succeeding questions was likewise based on the Primacy of Jesus, Family/Community, and Empowered Leadership, with many questions having matching or similar pastoral questions. Following are the results of the survey:

6. Do you consider your church to be:

- Your Acquaintances (you go to church, say “Hi”, but you have a close circle of friends outside of the church) 17.2%
- Merely Friends (you may or may not hang out with a couple of people, but for the most part your circle of friends is generally outside of the church) 22.4%
- Your Family/closest friends 60.3%

Fig. 27

Relating to Question 12 of the pastoral survey, while the pastors polled tended to have very limited close relationships within their congregations, congregants tended to view those within their churches as their closest friends. The expectation here was actually the other two options dominating the survey, mostly due in part to the detached business model that church has become in America. However, this writer’s error was not taking into consideration that people are generally social beings who want friendships and a social gathering will still offer the opportunity for these interactions and relationships, even outside the formal church gathering. Furthermore, this survey did not delve into the health and variety of these respondents’ relationships as that was outside its scope.
Interestingly, this question was evenly split as to the empowerment level of the congregants’ churches. The expectation was the restriction, not the liberty to serve. Question 14 of the pastoral survey corresponds with this one, and is split almost in half as well.

Fig. 28

8. Does your church attempt to motivate you to live righteously and to serve using (choose the answer which most closely matches your church):

- Encouragement (because itplease Jesus) 69.7%
- Guilt 6.9%
- Fear 3.5%
- Other 10.9%

Fig. 29
Relating to pastoral survey question 11, the responses were overwhelmingly similar, and again unexpected. While the assumptions herein were wrong, it is encouraging that this is the preaching style of these pastors. Ultimately, while the primacy of Jesus may be the focus to live rightly, further research should probably be done to determine why Jesus-focused preaching is not yielding Jesus-obedient lifestyles in most of America’s Christians. A new assumption is that possibly the preaching needs to be reinforced through a stronger Family/Community dynamic which would occur better in a small group setting than in mass congregational format.

9. You have a deep spiritual or personal problem. Would you prefer to take it to:

- Your pastor for counsel and direction 33.3%
- Your closest friend(s) for counsel and direction 66.7%

Fig. 30

These results were expected since most churches direct their members to get all of their “expert” spiritual counsel from a trained pastor, but most people would rather confide in their closest friends. The Family/Community dynamic cannot be ignored as it is a strong force in shaping people’s spiritual lives and supporting their personal lives. Pastoral survey question 15 demonstrated almost the opposite response as most pastors believed the deepest spiritual needs of their congregants are best served by the pastor. However, biblically, the congregation will have the Holy Spirit, which should suffice. Educationally, if a congregation is not prepared to deal with deeper or complex needs of its own members, then its pastor needs to re-evaluate the discipleship and teaching aspects of his church to ensure they are being trained in the Bible and in its practical application.
Loosely matching up to pastoral survey question 8, this question sought to determine what congregants were hearing from their pulpits with regards to evangelism (i.e. being empowered to preach the Gospel). The expectation was that they would be hearing that they should bring people to church to a larger degree. The survey demonstrated the opposite. Notwithstanding, the attractional model of church is the most prevalent in America and is built upon bringing crowds into the church to hear the Gospel.¹⁶⁶

The expectation was that people would be most motivated by making Jesus happy, and is a Primacy of Jesus question. There is a place for guilt in society (generally as part of the Holy

Spirit’s convicting process through the preaching of the Gospel), but the church is never demonstrated in the New Testament as a place to live in guilt. Fear is presented in the New Testament, such as the Bema Seat Judgment (II. Corinthians 5:10), but is not the primary focus of the Bible. Jesus stated that if we love Him, we will keep His commandments (John 14:15). When Jesus is the focus of the church, it will want to serve Him, especially as the church gets closer to Him, loves Him more, and desires to serve Him out of a heart of love. Further on in John 14 Jesus discusses abiding in Him which relays a deeper relationship with Him than is achieved through casual interactions. Oddly, however, while most of the pastors indicated that they did not use negative motivation on their congregations, 38% of the congregants heard the opposite.

The expectation was that the suffering of Jesus would not be the largest percentage, yet the survey produced the opposite result. The reasoning was the fact that most church traditions have made the Lord’s Supper a periodic, repetitious ceremony that has very little emphasis on the full impact of the crucifixion. The early church continually observed the Lord’s Supper as a
feast which continually kept Jesus in the foreground of their sights.

13. What would your church value more:

![Pie chart showing answers to the question.]

Fig. 34

Question 13 of the pastoral survey asked this with regards to attending a Bible study outside of the church. In that question, pastors were overwhelmingly opposed to members attending groups outside of church services. However, for the congregant survey, the question was a choice between being at the weekly church meeting versus serving outside of church. While a larger minority said that serving the poor would be acceptable, still the majority believed that their church would value the church meeting more. The exaltation of the church service tends to assume that it is mandatory, necessary, and beneficial. Pithy statements such as “Seven days without church makes one weak” have been presented from pulpits in an attempt to demonstrate that the preaching service is paramount for spiritual growth and obedience to God. As an Empowered Leadership question, the thought here is that churches find more value in the liturgical system than in Jesus’ mandate to serve. Jesus Himself challenged Jewish Sabbath traditions against serving people (Matthew 12:10-14). Similar to the negative attitudes Jesus received from the Pharisees, a Christian who would replace church services with serving the poor\(^\text{167}\) would generally be disfavored. Most churches regard the preaching service as the most important thing they do and will thus direct their members to serve outside of the Sunday worship.

\(^{167}\)Serving the poor here is the idea of serving them in the name of Jesus and connecting a Gospel witness to the work involved.
services on their own time.

14. (Which answer most identifies you?) You feel a close bond and connectedness to your church family; that they are amongst your closest friends:

![Pie chart](image)

**Fig. 35**

Akin to question 6, this question found that the respondents found their closest friends to be those within their churches. The family/community bond should be strongest here, as is evidenced by the answers received.

15. If you were on your deathbed, what would be most important to you?

![Pie chart](image)

**Fig. 36**

The experience of this writer is that when people are dying, they call for their pastors, wanting that final parting blessing, spiritual encouragement, and to ensure there are no loose
ends. Therefore, it came a surprise that having one’s church family visit was more important than having one’s pastor.

Conclusion of Pastoral and Congregant Surveys

While a few survey questions did not provide the expected answers, nevertheless, the results reinforced the idea that 1) the Primacy of Jesus should be paramount but is often lacking, 2) Family/Community was found to be weakest among pastors and strongest among congregants, which indicates a problem within these pastorates, and 3) Empowered Leadership was severely lacking in many places which demonstrates an imbalance in the structure of these churches.

Ultimately, the surveys show that pastors and congregants see things differently with regards to their churches. These results do support the fact that the church must re-evaluate its emphases and structures to ensure the most effective, relational, and operational functions are in place.
Chapter 4
The Three Necessary Foundations for a Church

The Primacy of Jesus

Orthoschesi

In the last few years there has been an interest in balancing orthodoxy (“correct belief”)\textsuperscript{168} with orthopraxy (“correct practice”).\textsuperscript{169} The assumption has been that these two concepts have usually been out of balance with an overemphasis on one or the other, and that biblically these two need to be balanced. For example, Shane Claiborne states that Christians are more preoccupied with doctrines but not as concerned with how they live, while Jesus represented both doctrines and correct living: “the correct relationship of orthodoxy and orthopraxy cannot be reduced to just these two options as neither requires in and of themselves, any interaction with God.”\textsuperscript{170}

Overemphasized orthodoxy has been most recently demonstrated in the national media within the life of Christian apologist, Dinesh D’Souza. In 2012, this New York Times Bestselling author, popular speaker, (now) former Christian College president, and former policy advisor to President Ronald Reagan, was discovered engaged in an adulterous relationship


\textsuperscript{169} Ibid., 915.

shortly before his divorce.\textsuperscript{171} In contrast, Tony Campolo, an American Baptist ordained pastor, former sociology professor, and also a famous author and speaker, loves serving people in the name of Jesus, but to the exclusion of often having accurate biblical theology.\textsuperscript{172} Both have done great things for the cause of Christ, but their lack of either orthopraxy or orthodoxy has caused great damage to their credibility and witness as well.

Drawing from the Greek term for “relationship” (with ortho meaning “correct”), this chapter is introducing the term orthoschesi as the necessary balancing element to orthodoxy and orthopraxy. Orthoschesi is that deep and growing relationship with Christ that seeks and abides in Him (John 15:4). When one evaluates the persons found in the Bible, one will find that those who sought after God (e.g. David) were blessed despite their inconsistencies or small infractions (e.g. when he ate the hallowed bread in the temple in I. Samuel 21:6). However, those who kept the rules rigidly but failed to passionately seek after God (e.g. the Pharisees, such as in Matthew 15:8) were denounced by Jesus for their hypocrisies and facades. God wants each person to have correct beliefs and correct actions, but none of these two things are acceptable if a person does not have the correct relationship with Him. Orthoschesi is evident in the deep prayerful lives of great Christians such as Jim Cymbala, Jerry Falwell, and A. W. Tozer. Tozer, for example, was a man who was marked by his commitment to seeking God daily. While most Christians probably find it hard to spend long amounts of time with God and to pursue Him passionately, it was


through countless hours of prayer, along with serious study of the Bible, and sincere worship, that Tozer pursued a deep relationship with God, and God blessed his ministry immensely.\footnote{Lyle Dorsett, \textit{A Passion for God: The Spiritual Journey of A. W. Tozer}, (Chicago, Illinois: Moody Publications, 2008), 121.}

Assessing the religions of the world, one does not find the theme of relationship (between man and deity) truly developing amongst them.\footnote{Bruce Bickel and Stan Jantz, \textit{World Religions and Cults 101: A Guide to Spiritual Beliefs}, (Eugene, Oregon: Harvest House Publishers, 2002), 29-30, 55, 67, 163, and 178.} On the converse, Christianity focuses on a relationship with Jesus based on the correct teaching of the Word, and then the correct response and action (obedience) to Jesus. The Great Commission in Matthew 18:28-29 provides insight into how these three interrelate: 1) orthopraxy is demonstrated by every believer being missional and obedient, 2) orthoschesi is the new believer entering into a proper obedient relationship with Jesus which is represented by baptism,\footnote{In clarification of this point, one of the purposes of baptism is to represent salvation in a believer’s life. In no way is it the same thing as salvation (Matthew 16:16 positions faith and baptism together in the Great Commission, but emphasizes that a lack of belief is the cause for condemnation, thus dismissing any doctrine of symbiosis).} and 3) orthodoxy is presented in the form of properly discipling (i.e. teaching) the new convert all things Jesus commanded.\footnote{Robby Gallaty, \textit{Growing Up: How to be a Disciple Who Makes Disciples}, (Bloomington, Illinois: CrossBooks, 2013), 18-19.} Because many Christians have failed to develop a quality relationship with Jesus, He has not been in the forefront of the church’s mind in the twenty-first century. Sweet and Viola concur that the church is losing its focus on Jesus and that: “Answers other than Christ to the problems of the church today mean that we are more into solvents than solutions… In this hour, the testimony that we feel God has called us to bear revolves around the primacy of the Lord Jesus Christ.”\footnote{Leonard Sweet and Frank Viola, \textit{Jesus Manifesto}, xviii-xix.}
The Focus of the Early Church

Baptism, while technically an ordinance, is more of an initiation that identifies one with Christ (Romans 6:4; Colossians 2:12). In the New Testament, baptism was preached concurrently with the Gospel as part of the Great Commission (in Acts 8 the Ethiopian eunuch, upon hearing the gospel, asks first about baptism. The Gospel and baptism were inseparable components of preaching). Krupp points out that baptism “is the initial step of identification with, and surrender to, Christ; and the step of initiation into a walk with Him, which one takes to begin his Christian life.” The whole focus of baptism is Christ’s work in the believer’s life, as well as the believer’s public dedication to living for Christ.

Likewise, the Lord’s Supper was not to be a sterile, mystical, and liturgical ceremony with a nibble of a cracker and a shot of grape juice (or wine, depending one’s tradition), but a celebration of the work of Christ through a family meal of fellowship (the bread and the wine being served as part of a meal, not a spiritual snack) which actually constituted the foundation of each church gathering. Christ was celebrated every week by the church, and was exalted and worshipped through this meal. Some traditions celebrate the Lord’s Supper every week, while others have more infrequent schedules. Few churches seem to spend time with the meal and

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178 Helen Doohan, Paul’s Vision of Church, (Wilmington, Delaware: Michael Glazier, 1989), 104.

179 Nate Krupp, God’s Simple Plan for His Church—and Your Place in It, 138.

180 For a similar assessment, see Neil Cole, Church 3.0: Upgrades for the Future of the Church, (San Francisco, California: Jossey-Bass, 2010), 198.

181 Tim Chester, A Meal with Jesus: Discovering Grace, Community, & Mission Around the Table, (Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway, 2011), 112-124. Chester speaks of the Lord’s Supper as a focus on Jesus and His cross, a participation in the body and blood of Christ, and a source of community (1. Corinthians 10:16-17). The supper that is spoken of here is a literal meal, not just a quick wafer/juice gesture.

182 Ibid., 50.

183 Neil Cole, Church 3.0, 199.
the message of Christ’s work on the cross, but instead hurry through the ritual to ensure they are obedient to the Paul’s direction: “as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup…” (I. Corinthians 11:26). The Lord’s Supper becomes a distraction from the sermon, singing, and service as a whole, often finding itself tacked onto the end of an evening service. The early church, on the converse, made it the primary focus of its gatherings. This feast was focused on “Jesus’ love and sacrifice for our sins” because Jesus is to be the focus of the meal.

The baptized body met throughout each week (as noted often sharing their communal meals/ Lord Supper celebrations with each other), was under the Headship of Christ, under the discipline/authority of the Bible, and guided by the elders. Two Christians meeting in the name of the Lord were just as much being a church as were fifty because they were assembling as believers in the unity of the Spirit. The Scriptures portray the church as a living, breathing organism, Spirit-filled and led, imparting the Christ-centered Gospel and its life-giving power to the lost masses, living in fellowship, and is training (i.e. discipling) each other via the Word. This initial First Century church mindset freed up the people (i.e. not the “gifted” preachers, evangelists, and leaders, but rather the common members) to use their spiritual gifts to serve each other and witness to the lost. Their power and effectiveness was directly related to their

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184 Ibid., 202.

185 Ibid., 203. Cole suggests that the Lord’s Supper was potentially intended to be part of each meal so that “every time we eat bread and every time we drink a beverage we are to take a moment and remember the love of Jesus demonstrated in His sacrifice for us.”


187 Tony Dale and Felicity Dale, Simply Church, 47.

Ways that Churches are Distracted Away from Jesus

Colossians 1:8 tells us that Jesus is the head of the church (also referred to as His body). In all things, the church of America needs to come back to the Christ of the Bible and rediscover Who He is, what He requires of His church, and to institute a balance between being an adopted child (with all the rights, privileges, and honor of a child of the King) with the position of being a desperately helpless child who is nothing without Christ. Viola and Sweet challenge us to answer the question about Jesus, “Who do you say I am?” They note that because the church no longer trusts Jesus to “draw all people to Himself”, that “we sit at drawing boards and draw up programs and methods and draft strategies that we hope might bring people to Christ.”

Churches in America that are holistically dedicated to Christ, proclaiming His Gospel and discipling His children, do exist. However, some, such as Michael Horton, have noted that the majority of churches are so self-consumed and worldly that even their views of Jesus are perverted. He states: “Jesus has been dressed up as a corporate CEO, life coach, culture-warrior, political revolutionary, philosopher, copilot, cosufferer [sic], moral example, and partner in

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189 New Testament history shows that the church’s focus was occasionally distracted (Robert Banks and Julia Banks, *The Church Comes Home*, 43-44), which led to correction (e.g. the Corinthian church which made the Lord’s Supper a time of drunken partying while ignoring the needs of the poor, or even the church of Ephesus (Revelation 2:4) which had lost its first love). Despite the sin nature of Christians deviating their focus, when the church is focused, history shows that it is a powerful force that grows spiritually and numerically (James Rutz, *The Open Church*, 8-9).

190 Leonard Sweet and Frank Viola, *Jesus Manifesto*, xix. Emphasis added by the authors.

191 Ibid., xx. Emphasis in the Scriptural quote added by the authors.
fulfilling our personal and social dreams.”\textsuperscript{192} The result has been a church that has lost its focus, has not been Gospel-oriented, and has failed to bridge the gap between the faith of yesteryear and the younger postmoderns who are seeking religious experiences.\textsuperscript{193} What is often found is a church that meets each Sunday to go through its rituals but has little interest in the lost world outside its doors. Churches are found trying to Christianize America through moral agendas.\textsuperscript{194} Many (and some very notable) churches teach that Jesus is the secret to all of your needs and wants. Innumerably, scores of churches are church-centered, tradition-centered, morality-centered, and ritual-centered but not Jesus-centered.\textsuperscript{195}

Since the church in America is not primarily Jesus-centered, it is often no more than a social club.\textsuperscript{196} It has its membership contract, complete with expectations such as paying one’s dues (tithes), being involved in its mission (serving the church on Sundays or other days as needed), attending club meetings (every Sunday, and maybe even Sunday night and mid-week), soliciting the club to others to increase membership (often called evangelism, but is usually inviting one’s friends to church with hopes that they will find the club worth joining), participating in the club’s budget decisions, voting for officers, etc. The club has a leader

\begin{enumerate}
\item[\textsuperscript{193}] Alvin L. Reid, \textit{Radically Unchurched}, 79.
\item[\textsuperscript{194}] Naomi Schaefer Riley, “From Moral Majority to ‘Prophetic Minority.’” \textit{Wall Street Journal}, 17-18 August 2013, A11. Here Riley interviews Russell Moore, who denounces the efforts of the American church to effect the morals of the country through politics and instead wants evangelicals to “refocus the movement on serving as a religious example…”
\item[\textsuperscript{195}] These tangents are often promoted in the name of Jesus, and for the sake of the Gospel, but are generally just cleverly disguised reasons to seek personal fulfillment or agendas, and are not really Jesus-centered nor Jesus-originating (Isaiah 55:8-9). Cole even discusses that many churches have accurate standards but that “Jesus is missing!” (Neil Cole, \textit{Organic Church}, 50).
\item[\textsuperscript{196}] Thom S. Rainer, \textit{I am a Church Member: Discovering the Attitude that Makes the Difference}, (Nashville, Tennessee: B&H Publishing Group, 2013), 9-11. Interestingly, the country club portion above was written before Rainer’s book was encountered. However, Rainer’s discussion reinforces the point that this is the mentality of many American churches.
\end{enumerate}
emeritus (Jesus) Whom everyone affectionately recognizes and generically identifies with, but the real leadership lies within club’s president or presiding committee (pastor or elders and deacons). The church of the New Testament was notably much less formal, much less organized, much more Christ-focused, and much more successful in fulfilling Christ’s mission (i.e. the Great Commission). It was not without problems (Acts and the Epistles demonstrate many sinful issues in the early church), and not without structure. Yet, it made a permanent impact on the culture and beliefs of the Roman Empire to the point where Constantine finally embraced Christianity.

Many American churches have failed to be forward thinking and missional, desiring to maintain their cultural preferences and comforts above the needs of the world. Those churches that hold a more conservative doctrinal stance are feeling threatened by the secularized culture and beliefs of the world, often longing for the “good old days” when the church had a prominent and influential voice and many of society were churchgoers and (perceived as) decent citizens. This attitude is understandable, but unresponsive to the reality that the world is changing. The Roman Catholic Church has recognized in recent years that its impact and membership are both declining, and it is seeking ways to reverse this trend. The Southern Baptists (the largest

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197 Paul Vieira, *Jesus has Left the Building*, (Woodland Park, Colorado: Klaris Publishing, 2006), 133-134, 140-144. Vieira dedicates a whole chapter to the importance and essence of structure in the church, but his conclusion is that traditional church structure is based on top heavy leadership that can essentially dictate uniform control over the people to assimilate them into one’s church system via conformation. The church that Jesus started was more Spirit-led, and the structure was based on Him and His kingdom. The shape of the church was determined by Him and the spiritual gifting of those who were members of each local church.

198 Frank Viola and George Barna, *Pagan Christianity*?, 18. The authors note that Constantine did not abandon his pagan beliefs, however. This makes his conversion quite suspect.


Protestant denomination in America) have been concerned about the noted decline in baptisms and growth and a perusal of their website (www.sbc.net) will often generate suggestions and antidotes to reverse these trends.²⁰¹ Many other Christians have been airing their concerns about the decline of the church numerically as well as the decline of its influence. While the church in China is exploding with growth,²⁰² the church in America is dramatically declining. Of this problem, Vieira state: “It is my belief that the role of the church is to be a prophetic voice to the culture. Jesus and the early church had a voice… However, I don’t see the church in the West walking with the same influence and authority.”²⁰³

Whilst the influence of the church is waning, its strategies to survive often sound like nothing more than a business attempting to extend its lifecycle and maintain its perpetuity. For example, in the business world, a product has a lifecycle: “The product life cycle consists of the different stages that a product passes through during its lifetime. The standard product life cycle tends to consist of introduction, growth, maturity, decline, and future development.”²⁰⁴ As is easily seen here, there is a point where the product’s growth declines (this can also relate to the business itself as many businesses, such as Coca-Cola, McDonalds, and General Motors, maintain an image lifecycle that is integrated with the perception of their products, and vice versa). Being that the American church is business-oriented, for that reason it will fight to defend

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²⁰¹ Neil King Jr., “Evangelical Leader Preaches a Pullback from Politics, Culture Wars,” Wall Street Journal, 22 October 2013, A1 and A14. This article is quoting LifeWay research with regards to the “Annual change in membership for the Southern Baptist Convention.” See also Thomas S. Rainer,  I am a Church Member, 4-5. Rainer discusses LifeWays’ research with regards to the church’s decline as well as the fact that the church has not successfully reached the Millennials (those born between 1980 and 2000).

²⁰² Banning Liebscher, Jesus Culture: Living a Life that Transforms the World, (Shippensburg, Pennsylvania: Destiny Image Publishers, 2009), 29. Quoting Bobby Conner, he notes that there has been an average of 1,200 people becoming Christians every hour in China for the last ten years.

²⁰³ Paul Vieira, Jesus has Left the Building, 257-258.

its name, its image, its influence, its property, its rights, its income, and anything else that would directly affect its existence. The goal for a church thus becomes to extend its business lifecycle, just like a secular business would its products: “Extension strategies include techniques used to delay the decline stage of the product life cycle. The maturity stage is a good stage for generating a profit. The longer the company can extend this stage, the more profitable the company will be.” Products whose lifecycles have ceased to be profitable and have ultimately terminated are discontinued, and often their parent businesses disband or are bought up (e.g. American Motors by Chrysler). Churches are so busy fighting for their business existence that they often see evangelism as a means to an end. They are often Gospel-oriented so as to keep the business growing. Likewise, they also seek ways to market Christians to join their churches from other congregations. The American church is not growing, and instead of seeking Jesus first, it seeks numerical growth and security (many times in the name of Jesus). Notwithstanding, there are churches who are wholeheartedly seeking to exalt the name of Christ, promote His Good News, and disciple His children. These are few and far between.

The institutional church has created a large set of diversions that have taken center stage, all crying for the attention of the congregants. Pastors, within some denominations, have become the cult of personality, and one’s church show (including, but not limited to music, drama, refined recitals, dynamic preaching, and well produced audio/visual presentations) must excel over any other local church’s show so as to grow larger. The look of the church is paramount,

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205 Tony Dale and Felicity Dale, *Simply Church*, 71. The Dale’s discuss the pedestal that American churches often put their pastors up on. Likewise, not only do church pulpit search advertisements often require a pastor with dynamic preaching skills, this writer’s father was an usher at a church for many years with a very charismatic and dynamic pastor who was very entertaining, funny, and dramatic. This writer’s father related that one Sunday a woman had come in for service and sat down near him. Upon hearing that the pastor was not present that day, she promptly stood up and left.

206 C. Jeff Woods, *Congregational Megatrends*. (Herndon, Virginia: The Alban Institute, 1996), 14-15. Woods states: “Because most churches either declined or were not able to make the subtle changes needed to appeal
and its parking lot, grounds, interior decoration, and sign must reflect the image being sought\textsuperscript{207} (pulling in countless hours of maintenance and money just to ensure it has the correct aesthetics). Budgets are developed to gather a greater market share of the community to help keep the business running (and often other churches are viewed as the competition).\textsuperscript{208} Unwittingly, the church has become a competitive entertainment business that is worth billions of dollars, both in its real estate holdings as well as its generated income.\textsuperscript{209} This scenario often leaves smaller urban churches feeling insignificant because they cannot compete with the bigger, “growing” churches (who seem to be mostly stealing sheep from the smaller ones). These smaller churches usually do not attempt to change that much (partially because they cannot afford to, and partially because they detest change), but rather hope to survive through adding such “assets” as contemporary music, a younger pastor, and padded chairs to their assortment. However, the church is to be the Kingdom of God, not a big budget business fighting for a perpetual

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\textsuperscript{207} James Emery White, \textit{Opening the Front Door: Worship and Church Growth}, (Nashville, Tennessee: Convention Press, 1992), 44-52. The premise of this book with regards to the church building and grounds is that they need to be in stellar and appealing condition to attract the lost.

\textsuperscript{208} Frank Viola and George Barna, \textit{Pagan Christianity?}, 41. The authors indicate that the average American church consumes 50-85\% of its monies (from tithes) for its operating budget. House churches, in contrast, have about 95\% of their monies free for ministry, missions, etc. Furthermore, the Bridge Community Church (SBC) was temporarily meeting in a non-adjoining suburb of Rochester, New York while attempting to get a meeting location that was closer to the ministry focus of the church (i.e. they were targeting the more heavily populated urban areas of the city and its adjoining communities, not the more distant upper class community they were temporarily meeting in). Meanwhile, another SBC church in the same suburb did not wish to assist the Bridge’s efforts because it felt threatened by the proximity of Bridge Community Church and saw it as competition.

\textsuperscript{209} Ibid., 41.
organizational survival which further detracts from a focus on Jesus. Ultimately, the American church is primarily a business that happens to have religious services.

The building is not in and of itself evil, nor are leaders or efforts to impact the lost world with the Gospel. However, it is true that whatever a person does or focuses on is what is important to that person. For the body of Christ, church buildings have often become revered and honored. Furthermore, one should wonder why the real church (i.e. the assembly) had been quickly dismantled just after a little over 300 years of existence, and its power removed so that a clergy-oriented building (now erroneously called the church, or even the “house of God”) that mimics much of the ideals of the paganism of the Roman Empire, has replaced said assembly.

For almost 1,700 years people have been led to believe that church is a building and an event, that they are not worthy or authorized to be the body of Christ, and that spiritual growth and

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210 D. Larry Crumbley, Nicholas G. Apostolou, and Casper E. Wiggins, “Planning for the New S Corporation,” American Journal of Small Business, 8, no. 1 (1983): 32. Businesses generally incorporate to ensure the “perpetual life of the business entity.” Any church organization that is over a hundred years old is generally guaranteed to be a different group of people with possibly a different culture than the original body of believers. Yet, the church continues to exist under its organized name, thus perpetuating its business/organization self. The New Testament church was a geographically identified body of believers (such as the Church in Jerusalem) that was made up of smaller units which met in homes. If a family died, so might that particular meeting-place. If a city disappeared, so did the church of that city. But, the universal church perpetuates because of Jesus Christ rather than because of the practices or survival instincts of business.

211 This is a dramatically unpopular view, but when one considers the business formation and practices of a church (to include incorporation, church officers, a CEO, church secretary, job descriptions, a constitution and bylaws, policies and procedures manuals, 501 (c) 3 governmental tax exempt registration, marketing, image and brand control, slogans, etc.), one finds that the time and money spent to maintain the business end of the church’s existence is disproportionate to the biblical functions and requirements of an assembly representing Christ.

212 While the buildings may not be evil, a church’s response to its building can be.

213 Frank Viola and George Barna, Pagan Christianity?, 42 and 43.

214 This writer contends that Satan was quick to figure out what constituted the power of the church and that by legalizing it in a society that originally sought to eradicate it, and centralizing its authority into a political-religious system full of pagan-inspired distracting traditions, that he could thwart its rapid multiplication and impact. Frank Viola and George Barna, Pagan Christianity?, 42, state that the unbiblical church building is an “artificial setting” where Christians “are lulled into passivity and prevented from being natural or intimate with other believers.”
power primarily rests in a building and a pulpit.\textsuperscript{215} Nevertheless, the true indicators of how important a building is should be demonstrated by how much time, effort, debate (especially over alterations), and money goes into it.\textsuperscript{216} Even so, until the twentieth century did churches have to concern themselves with many of today’s requirements for a building. Churches rarely had insurance, had little or no utilities, little maintenance, no security systems, no ADA requirements, limited or no electricity, no paved parking, probably no retained legal firm, etc. Maintaining most buildings was relatively cheap and did not consume the assembly or its money.\textsuperscript{217} Today’s America requires most of these aforementioned things to be in place, and if these things are in the way of being wise stewards of our money, in the way of effectively getting the Gospel out,\textsuperscript{218} and in the way of releasing church membership to serve fully, then maybe the church needs to reconsider what is important. If Jesus is to be the primary focus of the church, then the building needs to be evaluated to ascertain if it is in the way of that focus, and whether it has become a sacred cow that has earned most of our attention. As previously mentioned, the church’s budget and committee meetings should serve as a good gauge of the percentage of money and time invested in the structure. Many churches are finding it more cost and time

\begin{flushright} \textsuperscript{215} Leonard Sweet, \textit{AquaChurch: Essential Leadership Arts for Piloting Your Church in Today's Fluid Culture}, (Loveland, Colorado: GROUP, 1999), 168. He states: “Because we are prisoners of the pulpit. The sermon is still a viable and dynamic communication form, as the success of Comedy Central and the stand-up comedian testifies. But the sermon has not always been held hostage by the pulpit. Some of the greatest spiritual awakenings in Christian history happened when preachers escaped from the pulpit prisons and starting preaching from the aisles, the fields, the streets, the airwaves.” \end{flushright} 

\begin{flushright} \textsuperscript{216} Frank Viola and George Barna, \textit{Pagan Christianity?}, 41-42. \end{flushright} 

\begin{flushright} \textsuperscript{217} The first church buildings were erected in the Roman Empire by Constantine’s decree, using the Empire’s money. Some churches have constructed expensive buildings and cathedrals at the notable expense of their parishioners. Yet, most community church buildings, especially in America, were originally smaller and relatively cheap to construct, thus incurring very little relative cost to the people as contrasted by a building today. \end{flushright} 

\begin{flushright} \textsuperscript{218} Ed Stetzer, \textit{Planting New Churches in a Postmodern Age}, 113. Stetzer notes that a mistake being promoted today in reaching the postmoderns is to try to get them to come to us. On the converse, Jesus sent the church \textit{out}, yet we keep trying to bring people into our buildings. \end{flushright}
efficient to rent out a facility for their gatherings, including storefronts and theatres. Having a church building is not a problem unless it holds a disproportionate amount of a church’s time, money, and concern.

For a church to be a biblical church, it must be founded only on Jesus and centered on Him from that point on. Biblically and simply, the Greek word for church means assembly. While more complex and formal definitions of church abound, they tend to miss the spirit of what a church is supposed to be. The church was not designed around formal, liturgical religious practices (as was Judaism), nor was it without structure (the structure inherent in the Word is of a family). In the church’s structure, Jesus is the Head, and elders are His leadership representatives, just as the husband/father is the spiritual and physical leader of the family. The members are part of the family and must serve to make it successful.

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219 Helen Doohan, *Paul’s Vision of Church*, 24. Quoting Murphy-O’Connor: “For Paul, ‘Christ is not only the founder of the community of believers, but in a real sense he is the community’ (1 Cor 6:5; 12:12) because it is through the community that the saving reality of Christ is made effective in the world.”


221 Stetzer deals with the Southern Baptist definition as well as the Westminster Confession as viable definitions of the church (Ed Stetzer, *Planting New Churches in a Postmodern Age*, 172-173), but does not recognize a group of believers in a large Bible study at Texas A&M as being equal to a church. However, mission statements and formal definitions are more what a club would have, and less of what a First Century Church would have recognized. Vieira, on the other hand, recognizes any gathering of any number of Christians focused on Jesus and spiritual matters as being the church, and going to a building on Sunday is not the same thing as being the church (Paul Viera, *Jesus Has Left the Building*, 143-144). See also footnote 14 where Neil Cole observes that Jesus is missing from most church definitions.

222 Tim Chester, *A Meal with Jesus*, 51. Here Chester deals with the aspect of the church as a family and notes that this is a common picture in the New Testament.

223 Robert J. Banks, *Paul’s Idea of Community*, 49: “All Paul’s ‘family’ terminology has its basis in the relationship that exists between Christ, and the Christian as a corollary, and God. Christians are to see themselves as members of a divine family; already in his earliest letters Paul regards the head of the family as being God the Father.” Also, Nate Krupp, *God’s Simple Plan for His Church—and Your Place in It*, 11, brings Christ in view by stating, “To this church, God gave Jesus to be the Head…”

Leadership may extend to formal pastors and deacons, but not necessarily. The primary goal is to be a community who represents and exalts Jesus, through dedicated love, service, and obedience to Him. Since Jesus is the “founder and perfecter [sic] of our faith” (Hebrews 12:2), the church is called to keep its eyes on Him. When the church focuses on Jesus, the distractions of self-survival and personal comfort are replaced with a love for its Savior, which then translates into obedience to Him, even to the point of death.

Lest one believes that being distracted from Jesus is new to the 21st Century church, starting almost as soon as the early church was founded one can trace how traditions, pagan philosophies, and bad doctrines began creeping into the church. As noted in chapter 2, Jim Rutz provides a list that starts in A.D. 140 of just 56 alterations to the church that crept in over the last two millennia. All of these are involved in deviating from sound doctrine, exalting pagan influences, centralizing worship in pagan worship-influenced Roman styled buildings, exalting the religious leaders, exalting Mary, minimizing the role of the church body, and ultimately minimizing Jesus. Furthermore, Viola and Barna, as well as Rutz and Edwards, all provide a more thoroughly detailed research on many historical church traditions and practices.

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225 Metosalem Quillupras Castillo, “‘The Church in Thy House’”, 41. He indicates that the church is responsible for being priestly and is to offer “up acceptable sacrifices to God through its worship, intercession, and evangelistic outreach.”

226 Neil Cole, *Organic Church*, 134-135. Cole’s view is that leadership does not necessitate having a title, but does require being a servant.

227 Calibration, (discussed in Chapter 2), is the key issue here when comparing the first century church with the church today. E.g. the closer the church was to its original design, the easier it was to adjust it when false doctrines were presented. Two thousand years later finds most churches out of calibration to the original design, and moving them back towards that design is fraught with scores of traditions, doctrinal alterations, cultural influences, etc.

228 James Rutz, *Megashift*, 221-223. These were fully listed in Chapter 2.
that have also diverted the church from being focused on Christ.²²⁹ Viola and Barna, emphasizing the centrality of Christ in the New Testament church, conclude that: “The early Christians were intensely Christ-centered. Jesus Christ was their pulse beat. He was their breath, and their central point of reference. He was the object of their worship, the subject of their songs, and the content of their discussion and vocabulary.”²³⁰

Horton also observes that the focus of the church today (in general) is not on Christ, but on tangents: “I think that the church in America today is so obsessed with being practical, relevant, helpful, successful, and perhaps even well-liked that it nearly mirrors the world itself. Aside from the packaging, there is nothing that cannot be found in most churches today that could not be satisfied by any number of secular programs and self-help groups.”²³¹ Elsewhere he notes that the church has its own agenda, and that it has become the focus of its own existence.²³²

²²⁹ All of these authors provide a highly detailed and documented journey into the radical changes of the church, from the body of believers Jesus founded to the convoluted traditions that have taken the church’s eyes off of Jesus. The traditions themselves may not be necessarily evil or wrong, but they are strong hindrances in a world already full of hindrances to this Christ-centered church requirement. Furthermore, see Chapter 2’s discussion on calibration.

²³⁰ Frank Viola and George Barna, Pagan Christianity?, 246-247.


²³² Michael Horton, The Gospel-Driven Life Being Good News People in a Bad News World, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Books, 2012), 126-127. He elaborates: “Today, the church in America has become so identified with its secular culture that it is difficult to tell them apart. Wanting to retain our last vestiges of power, popularity, and privilege, our churches and Christian movements often seek to grab the headlines. We try to build a kingdom through press releases, crowded stadiums, programs, and ‘relevant’ communication. Like news celebrities, we pander to particular constituencies in order to gain a larger share of the market, instead of simply keeping to our script, proclaiming Christ and him crucified to the nations.”
How Churches Can Place Their Focus on Jesus

Jesus, in John 12:32 said: “And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself.” Peter, when walking on the water (Matthew 14:28-31), faltered in his faith and took his eyes off of Jesus and sank into the water. The church in America needs to put Jesus back in its sights and to keep its eyes there. This focus needs to be balanced by a strong teaching of the four Gospels and the message that Jesus proclaimed in them (in Matthew 28:20 as Jesus gave the Great Commission, He instructed that His commandments be taught, thus, His teachings as found in the Gospels exist as our record of those commandments). Many books are calling the church back to a Gospel-centered existence since the Gospel is about Jesus and not about man, is about His purposes and not man’s, and it always points people back to Him. No longer can the church hope to influence the world through carnal platforms such as politics, bumper stickers, the courts, and even church buildings (see Ephesians 6:12 and II. Timothy 2:4). The world is not responding positively (or at all) to these attempts, and meanwhile Jesus is not being fully exalted.

A church that is seeking to follow Jesus will not have its own agenda. Chandler, Patterson and Geiger state: “In an individualistic Western culture, we tend to want a unique theology, one that is just for us and feels fresh and new. But longing for something ‘fresh’ or ‘something no one else has said’ often leads to bad exegesis.” What can be noted is that there are scores of churches in America that are on their own agenda, building their own kingdoms,

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234 Naomi Schaefer Riley, “From Moral Majority to ‘Prophetic Minority,’” Wall Street Journal, 17-18 August 2013, A11. This article is an interview with Russell Moore who currently serves as President of the Southern Baptist Convention’s Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission. He states that “we are no longer the moral majority. We are a prophetic minority,” and believes that Christians need to live their morals as an example to an unbelieving culture rather than try to change culture externally.

often worried about keeping the business running and the salaries paid. Some groups promote a health and wellness Christianity (i.e. God wants everyone to be successful, happy, healthy, rich, etc.). Others worship morals and rules (sometimes, but not always, equating legalism with salvation), in an attempt to gain God’s favor or to control their congregations. These efforts tend to promote a sense that godliness is found in the uniformity they promote. Jesus is often not the leader of His church, but a participant at best as these agendas have supplanted Him and His authority.

For the church to function properly, Jesus must be its only true leader. All allegiance, love, and worship must go to Him. This writer has been in far too many Sunday church gatherings where football, movies, jobs, and life issues were the primary topic and focus during times of “fellowship”, and Jesus was only mentioned in a brief lesson during service. A church based on Jesus will be filled with Him, passionately in love with Him, and desirous to spend time with Him. That same church will seek His leading through dedicated prayer and fasting. That church will obey Him (John 14:15). All agendas, functions, meetings, and outreaches will exalt Him. The church will become known for lifting Him up rather than for fighting societal ills such as abortion, Christless Christmases, and homosexuality. His Gospel will become center place, and the message will not become obscured with political, moral, or preferential agendas.

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236 E.g. the pastor of the aforementioned Bridge Community Church, meets weekly in another Southern Baptist Church’s building. The latter church meets very infrequently only so as to keep its tax exempt status. Evidently, it is not a church in the biblical sense, but rather, a tax exempt organization existing to get discounts and keep property. Jesus is not its Head, and the Gospel is not its mission.

237 Michael Horton, *Christless Christianity*, 68. Horton attacks Joel Osteen’s positive psychology-based theology throughout his book as a clear example of an unbiblical theology.


239 The church is directed in I. Corinthians 5:12-13 to only judge (towards correction) those within the church body, not those outside. It is this writer’s contention that if the church focused simply on spreading the Gospel, and then discipling the converts to maturity, that the aforementioned social ills would in time take care of
As a focus on Jesus ensues within the church, Christians will be more desirous to live righteously because if one loves Jesus, then Jesus will be obeyed (John 14:15). The church will also be more in tune with fighting sin within its congregations (I. Corinthians 5:9-13). A desire to tell others about the Lord will follow because when He is one’s all-in-all, that person cannot help but to tell others. This change of attitude and focus will do more for seeing people saved than anything else, because Gospel preaching is not restricted to a few “gifted” orators, and the world will see the sanctified lifestyle of believers and find their lives matching their message, thus reducing the accusations of hypocrisy in the church.

Sweet and Viola believe that the Scriptures are absorbed with Jesus, and that those who are Christ-centered will continually speak and teach Jesus because they are so consumed with Him. But, they evaluate our current day Christians as being less than Christ-oriented: “The tragedy of our time is that countless preachers, teachers, even healers are giving dozens of sermons, lectures, and messages, relegating Jesus to little more than a footnote or a flourish to some other subject. At best, He gets honorable mention. What is lacking is a groundbreaking revelation of Christ that boggles the mind and enraptures the heart.”

The evidence that this mindset is not at the heart of the American church can be simply witnessed by the conversations of churchgoers while at church and the lifestyles of churchgoers themselves. Unfortunately, similar to the Pharisees in Jesus’ time, much of the American church (especially in “Conservative” circles) worships morals over the Jesus Who created and reigns over morals.

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241 Ibid., 127. Horton’s contention is that the lives of Christians have so many inconsistencies that they disprove Christianity daily, and that it is Christ Who brings people to Him, not the lives of Christians. However, Christians are admonished throughout the New Testament to live good lives that represent Jesus (Paul said to follow him as he followed Christ). While a Christian’s life may not be the force that brings people to Christ, it definitely should not be a hindrance via ungodly living.

while not at church. Many church sermons are oftentimes focused on a variety of theological, social, or practical issues, not directly for the glory of Christ, but rather, for the fulfillment of man. The need, therefore, is to reverse these trends so that Jesus is sought after, worshipped, followed (because He is leading), and on the lips of His people (Luke 6:45). The petty, superficial issues of buildings, grounds, salaries, budgets, committees, and traditions, need to be abandoned for the deeper things of Christ. His mission is the Great Commission, and the longer the church adds superfluities to the Great Commission the longer it gets diminished and watered down. Furthermore, these continual additions will, in a practical sense, only serve to keep Christ from being the Head of His own church.

Edwards, discussing the first churches planted in the New Testament, asked: “What did they speak about? They spoke about the Lord Jesus Christ! And when they finished doing that, they spoke about the Lord Jesus Christ! And when they finished doing that, they spoke about the Lord Jesus Christ!” Jesus was the continual discussion of the early church, just like the two travelers on the road to Emmaus (Luke 24:13-35). In fact, the four Gospels are the Good News about Jesus and His kingdom. The Book of Acts is the historical account of how the early church took root and impacted the world with this Gospel. The various Epistles all contain continual references to being “in Christ” and following Him, obeying Him, having His mind, proclaiming and living His Gospel, exalting Him. Revelation is about Him purging His church and then punishing a sinful world to set up His throne forever. The Old Testament is all about Jesus (Luke 24:44), and so are the Scriptures written directly for His church—the New Testament.

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243 Over a decade ago this writer assisted an inner-city church plant. Each Sunday, after service, men from the church would go upstairs for coffee and doughnuts, and conversations about football. Today, in the church that this writer attends, the period between service and Sunday School is often filled with guys discussing sports.

244 Gene Edwards, How to Meet in Homes, 37.

245 John R. Rice, Christ in the Old Testament, (Murfreesboro, Tennessee: Sword of the Lord Publishers,
As discussed earlier, the purpose of the Lord’s Supper is to focus on Him. The early church celebrated His death, burial, and resurrection throughout each week because it was the central message of the church. Their focus was on Him continually. This continual communion with their Lord poured out into their lives so that they could not contain His message (e.g. Apollos in Acts 18:24-28). While the church in Jerusalem swelled, the churches Paul and others planted continued to grow, and ultimately Christianity was noticed by the Roman government as a major movement. The Roman Empire was polytheistic, and required all to regard Caesar as God and Christians began to be targeted and punished for their refusal to acknowledge anyone but Jesus as God. Despite some who recanted their faith, the church continued to multiply even under various times of persecution. A primary reason that this grassroots movement was spreading was because the church members themselves were naturally pouring out their faith into the lives and ears of those around them. Results such as these do not just happen, but are the by-product of lives fully transformed by the Gospel, and fully in love with the Jesus of the Gospel.

**The Christian’s Identity In Christ**

Social Identity Theory states that:

…a social category (e.g., nationality, political affiliation, sports team) into which one falls, and to which one feels one belongs, provides a definition of who one is in terms of the defining characteristics of the category—a self-definition that is part of the self-

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248 Alan Hirsch, *The Forgotten Ways*, 92. This is a profound testimony to the power of the Gospel since outside Israel, most of the church was made up of former polytheists who were now identifying with Christ alone.
concept. People have a repertoire of such discreet category memberships that vary in relative overall importance in the self-concept. Each of these memberships is represented in the individual member’s mind as a social identity that both describes and prescribes one’s own attributes as a member of that group—that is, what one should think and feel, and how one should behave. Thus, when a specific social identity becomes the salient basis for self-regulation in a particular context, self-perception and conduct become in-group stereotypical and normative, perceptions of relevant out-group members become out-group stereotypical, and intergroup behavior acquires competitive and discriminatory properties to varying degrees depending on the nature of relations between the groups.

Social identities are not only descriptive and prescriptive; they are also evaluative. They furnish an evaluation (generally widely shared or consensual) of a social category, and thus of its members, relevant to other relevant social categories. Because social identities have these important self-evaluative consequences, groups and their members are strongly motivated to adopt behavioral strategies for achieving and maintaining in-group/out-group comparisons that favor the in-group, and thus of course the self.249

Church history demonstrates the progression of these characteristics, especially as carnality and self-centeredness (primarily emitting from individual churches, denominations, or self-categorizations such as identifying one’s group as Fundamentalist) developed over the centuries. Church-focused societies, such as those in Seventeenth Century New England, often dictated behavioral attributes to ensure conformity. Generally when this happens, each group becomes an isolated island of a self-righteous self-conceptualization that judges those in the out-groups (even, and often more so if those out-groups are other Christian groups of differing doctrines or practices).

Acts 6:1 demonstrates an early in-group/out-group mentality that was developing within the church (the church as a whole being the only in-group that should have mattered). These believers became focused on their cultural identities and needs, and the church leaders appointed men (often believed to be the first deacons) to ensure that the issues were resolved. Moreover, Paul writes often against many of these in-group/out-group issues (e.g. Colossians 3:11), stressing a unity of the body with Jesus as the Head. The deviation from being Christ-centered to


self-centered ultimately alters the design for the church. However, when the church is focused on
Jesus, and integrates that mentality into its culture while using the Bible as its measuring stick to
gauge its accuracy, it is then that the church is functioning properly.

At this stage the church will not be focused on its denomination, its so-called theological
“distinctives”, its pastor, its building, its name in the community, or any other tangents. As unity
is maintained, and Christ is exalted, the subsequent attributes (Family/Community and
Empowered Leadership) will naturally develop and perpetuate. The church will be known for
being a light that represents Jesus, and will not be confused with political causes, or Bingo night,
or fundraisers. One will no longer hear, “Who is the pastor of your church?” or “You’ve got to
come to my church and hear my pastor preach”, or “We’ve got an awesome Christmas show this
year with a really cool band. Would you want to come and check it out?” When the show is
being used to hopefully win people to Christ, or the superstar pastor is what matters, then the
church has again diverted its focus from Christ. Unity in Christ is demonstrated by loving each
other, and the church on target will be worried more about the in-group demonstrating love to
Jesus (via obedience) to each other, and then, in a break from Social Identity Theory, presenting
the love of Jesus towards the out-group (lost world) through a loving, Gospel-oriented lifestyle.
All varying groups of believers, regardless of church identification, would be viewed as being
part of the larger in-group (the body of Christ). Ultimately, the church’s ultimate social identity
would be centrally oriented on Jesus Christ.\(^{250}\)

The importance of this is found in the fact that people are seeking to have an identity.
People today are now defined by what they are (such as their sexual orientation, cultural/racial
identification, etc.), what group they support (football team, political party, social justice

\(^{250}\) Alan Hirsch, *The Forgotten Ways*, 94.
organizations, etc.), and even who they think they are (e.g. transsexual). The complexities of postmodern thought have left many stranded in rootlessness wherein their identities never have a solid foundation but are always shifting.\textsuperscript{251} Geiger notes that people often seek their identity in their careers, relationships, possessions, or even their hobbies.\textsuperscript{252} The Christian is conversely to find his identity in Christ and Christ alone; to have a sure foundation. This identification for a Christian supports all of his needs whether they are spiritual, physical, psychological, ad infinitum. His position possess the role of an adopted child with the full eternal inheritance God has given him; nothing held back. He is no longer a color, a race, a nationality, a culture, a gender, disabled, or gifted (Galatians 3:26-29). Those things will still physically exist, but to the Christian, he finds his full identification in His Lord. One’s identity may be a mask for inferiority, or it may be a source of pride. Neither of these exist for those “in Christ” because while he is not worthy of this great privilege and honor, nevertheless he has been granted a grand position in the Kingdom only because of the Jesus he identifies with, and for no other reason. People want to belong, and they want to be wanted. Jesus came to earth and shattered the notions of the Pharisees which placed an emphasis on higher class inclusivity. He chose, instead, to allow the lowest dregs of society to be included in His Kingdom purpose, wanting them and loving them unlike anything they had ever experienced before (or even had believed possible by the God of the universe).\textsuperscript{253}

The name “Christian” identifies the believer with Christ. Geiger states: “As His child, you have received His nature and nurture. He has called you to Himself and has named you His


\textsuperscript{253} Tim Chester, \textit{A Meal with Jesus}, 20-22.
child. Now live worthy of the call you have received by reflecting His character to the world around you.”²⁵⁴ Thus, the identity of the believer is with Christ and he has Christ’s name on his life. When he intentionally focuses on his identity in Christ, he will exalt Him and allow Him to be the Head of his life, family, and church.

**Primacy of Jesus Conclusion**

The conclusion of this section is that the church will not be the church until it has first carefully followed Jesus through prayer and the guidance of the Holy Spirit since Jesus is the leader of the church. Second, it must remove the plethora of distractions from its focus, and third, it must place Jesus back up as the true Head and Leader while fully identifying with Him.

To talk about Jesus, wear a Christian-themed tattoo, or to have a “Jesus is the Reason for the Season” bumper sticker on one’s car is not the same as having a relationship with Him. Orthoschesi must exist if the church truly seeks to exalt Him. Christianity is unlike any other religion in the world in that its followers have a privileged relationship with God. Doohan notes that we are “challenged to live in union with him…”²⁵⁵ Orthoschesi does not occur magically, but intentionally as the believer spends time with Christ. The more time the believer spends with Jesus, the more the superficial distractions fade away from view and the more influential Jesus is on his identity.

Being Jesus-centered means that one’s orthodoxy needs to be correct so that his orthopraxy is in balance. For example, Izuzquiza advocates quite strongly for a Jesus-centered church, but his narrow focus is on political change, especially with regards to overcoming the

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²⁵⁵ Helen Doohan, *Paul’s Vision of Church*, 177.
greed of capitalism through a core focus on “Eucharisticizing [sic] the world.” His focus seems to override the primary message of the church (the Gospel) by using the Gospel as a political force rather than a spiritual force that inherently provides political and physical change. On the converse, Hirsch, ignoring these types of tangents and diversions, comes to the conclusion that: “For authentic missional Christianity, Jesus the Messiah plays an absolutely central role. Our identity as a movement, as well as our destiny as a people, is inextricably linked to Jesus—the Second Person of the Trinity…”

Once the distractions are eliminated, then one’s identity in Christ is necessary to provide the catalyst for a true Family/Community Relationship which represents the natural response to following Christ; the biblical representation of our relationship with our Lord. Mead believes that Christians need to “belong”, and feel “safe”, and that the church community is where those ideals should exist.

Finally, one’s identity in Christ is the paramount foundation to Empowered Leadership wherein the Christian will know that His authority comes directly from Christ. In affirmation of this assertion, Neil Cole views biblical leadership as a flat structure rather than a hierarchical (tiered) structure. All authority is delegated from Jesus, and each person has his authority and approval from his status of being “in Christ”. Furthermore: “In this manner, each person is

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257 Alan Hirsch, *The Forgotten Ways*, 94. He expounds on this point by stating: “At its very heart, Christianity is therefore a messianic movement, one that seeks to consistently embody the life, spirituality, and mission of its Founder. We have made it so many other things, but this is its utter simplicity. Discipleship, becoming like Jesus our Lord and Founder, lies at the epicenter of the church’s task. It means that Christology must define all that we do and say. It also means that in order to recover the ethos of authentic Christianity, we need to refocus our attention back to the Root of it all, to recalibrate ourselves and our organizations around the person and work of Jesus the Lord. It will mean taking the Gospels seriously as the primary texts that define us. It will mean acting like Jesus in relation to people outside of the faith; as God’s Squad, a significant missional movement to outlaw bikers around the world puts it, ‘Jesus Christ—friend of the outcasts.’”

258 Loren B. Mead, *Five Challenges for the Once and Future Church*, 44.
endowed with the authority to accomplish all God intends. Permission from other people above is not necessary if God is the one who issues the command. In such a system, spiritual and relational authority are what is needed in leadership.”

The Family/Community Imperative

Orthoschesi Expanded

A correct relationship with Jesus will assist the believer in developing correct beliefs and correct doctrine (I. Corinthians 2:12-14). Again, this is critical because correct doctrine does not in and of itself create a correct relationship. Correct doctrine will influence correct practice because many of the doctrines of Christianity are action-oriented (e.g. the Great Commission’s focusing on going, baptizing, teaching, and obeying). However, a correct relationship with Jesus is demonstrated through a correct relationship within the church.260 Doohan states: “Being in Christ is a transformational insight that determines every aspect of the believer’s life. Once called into a personal relationship, the believer and the community respond totally.”261 Thus the two are inexplicably intertwined, and cannot be separated. For a Christian to have a proper relationship with Christ, he must also have a proper relationship with fellow Christians (I. John 4:20-21), just as his having a proper relationship with fellow believers requires him to have a proper relationship with Christ.

259 Neil Cole, Organic Church, 135.

260 Julie A. Gorman, Community that is Christian: A Handbook on Small Groups, 2d. ed. (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker, 2002), 37. Gorman states, “The community is central to representing the incarnation of Christ.” Also, Craig Van Gelder, The Essence of the Church: A Community Created by the Spirit, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Books, 2000), 25 where he states: “There is a duality within the church’s nature which we must understand… The church is God’s personal presence in the world through the Spirit. This makes the church, as a spiritual community, unique. The church also exists as a social reality with human behaviors organized within human structures.”

261 Helen Doohan, Paul’s Vision of Church, 23-24.
Therefore, orthoschesi is first built in a church’s life through a deep and passionate commitment to Christ, and is proven through a deep and passionate commitment amongst each Christian’s fellow believers. Neil Cole defines church as “the presence of Jesus among His people called out as a spiritual family to pursue His mission on this planet.”

The key ingredient is the presence of Jesus “among His people” and that they are a “spiritual family”. One will not find this depth in most of America’s churches.

However, the relationship is key to the church’s existence. McCallum notes that most Americans do not want God to overreach too deeply into their lives for fear that their selfish pursuits will be reduced or eliminated.

The contention herein is that the relationship with Jesus demands that Christians invest in and grow in relationship with each other (i.e. the interpersonal relationships of the church). Castillo confirms this notion by stating: “To say he is in fellowship with God but does not involve himself in the concerns of the Church involves a basic contradiction.”

Krupp indicates that fellowship is the Greek word, *koinonia*, and means, “fellowship, association, community, communion, joint participation, intercourse, intimacy.” He continues by stating: “Thus, fellowship is more than having a cup of coffee and some surface conversation together. It means to be in life together, walking deeply with one another.”

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263 Dennis McCallum, *Members of One Another*, 9-10. He notes: “We never see a version of Christianity in the New Testament that envisions the individual with his or her God. It’s always, always, always the people of God growing together at a deep level. Without this, much of the content of the New Testament simply makes no sense.”

264 Metosalem Quillupras Castillo, *“The Church in Thy House”*, 52. He also quotes Seitz as stating: “Any idea of private communion with Christ that did not also involve real and active participation in the life and work of the Christian community was totally unthinkable in the New Testament.”

265 Nate Krupp, *God’s Simple Plan for His Church—and Your Place in It*, 43. Krupps definition of *koinonia* is quoted from Thayer’s Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament.

266 Ibid., 43.
churches, and as such, this lack of deep interactive friendship creates an anti-biblical atmosphere inside the church organization wherein mostly limited, surface-oriented interactions exist. Ralph Neighbour also emphasizes this point by stating that: “Much of the Western church is impersonal.” Sadly, the trend in America is for most Christians to continue their individualistic pursuits to the demise of true church; church that is made up of people deeply longing for intimate fellowship with Jesus and their fellow Christian brothers and sisters. The result is that even Christians are leaving American churches at an alarming rate, and one of the contributing factors is the lack of Community/Family relationships.

The Nature of the Church

The New Testament describes the church in many different ways. Some of these ways, such as by the use of military terms, (II. Timothy 2:3; Ephesians 6:11-20), tend to define the church by its actions or responses in fulfilling the Great Commission or fighting sin. Others may reference the relationship of the church to its position in Christ (Romans 7:4; I. Corinthians 10:16, 12:27; Ephesians 1:23, 4:12, 5:23; Colossians 2:17). Minear points out that there are about ninety-six images for the church within the New Testament. Viola notes that the most prominent image for the church in the New Testament is of the family.

267 Gene Edwards, How to Meet in Homes, 57.

268 Ralph W. Neighbour, Jr., Christ’s Basic Bodies, 26.

269 Michael Spencer, Mere Churchianity: Finding your Way Back to Jesus-Shaped Spirituality, (Colorado Springs, Colorado: WaterBrook Press, 2010), 25, 31-32. The primary theme that Spencer is conveying is that American churches are so disconnected with Jesus that they cannot perceive that the exodus is being caused by their artificial Christianity, and instead judge those who leave as being less spiritual. However, his contention seems to be that these people who are leaving are looking for the Jesus of the Bible, not the Jesus of American churches.


271 Frank Viola, Reimagining Church, 98.
organizational foundation being emphasized within this writing, the church emphasis that is highlighted here is of Family/Community. Highlighting the importance of this concept, one should also note that the term “brothers” is found more often in the New Testament to describe Christians than any other term.\(^{272}\) Church as family finds its foundation and affirmation in the Word of God, and thus becomes a necessary component to the holistic health of the church.

As previously noted, the church is an assembly of believers who find their identity \textit{in Christ}.\(^{273}\) They are exhorted throughout the New Testament to live in unity. They are to see themselves as brothers and sisters (I. Corinthians 7:15; James 2:15), and to train each other up as parents would their young (e.g. Titus 2:3-5). They are to sacrificially love each other to the point where the world sees Christ through their love (John 13:35). Logically, when one looks at the various descriptions of what the church was in the New Testament as well as what it was exhorted to be, one would not be able to look at the majority of American churches and conclude that there is a tight level of unity or community within most assemblies. To this point Gene Edwards states:

> Dear reader, walk into a Baptist church next Sunday morning and ask yourself a simple question. Are these people madly in love with one another? Are they caring for each other? Holding onto each other? Listen, dear one, I am a Baptist minister. In a Baptist church in a typical city today people do not even know one another’s names!\(^{274}\)

\(^{272}\) Gene A. Getz, \textit{Elders and Leaders: God’s Plan for Leading the Church}, 50.

\(^{273}\) Gerhard Lohfink, \textit{Jesus and Community: The Social Dimension of Christian Faith}, (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: Fortress, 1984), 77. Here Lohfink elaborates on this term: “The Christian community in Jerusalem called itself the ‘\textit{ekkêlsia} of God’ (cf. 1 Cor. 15:9; Gal. 1:13). In Greek, \textit{ekkêlsia} meant a public assembly, the popular assembly of the political community. But in many texts, including some important ones, the Septuagint had used \textit{ekkêlsia} to translate \textit{qhul}, the assembly before Yahweh of the Old Testament people of the covenant. Deut. 23:2-9 and the history of its early Jewish interpretation are especially important. Here \textit{ekkêlsia} is understood as the true people of God, separated from all unholiness [sic] and impurity. If the earliest Christian community called itself the ‘\textit{ekkêlsia} of God’ against this background, it must have seen itself as the chosen people of God, the true Israel.”

\(^{274}\) Gene Edwards, \textit{How to Meet in Homes}, 57.
As mentioned previously, the natural (i.e. biblical) order of church hierarchy is one where Jesus is its Head. He came to earth and dissolved the traditional religion of Judaism by fulfilling its purposes via the cross. He also established His purpose for the family wherein its heart is turned towards each other (in love, unity, obedience, etc.). He then proceeded to establish a non-religion where He is the direct leader, and every person who is a part of Him is a priest. Every member, from the lowest in intelligence to the highest in intelligence, from the poorest to the wealthiest, whether male or female, when in Christ, is a participating full-fledged member of the family of God. Leadership is to exist within the church just as it would in any family setting, but the leaders of the church are practically irrelevant and unimportant other than their guiding responsibilities and demonstrative testimonies to the flock. Notwithstanding, Melvin points out that the importance of how leaders raise their own personal families will have a major impact on how well they lead the church and is critical to the church’s success.

In smaller communities, a church is often made up of just a few families and is often much more family and community-oriented by default, but this is not normative in America’s more populated locales, especially as mobility allows people from many miles away to come to

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275 David E. Holwerda, Jesus and Israel: One Covenant or Two?, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1995), 56-58. While Holwerda’s theology is Covenantal, he does propose that Jesus is now the corporate representative of Israel, and of His kingdom: “God now recognizes as Israel all who respond in faith and obedience to the presence and will of God revealed in Jesus” (57) which would seem to be in keeping with Galatians 3:29.

276 Steve Atkerson, ed., Toward a House Church Theology, 103. This section is referencing Malachi 4:4-6 and Jeremiah 31.

277 James Rutz, Open Church, 11. Rutz notes that the priesthood of the believer was taken away early in the history of the church.

278 Frank Viola and George Barna, Pagan Christianity?, 109-110. The leaders are in one sense important since God’s design always includes them as representatives of His authority. However, the position of pastor (priest, minister, bishop, etc.) has been exalted by both Catholics and Protestants to a position of reverence, awe, and special importance. The biblical example never promotes this, nor does Jesus’ continual rebukes of those in a similar exalted position (such as the Pharisees and Sadducees).

279 Steve Atkerson, ed., Toward a House Church Theology, 104.
church services. Thus, Americans tend to leave the immediate communities they live in and travel to churches meeting in alternate communities, sometimes much further away, and often do not fully engage with those in their churches. To counter this problem, churches today have attempted to incorporate artificially-induced fellowship into their design and sometimes even into their name, but this does not guarantee that it exists. The American church stressed church growth for many decades, envisioning the church as a large, ever multiplying assembly on Sundays, and at times even tried to use intimate fellowship as a means of growing larger.

Overall, while it failed to fulfill the needs of deep fellowship amongst its members, sinful lifestyles crept in without disciplinary recourse, self-centered anonymity became prevalent, and discord and division became so common that the term “church split” entered church vernacular. The church in many ways became a reflection of an American society that has become extremely disjoined, especially as: 1) suburban housing designs have created greater spaces between homes and neighbors, 2) shopping became a mega experience with enormous supermarkets, theatres, discount stores, and malls, 3) modern technology has provided a means to remain anonymous and detached from necessary human contact, 4) people are filled up with so many activities

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280 Loren B. Mead, *Five Challenges of the Once and Future Church*, 51.
283 American Sociological Association, “Americans’ Circle of Friends is Shrinking, New Study Shows,” *ScienceDaily*. June 23, 2006. Accessed 27 May, 2014 www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2006/06/060623093533.htm. A person can go to the gas station and fill up his vehicle while never coming in contact with another human. Internet shopping can be done from home and a person never has to go anywhere nor encounter people. Internet “churches” allow congregants to hide behind technology and never fully interact with other humans as the Lord designed. A text can be sent out and no actual verbal communication transpires. A pizza can be ordered online and delivered, and the recipient can watch a Netflix video, eat his pizza all alone, and then do online gaming, and only had to personally interact with the pizza delivery man for less than a minute. Direct human interaction is becoming less and less important to society; an unintentional yet direct result of technology.
that they have little time to really get close to others and develop deep relationships, 284 5) divorce and abuse are running rampant, and 6) the evolution of the American republic into a democracy has exalted man into the position of being his own god which has opened the door for him to exalt his own selfish importance and project it into everything he thinks, does, and says. Noticeably, America has developed into a three hundred million citizenship of individuals—probably the largest in history. In confirmation of the above statements, Barna notes: 1) Of churched believers, less than one in six have a relationship with another wherein spiritual accountability occurs, and 2) The media, law and family members have a greater influence on the lives of church believers than preaching or other believers have. 285

O’Halloran exegetes today’s individualistic culture by noting that we now have a “Lone Ranger mentality” which the church is unwittingly supporting with its individualized evangelism, programs, and ministries. He points out that the church has been so busy trying to grow, so busy trying to figure out what works, that it has failed to actually be the church (i.e. community of God). 286

There are many who state that as long as the church is seeking God, is not heretical in function or doctrine, and is obeying the Great Commission and the Great Commandment, (or other similar ideas), it really does not matter how the church meets and is structured since the Bible is silent on the matter. 287 In other words, the Bible opens the door for freedom of


287 Craig Van Gelder, *The Essence of the Church*, 159-160. Here he discusses his belief that balance should be kept in play, and that as long as it keeps to the biblical foundations yet responds to cultural contexts, then the structure is not an adamant design.
expression within the area of how and where a church meets. This view is contrasted by those who hold to a strict house church design and point out that Paul made it clear that the church was to follow the traditions he taught them and the example he set (I. Corinthians 11, 14; Philippians 4; II. Thessalonians 2). There are those who attempt to function in between to be sure, keeping a traditional Sunday service backed by the small group structure. Still, the family-orientation of the church must be fulfilled, and an analysis of most institutional church structures will find it severely lacking.

As the church seeks to function as a business, a most recent phenomenon has been the development of church mission statements. Granted, some families (though it could be suggested very few) develop mission statements, overall this is predominantly a function of businesses. Noticeably, the early church did not work to develop a mission statement, though there was evidently a common goal that they sought to fulfill (i.e. the Great Commission). Mission statements do very little to motivate people, and primarily seem to serve the idealism of upper corporate leaders who seek to find a rallying point for their organizations to identify with and be motivated by. The suggestion is that the mission of the early church was ingrained in its design

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288 Steve Atkerson, ed., Toward a House Church Theology, 57-59. The insinuation here is that the house church structure is what Paul meant by traditions.

289 Larry Osborne, Sticky Church, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 2008). This whole book discusses how Osborne uses sermon-based small groups to reinforce the Sunday services.

290 Loren B. Mead, Five Challenges of the Once and Future Church, 51.

291 James O. O’Halloran, Living Cells, 97. O’Halloran states here: “Realizing that we’re in essence a Holy-Spiritual community should again make us cautious about the usefulness and relevance of using business and management techniques to achieve success within the church. Certainly, order is important. Crowds can be gathered. We can launch new programs. Raising money is important. But in the midst of all this busyness, is anyone becoming a disciple of Jesus? Is spiritual transformation taking place? Are people experiencing change of character? Is anyone learning to put away selfishness in order to sacrificially serve others?”

292 Neil Cole, Church 3.0, 28. Cole indicates that postmoderns value relationships over mission statements.
as being a family. Families naturally multiply which is a key effort of the Great Commission.\textsuperscript{293} Families are made up of parents and children with the former training up the latter (discipleship). The children grow up and become sexually mature and naturally want to participate in the act of procreation. Properly raised, these young adults will then seek to start a family and raise their own children and perpetuate the cycle. However, the American church has become asexual.\textsuperscript{294} There are a few vestiges of reproductive desire within a small contingency of church members and occasionally within whole church bodies, but overall the church is just not interested enough to actually engage itself in the act of reproduction. Mostly, the Catholic influenced structure of the Protestant church is to blame, as exalted pastoral leadership has replaced the priesthood of believers. On one hand the leadership does all of the important tasks of ministry and then begs the congregants to live righteously and witness to the lost.\textsuperscript{295} This in turn has created a level of apathy amongst the congregants which has led to a surrogate view of ministry that believes it is the pastor’s job to witness, visit the sick, study the Word, etc. Yet during the first three hundred years, the early church rapidly spread as its family design was the basis for \textit{natural} spiritual reproduction via the fulfillment of the Great Commission. Family and community are the nature of the church and the realization of its mission. Bolsinger confirms this by stating: “Christian community is an ontologically irreducible organism. It is a living reality that is imbued with the Spirit of God. And most dramatically, it is the very life of the Triune God drawing people into a

\textsuperscript{293} Alan Hirsch, \textit{The Forgotten Ways: Reactivating the Missional Church}, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Brazos Press, 2006), 212-216. Hirsch equates the church with the sexual reproduction of biological systems, and that both should \textit{naturally} reproduce, rather than clone each other.

\textsuperscript{294} Ibid., 215-216. Hirsch demonstrates how attractional and mega-churches are not designed around reproducing (again, he designates even their church plants as clones). His discussion delves into adaptability and demonstrates how clones do not adapt well and often fail.

\textsuperscript{295} Neil Cole, \textit{Church 3.0}, 53.
covenantal relationship with God and one another. …Thus, the community together is a witness for Christ.  

The Family Image of the Church

Unity is a natural design that God created for families. Despite sin’s invasion of the family structure, God created man and woman to be one (Genesis 2:24). The family unit in most previous societies required a strong unification since every member was actively needed to keep the home structure running. The co-dependent and unified family was seen in most of American society up to and just past the Industrial Revolution, and is still found today amongst Amish communities. Correspondingly, the church is a family and is to demonstrate an interactive unity; a feature missing in most institutional churches, but was found in the New Testament churches. Banks notes that “each member of the gathering has his or her particular contribution to make. Since all have something to give, there are no mere spectators in church but only active participants.” Paul expressed the necessity of unity throughout his letters as well. Unity for the church is not based on the common goal, or mission statement, but on and in Christ. The church is part of His body and is to have an abiding in Him (John 15), thus creating an intertwined unity that cannot be broken or unraveled.


297 Julie A. Gorman, A Community that is Christian, 43. Gorman discusses the destruction of the family via individualism in American society.

298 James O. O’Halloran, Living Cells, 13-14. O’Halloran recounts the story of Sylvia who attended a Catholic church in Nairobi, and often heard messages about love and community, but never experienced those traits at the institutional church. In time she found a small Christian community where she lived and by joining it experienced firsthand the love and community the institutional church never truly offered.

The standard American church today is detached from itself, thus mirroring American society. As mentioned in Chapter 1, Carl George has listed out fifty-nine “one another” statements in the New Testament that testifies of the importance of deep, committed unity within the family of God. The Bible places a high premium on living in continual unity. The institutional church has often shortchanged this concept by assuming that a lack of gossip and a lack of divisiveness on Sunday is the same thing as what the Bible describes as unity. However, the Bible demonstrates unity as a lifestyle of people devoted to each other. In Acts 2 these people sold what they had to help each other out, without coercion and without a sermon directing them to do so. Bilezikian discusses what he calls “communal life”, and dismisses the traditional Sunday service as not really being church, but believes rather that the church should live out its biblical metaphor of being a family. True unity is not found in the coming together of people to sing, hear a sermon, and then go home, but in living life out together as a family. This will take on many shapes, but many of the essentials will be found, such as praying for each other, serving each other physically, and loving each other. As much as is possible, church should be the image of the perfect family, a far cry from what the institutional church presents.

300 Julie A. Gorman, Community that is Christian, 56 (referencing Wuthnow).


302 James O. O’Halloran, Living Cells, 92 states: “Encouraging authentic community isn’t going to be easy. Building community means thinking about the needs of others before we think about ourselves. It means learning to appreciate the discomfort of being with people who aren’t like us. It means learning personal sacrifice. It means setting aside time in our already crammed schedules to ‘waste our time’ with other people who will cramp our styles and who don’t care about our personal agendas.”

303 Gilbert Bilezikian, Community 101, 54.

304 James O. O’Halloran, Living Cells, 87, states: “As a community, we’re called to make sense of the gospel to the watching world. When people want to know what it’s like to live under the reign of God, they ought to be able to point to the Christian community and say, ‘That’s what it’s like.’ How we live with one another and relate to the rest of the world is crucial to the purposes of the kingdom of God.”
Occasional potluck meals, or meeting in smaller groups in Sunday School are not family events or family living.  

While families will have their disagreements and sadly even their divisions, there is usually a bond within families that goes deeper than the social relationships people have at work or in most American churches. That family bond is replicated within family-oriented churches, but not necessarily within business/club-oriented churches. That bond produces a natural system that keeps order and expectations in regulation. The limitations of all churches, whether they are house churches or institutional churches, are often found in the disunity amongst outside groups (i.e. between one’s institutional church and another’s, or one’s house church and another’s). No matter how unified a local assembly is, the challenge is to get these assemblies to see other groups of Christians as part of the larger universal church.  

As noted previously, Acts 6:1-7 demonstrates some disputes between the Hellenistic Jews and the non-Hellenistic Jews, demonstrating that even the early church had this battle to contend with.

Banks notes that, “All Paul’s ‘family’ terminology has its basis in the relationship that exists between Christ, and the Christian as a corollary, and God. Christians are to see themselves as members of a divine family…” Similarly, Patrick states: “The perfect model that meets our longing for relationship is not found by looking horizontally, within the community of humanity.

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305 As alluded to in Chapter 1, limited community can exist in these events, but true community is more natural and continually recurring as peopled grow closer to each other.

306 Julie A. Gorman, *Community that is Christian*, 80-81. Here Gorman references Eugene Peterson’s quote: “Americans are good at forming clubs and gathering crowds. But clubs and crowds, even when—especially when—they are religious clubs and crowds, are not communities. The formation of community is the intricate, patient, painful work of the Holy Spirit.”

307 De novo, “Social Identity Theory” and how in-group/out-group perceptions influence this divisiveness.

308 The goal is not ecumenicalism, but unity.

Instead, it is found by looking vertically—at the community of *divinity.*”  

From here Viola indicates that the church is not a church unless it is a family, and that as a family it needs to be embracing Christ, Who in turn influences us to embrace each other.  

Seeing that the family is a spiritual relationship between God and His children, I. John 4:7-11 emphasizes that those who love God will also love each other.  

Philip Yancey recounts the story of a woman named Daisy, who grew up bitter at her drunken father because he forced her mother to walk out of her family right in front of them. She in turn became a very bitter mother who was extremely harsh to her son.  

Yancey later affirms that he views church as “a community of people thirsty for grace.”  

Grace dispensed by the church family among its members is a demonstration of the God of grace, and solidifies the family unity. While imperfect human families are often riddled with problems (such as the story of Daisy above), grace comes from a love of God that then transpires to loving others. Moltmann believes that Christians who are not connected into the church family are in isolated danger, but within the family: “Hope is embodied in the congregation which exists in the friendship of Christ and can accept each person in his or her own integrity. The congregation is the lively hope because it is the experienced hope, the hope which has the power to enliven us in the midst of death. Therefore, make the congregation strong!”  

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310 Darrin Patrick and Matt Carter, *For the City: Proclaiming and Living out the Gospel*, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 2010), 86.


312 Ibid., 73.


314 Ibid., 273.

However, while some demonstrations of Christian family love may exist within the institutional church, the institutional church is often a disconnected church missing out on the fulfilment of its full potential to experience and share God’s love. The institutional church is building-oriented by default, and thus has placed barriers to true fellowship and community.\footnote{Steve Atkerson, ed., \textit{Toward a House Church Theology}, 37.} For the church to be a family, it must look, act, and be indeed a family. Families meet in homes, fellowship in homes, and eat in homes. Granted, they will also meet at restaurants and parks, or go shopping together. Nevertheless, their homes are the centerpiece of their relationships, and the meal is supremely important to the family gathering.\footnote{Tim Chester, \textit{A Meal with Jesus}, 47.}

The Lord’s Supper has become a mockery as the institutional church has turned it into a sterile liturgy that is devoid of its original design and intent. Matthew 26:26 states: “Now as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and after blessing it broke it and gave it to the disciples, and said, “Take, eat; this is my body.” The Lord’s Supper was done “as they were eating”. Jesus broke literal bread at a feast (the Passover celebratory feast to be exact), and passed literal wine. He bridged the Passover imagery with His forthcoming death to demonstrate that He is the permanent fulfillment of the Passover. Yet, families do not naturally have liturgies with each other, but they certainly do eat with each other. Eating is a natural place for families to unify around. As a church family is eating, what more natural way to instill the church’s mission than to celebrate the Lord’s Supper wherein the message of the Great Commission is found? The meal is a natural function of a family, and is central to the church developing community.\footnote{Wolfgang Vondey, \textit{People of Bread: Rediscovering Ecclesiology}, (Mahwah, New Jersey: Paulist Press, 2008), 214-215.} No one would invite friends and family over for a meal and then serve a dried up speck of cracker and a
couple drops of juice; they would serve a fulfilling meal. Conspicuously, the Lord’s Supper contains the word, “supper”, which clearly indicates that it is a meal and not a snack. Meanwhile, as is the custom of many cultures, intercommunication occurs around a table as people open up and discuss various topics. Likewise, the church as a family should naturally be centered around meals just as Jesus was. The example of the early church demonstrates that it was constantly meeting around meals. Around these meals intentional spiritual discussions should abound in churches today. McLeod indicates that the Lord’s Supper (often called a Love Feast) was the central way in which the early church served each other’s needs. Furthermore, the unifying celebration of the Lord’s Supper becomes a natural centerpiece that reaffirms what He has done on the cross, as well as the church’s outreach to a lost world with that same message. Note Chester’s observations on the early church’s feasts with relation to how the church today should view and observe them: “These were feasts of friends… Communion should be a feast of friends with laughter, tears, prayers, and stories. We celebrate the community life that God gives us through the cross and in the Spirit. We can’t celebrate it with heads bowed and eyes closed, alone in our private thoughts and strangely solitary even as we’re surrounded by other people.” He further notes that when the Lord’s Supper becomes a spiritual time feasting with friends, that it will become the pinnacle of the church’s time together.

319 Ibid., 15.

320 Robert Banks, and Julia Banks, The Church Comes Home, 118. Markedly, there is no such thing in the Bible as a church “service”, nor a time of monologue called “preaching”.

321 Ibid., 118.


323 Tim Chester, A Meal with Jesus, 119.
There are two opposing views of church that cannot be easily merged or reconciled. The one being promoted herein is the Family/Community view that suggests that the church is to be a family of believers who meet and function similarly to a biological family, yet on a more continual and consistent spiritually-oriented basis. Their Father is God, they are the Bride and Jesus is the Bridegroom, they are all related to each other through the Spirit, and in that unity they continually come together to break bread. The opposite view is the institutional church, defined by Barna as the congregational model. He describes this model as “a definable group of people who regularly meet at the same place to engage in religious routines and programs under the guidance of a paid pastor who provides doctrinal teaching and organizational direction.”

The congregational model is what former Southern Baptist pastor Gene Edwards describes as spiritually destructive and boring. Larry Crabb’s view is that: “Churches are rarely communities,” and even with intentional small group programs are often still coming up short in the area of community. However, Crabb surprisingly bears his true feelings about congregational church by relating how he had two recognizable Christian leaders approach him within two weeks of each other, both unsolicited, both tired of (institutional) church, and Crabb recognizing that he was feeling the same way.

The holistic nature of the Family/Community orientation creates the catalyst for fulfilling the Great Commission’s instruction to “make disciples” and to “teach” (i.e. disciple) them.

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327 Ibid., xiii
Gibbs, discussing close groups of Christians as “clusters”, points out: “The cluster provides mutual support, encourages accountability, develops ministry and mission potential, and facilitates a climate for leadership development. … It ensures that the church doesn’t live for itself, within its own “bubble,” but that it is identified with both its surrounding neighborhood and other locations where clusters of believers begin to form.329

**Evangelism through the Family/Community**

Biblically, evangelism happens best within the community.330 Roberts and Marshall state that the church is the hermeneutic of the Gospel, and that the community of the church is to demonstrate life together as children and servants of God.331 With such a witness, the world will then see the unity of the church, the love it has for each other, and the testimony it proclaims of its Lord. No longer will a church need to beg its members to witness, or bring lost people to a service. Instead, the community will be a unified demonstration of Jesus’ acceptance: “The communities that we foster within the church will spill out into our local communities. The church will proclaim the good news of the kingdom by its very existence—as a community, in contrast to an individualistic culture.”332

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330 Tod E. Bolsinger, *It Takes a Church to Raise a Christian*, 57. Bolsinger states: “Christian transformation comes through the pattern, the personal relationship, and the power of God to the believer found in Jesus Christ through the Spirit experienced within the community,” (italics his).


Natural community evangelism is not just theory. This is proven over and over again in church communities that live out their Gospel. People that live the Gospel, preach the Gospel, and fulfill the Great Commission impact their communities.\textsuperscript{333}

Many factors contribute to the lack of community within America which have influenced its churches, and then extends to a lack of witness for Christ. As cities have gotten larger, and transportation has developed to where people can go wherever they want whenever they want, community has declined. Humanistic pragmatism has become the normative ideal for most. The family had disintegrated substantially as American families are often filled with one parent homes, homosexual parents, working parents who are barely involved in their children’s lives, abusive parents, and the list goes on. Americans really have little or no idea what it means to be a family and to be a community, yet they long for it.\textsuperscript{334} Many people have a distorted image of God as their Father since their earthly fathers have failed them. Many men have given up being a father and have abandoned their families, and others still have been abusive to their children and spouses in various ways.\textsuperscript{335} The individualism of America makes it hard for people to break out of their facades and to become vulnerable servants in a community.\textsuperscript{336} Churches filled with disunity, infighting, judgmental expressions towards others, hypocrisy, and spiritual charades are not drawing the lost to them.


\textsuperscript{334} Alvin L. Reid, \textit{Radically Unchurched}, 62.


\textsuperscript{336} Joseph H. Hellerman, \textit{When the Church was a Family}, 4.
The church’s example is Jesus, and He attracted the lost by His love and His lifestyle. The hermeneutic of our lives should therefore be evident and appealing as was Christ’s.

Furthermore, we are to be focused on Him, exalting Him, and proclaiming Him; all aspects of being a living apologetic. Essentially, the Gospel should only be rejected because of unbelief, not because of the unbelievable church.\(^{337}\) Meanwhile, the lost world (especially postmoderns)\(^ {338}\) deeply crave community and should see ours as a testimony of the Gospel.

Revisiting the Lord’s Supper, Cole suggests that families should personally celebrate the Lord’s Supper as a means of focusing on Jesus. However, he expands his idea to making the Supper such a common daily practice that when the lost are sitting around one’s table for a meal, the Lord’s Supper (including a verbal reminder of its meaning) serves as an “informal and highly relational” means of sharing the Gospel.\(^ {339}\) Even if the Lord’s Supper is not the focus of each family meal, eating is an important witness to the lost, and was demonstrated by Jesus, Who was often conversing around a meal. Chester elaborates on how the church has a phenomenal opportunity to reach all classes of people around a meal while sharing the Good News.\(^ {340}\) Robert and Julia Banks confirm the success of this approach by relaying the ministry of a married couple who had monthly Saturday meals offered to everyone they knew, and would follow up the meals with a discussion that reached many lost people.\(^ {341}\) Since church is not a building or a Sunday meeting, but an organism made up of gathered believers, the Family/Community

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\(^{337}\) The contention here is that while Jesus attracted scores of people, not everyone had faith and accepted Him as the Messiah. We as His representatives should attract people to our Christ-honoring lifestyles, and if the world rejects our message, it is only because of a lack of faith, not because our lives got in the way.


\(^{340}\) Tim Chester, *A Meal with Jesus*, 75-93.

\(^{341}\) Robert and Julia Banks, *The Church Comes Home*, 233-234.
emphasis finds its evangelistic strength not through inviting people to a church service to hear the Gospel, not through door-to-door evangelism, not through attractional methods often used by churches, but rather by actually being the hands and feet of Jesus, sharing a meal with the lost, and living and verbalizing the Gospel in a naturally relational atmosphere.

The key to evangelism within the Family/Community does not lie within the church as an organization, or the church as a building, or on programs, or on events (revivals, concerts, preaching to an audience, etc.). Hirsch denotes the difference between the commonly practiced attractional model and what he calls the “missional-incarnational” model—one that has an “outward thrust and deepening seeding” nature. Of the former, the business/club style of churches have tried to entice people to come to their services using such themes as sex, prosperity, patriotism, and even guns. Currently, one of the latest ideas is to attract people to

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342 This common practice is Surrogate Christianity wherein the professional preacher is the best qualified to give out the Gospel and thus win visitors to Christ. Therefore, congregants are encouraged to invite their lost friends to “church” to hear the professional present a refined and convicting Gospel presentation. On the converse, the biblical model as found in Romans 1:16 states that the Gospel is “the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes…”, thus removing the surrogate evangelizer’s role and replacing it with the witness of every Christian.

343 Reggie McNeal, *Missional Communities: The Rise of the Post-Congregational Church*, (San Francisco, California: Jossey-Bass, 2011), 8. McNeal points out that billions are being spent by American churches in an attempt to attract the lost, but that the return on investment is decreasing significantly.

344 Ibid., 12. McNeal relates how he attended a conference where a denominational executive was relaying a story about “witnessing” to his doctor, a Hindu. The Christian tried to get the Hindu to read a book on apologetics, but he stated he was too busy to read it and asked the Christian to tell him what was in the book. Instead, the Christian invited the Hindu to church. The Hindu told him he would rather have tea with the Christian and talk to him. After completing his “witnessing” story, McNeal spoke to him and stated, “Don’t talk church. This guy is looking for God,” and urged him to have tea with the Hindu. The denominational executive’s response was a mixture of bewilderment and offense. The natural means of witnessing to the Hindu would have been around tea (the idea of food, once again). The unnatural, surrogate means of “witnessing” to him was to have him read a book by an expert, or come to church and hear an expert give out the “plan of salvation”.


church using Mixed Martial Arts (generally known as MMA) competitions. Attractional evangelism has evolved into a circus-like atmosphere advertising that one’s church has the greatest show on earth, the greatest Jesus, the greatest fellowship, the greatest activities, etc. Yet, those that are attracted are becoming fewer and fewer, as if the American church is talking so much that it cannot hear what the lost world is asking for: “authenticity, honesty, and spiritual integrity.”

When Christians abandon the artificial church structures so inherent in America, they often do so because they are actually seeking God. They are no longer interested in the empty and shallow attributes of these churches. Erre sees that what pleases Jesus is a hunger for “deeper, wider, and higher community that genuinely and organically transforms the communities we belong to and the ones that surround us.” Herein the church that exalts Jesus and begins to build its Family/Community around Him, will naturally attract people wanting a genuine relationship with Jesus and His Family/Community. They will also focus on “making disciples” (Matthew 28:19) via natural (i.e. relational) means, thus evangelizing the world better (and cheaper) than through any other platform, (i.e. television, crusades, Christian made movies, and all other attractional methods).

McNeal’s assessment is: “A post-

http://www.fightchurchfilm.com/. Accessed 10 June, 2013. “Fight Church” is a controversial subject being made into a movie dealing with churches endorsing and creating outlets for MMA. Major news outlets and programs have featured this upcoming production.


349 Ibid., 17, 21.


351 Ralph W. Neighbour, Jr., *Christ’s Basic Bodies*, 26-27, 31. Neighbour believes that most Christians do not experience Christ’s “presence and power,” but that Christ within the community distinguishes it from all other man-made “structures.”

352 Win Arn, and Charles Arn, *The Master’s Plan for Making Disciples: How every Christian can be an Effective Witness through an Enabling Church*, (Pasadena, California: Church Growth Press, 1982), 59. The authors
congregational culture requires a strategy of engaging people right where they already live, work, play, go to school, and pursue their hobbies and passions… It lets them live more intentionally, learning to love God and their neighbors more, making a contribution to their community, all with people they know and are known by.”

Discipleship through the Family/Community

While “making disciples” is the initial goal of Great Commission-oriented Christians, discipling (the training aspect) becomes the natural follow up to that goal as highlighted in Matthew 28:19-20: “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.” With the presupposition that the Great Commission was given for all Christians, not just for the professional clergy and evangelists, it would then only be natural that all Christians (not the clergy or evangelists) are the ones who are supposed to be discipling converts. The fallacy that has been perpetuated within the American church for many decades is that discipleship comes from the pulpit. As previously discussed, much of this mentality comes from the unbiblical clergy-laity distinctions which have placed spiritual authority, power, and therefore the dissemination of spiritual information into the hands of a select few. Gallaty points out that,

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believe that there are eight reasons why natural relationships and their respective networks work best at evangelizing: “1) It is the natural way churches grow, 2) It is the most cost-effective way to reach people, 3) It is the most fruitful way to reach people, 4) It provides a constantly enlarging source of new contacts, 5) It brings the greatest satisfaction to participating members, 6) It results in the most effective assimilation of new members, 7) It tends to reach entire families, and 8) It uses existing relationships.

“preaching alone will not produce disciples,” a notion which still runs contrary to how most churches operate. The assumption appears to be that sitting under the preaching of the Word will produce changed lives, yet the evidence does not support this fallacy. Asking “Once we baptize them, then what?”, Cocklereece believes most churches do discipleship unintentionally, and has observed that: 1) Churches are not effective at making disciples, 2) The many programs and activities provided by churches do not translate into spiritual growth of people, 3) Independent programs and events do not function as a process for disciple-making, 4) Discipled Christians are better evangelists, and 5) Christian life coaching may be the greatest innovation that addresses problems 1-4.

Like a father intentionally trains his son to maturity, so also a church that has a Family/Community nature will effectively disciple others. The church family is the natural place to raise spiritual children to maturity within the context of living life. On the converse, the common method of lecture/preaching as its primary means of discipling, or even offering discipleship courses, reverts to the problem of a teaching method that is one of the least effective means available. Svinicki and McKeachie point out that research on the effectiveness of lecturing is “discouraging,” and indicate that: “Discussion methods are superior to lectures in student retention of information after the end of a course; in transfer of knowledge to new

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356 Ibid., 1-2.


358 Dennis McCallum and Jessica Lowery, *Organic Discipleship: Mentoring Others into Spiritual Maturity and Leadership*, rev. ed. (Columbus, Ohio: New Paradigm Publishing, 2012), 10. The authors support using classroom discipleship as a “supplement to personal discipleship, not a replacement for it.”
situations; in development of problem solving, thinking, or attitude change; and in motivation for further learning. Compounding this issue is the fact that lecture-oriented preaching is supposedly based on the New Testament, but quickly disintegrates when one discovers that “preach” in the New Testament often means (or was demonstrated as) dialogue rather than a one-way conversation. Churches that resort to lecture styled preaching to teach their congregants are ultimately doing them a disservice. While there is a place for this style of teaching, it should most often be relegated to limited purposes. Biblically, there is little evidence of long one-way preaching lectures in the New Testament. Continually throughout the Gospels people would interact with what Jesus taught. Paul (Acts 19:9-8) preached in the synagogue in Ephesus via dialogue, and when he made no headway he left them and spent two years in the hall of Tyrannus doing the same. Thus, in both presenting the Good News, expounding on it, and discipling through the Bible, the biblical evidence supports interactive dialogue as the primary means of teaching rather than lecture-based preaching.

Discipleship within the church then must be interactive. Furthermore, since all Christians are of the priesthood of believers, all are integral in the function of discipling. Tight-knit communities of Christians who view themselves as a family, and who are focused on exalting

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361 Marilla Svinicki, and Wilbert J. McKeachie, *McKeachie’s Teaching Tips*, 56. Svinicki and McKeachie suggest lectures benefit: 1) Presenting up-to-date information, 2) Summarizing material scattered over a variety of sources, 3) Adapting material to the background and interests of a group of students at a particular time and place, 4) Helping students read more effectively by providing an orientation and conceptual framework, and 5) Focusing on key concepts, principles, or ideas.


Jesus, will naturally be interested in seeing other Christians grow and develop in their spiritual maturity as well. Meals with each other and continual gatherings of fellowship, prayer, celebration, worship, and discussing the deeper truths of the Word are the key ingredients to discipleship.

**Leadership within the Family/Community**

Leadership within the church should rest with the elders.\(^{364}\) Much debate has ensued over the years about church government and the various forms it can take on. Granted, leadership is always to be desired over a lack thereof, but nevertheless, there are some forms of leadership that are more functional, get better results, and are more biblically-based than others. Business models of leadership view the pastor as a CEO.\(^{365}\) He leads via a top-down style wherein he delegates to his upper level management of Vice Presidents (called Associate Pastors) and has them then delegate to the leaders below them. Democracy-oriented views of leadership view the congregation as having the leadership of the church, voting on everything from the color of the rugs, to the Sunday School materials, to the outreach efforts for the forthcoming year. The committee-oriented leadership style has deacons or elders who make group decisions for all of the church’s functions. There seems to be biblical support for various aspects of each of these forms,\(^{366}\) but with the family orientation of the New Testament, it is safe to say that a business-oriented CEO pattern is definitely not endorsed.\(^{367}\) Similarly, neither is a full-fledged democracy

\(^{364}\) Gene A. Getz, *Elders and Leaders*, 18. Getz believes elder rule will incorporate a primary leader, but nevertheless, always has a “plurality of leaders.” Bilezikian, 54, seems to indicate that human leadership within the church (i.e. elders) is always mutual and equal with no man designated as the “head” elder.

\(^{365}\) When this writer pastored a traditional Baptist church, the Constitution and Bylaws of that church designated him as the CEO amongst other things.

\(^{366}\) Steve, Atkerson, ed., *Toward a House Church Theology*, 68-70.

\(^{367}\) Ibid., 37.
endorsed. The pattern appears to be of Jesus as the primary leader (leading through the Bible and the Holy Spirit), \(^{368}\) and then everyone else follows. The human leadership within the congregation is made up of elders who lead through persuasion (Greek: *peitho* as found in Hebrews 13:17), \(^{369}\) not through domination (see I. Peter 5:3). Atkerson notes that biblically, the church and the elders are both viewed together as being the flock, that the elders were merely a “subset of the church as a whole,” and that there was a lack of emphasis on the church leadership. \(^{370}\) Structuring the church around the eldership of a family, the Bible placed leadership into the church, but not a dictatorship. The Bible allowed the members to be involved in the decision-making process, but not exclusively function as a democracy. The vast numbers of members were represented via the presbytery (I. Timothy 4:14), but the decisions and guidance were presented via the elders. The elders were amongst the members as common members themselves. Ultimately, this eldership was a spiritual representation of one’s biological family leadership (I. Timothy 3:2, 4, and 5). \(^{371}\)

**Family/Community Conclusion**

When the church family functions properly, the members become empowered to do the work of the church because they *are* the church. No longer is there a need for micromanaged control of the activities of the church members. The church then stops viewing the pastor as the surrogate servant because the pastor as found in business-oriented churches no longer exists. \(^{372}\)

\(^{368}\) Ibid., 68.

\(^{369}\) Ibid., 71.

\(^{370}\) Ibid., 71.


\(^{372}\) Every time Paul wrote to a church he addressed the church that existed in a geographical location by that
The church is represented in the Bible as a family, and when it is designed around the family unit, then, and only then will it truly function as a family. A properly functioning family will lead to proper results, namely a fulfilment of the Great Commission and the Great Commandment.

Empowered Leadership

Moving Forward

The balance of Orthodoxy, Orthopraxy, and Orthoschesi should motivate church members to seek Jesus in all things (hence, their vertical relationship), followed by a wholehearted commitment to the Family/Community (their horizontal relationship), and a loving outpouring of their lives to others both in the church and without (i.e. service and ministry). One should also find the church personally taking the initiative and serving one another with each person’s spiritual gifts. Yet, business styled leadership has overwhelmed many of the church’s functions to the point that Christians are often restricted as to what they are or are not allowed to do. Micromanagement is leadership’s path of least resistance because it circumvents the talents and abilities of those being led while instilling an atmosphere of distrust. Many pastors (whether intentionally or unintentionally) function in this practice due to their strong personalities and need for control.\footnote{Barry Campbell, “Four Basic Styles of Pastoral Leadership,” Accessed 22 April 2014, http://www.lifeway.com/Article/Four-Basic-Styles-of-Pastoral-Leadership.}

Much has been written in the last few years about the need for pastors to equip the saints based on Ephesians 4:12. Interestingly, the biblical idea is not that a select few (i.e. only the pastors) would be training the flock, but that Christians have been given spiritual gifts, and in location, not by its pastor.
their maturity would train the spiritual children. Then, those children would be sent out and the process would repeat. This is the crux of the Great Commission wherein the perpetuating cycle is one of reproduction followed by rearing converts towards maturity. On the converse, the American family is in jeopardy today because such things as television, magazines, and comic books are raising the children while most parents are divorcing, absent, abusive, stressed, overworked, or any combination of these problems. The children grow up and have virtually no idea what family and responsibility are all about. They then repeat the divergent cycle and it continues to disintegrate the foundation of the family. While Christian families are not exempt from these negative influences either, it is the church’s job as a family to break the dysfunctional cycles and their negative influences, and to properly disciple the congregation into a spiritually mature family. Wardle indicates that one of the goals of spiritual maturity, and what is being contended here as foundational to a church’s health, is that Christians become “empowered by the Holy Spirit.”

374 Craig Van Gelder, The Essence of the Church, 182-183. Here Van Gelder points out that Ephesians has a list of different leaders who help prepare the saints, not just one “position” (i.e. the pastor). Also, Nate Krupp, God’s Simple Plan for His Church – and Your Place in It, 68, discusses Ephesians 4 and its emphasis that “all believers are ministers.”


377 Ibid., 8.

378 Banning Liebscher, Jesus Culture, 83.

Leadership and parenting books (and other supplemental training materials) are dominating the Christian landscape, and rightfully so: most Christians fall short in being Christ-like leaders and parents. Notwithstanding, Empowered Leadership as presented herein is not a method or program, but a foundational lifestyle that should undergird the church’s biblical leadership and parenting emphases. The mentality that is missing in many churches is the necessity of releasing the membership to serve as the Holy Spirit has directed each member. Thus, the emphasis herein is to promote the catalyst for churches to develop motivated, and dedicated leaders. I. Timothy 3 emphasizes traits for both bishops and deacons; traits that should be evident in their lives. However, churches are often bewailing the lack of qualified members when they seek to instill leaders. Churches often assume that a Bible college or seminary will provide instant leadership when in fact, many of these schools have primarily prepared people to study the Bible and theology.

The current age abounds with scores of Christians abandoning church, and lost people who are not even attracted to it. Many of these are tired of going through the motions, tired of the church facades, and not finding answers. Felicity Dale notes that 1) 50 percent of people are tired of the usual church experience, 2) 64 percent of adults are interested in pursuing their faith somewhere other than a traditional church, and 3) 75 percent say that God is leading people to be connected with Him in different ways than in the past. As discussed earlier, the evidence from both Christian and secular sources is that the traditional American church is seeing a massive

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decline, and one of the antidotes is to reverse the attitude that church is a place one attends, and to change it to church as something one is.\textsuperscript{383} Empowering the church and releasing people to ministry is not only the desire of many today, but it is the solution to many of the needs of as well.

\textbf{Empowered to Change the World}

When the clan/herd mentality exists, people do not want to disobey the norms set for them by their family and its leadership.\textsuperscript{384} Luke 1:59-63 demonstrates this concept when Elizabeth gave birth and the family named her son Zacharias after his father. Elizabeth stated his name instead would be John and they were confused because that was not a name used in their family. When the family challenged her decision, Zacharias confirmed that John would be his name. As can be seen in these types of cultures, the tightknit family structure puts pressure (i.e. peer pressure) to live up to family expectations. When the family is the church, and the expectations of its family members are biblical, then those within the church are the responsibility of the church and the (positive) peer pressure works towards keeping everyone living within the church family’s expectations.\textsuperscript{385} Discipline must occasionally occur, as it did in the early church, but as long as the church is seeking continual sanctification, then it should show minimal signs of deviation.

\textsuperscript{383} Ibid., x.


\textsuperscript{385} Fenna M. Krienen, Pei-Chi Tu, and Randy L. Buckner, “Clan Mentality: Evidence that the Medial Prefrontal Cortex Responds to Similar Others,” \textit{The Journal of Neuroscience}, (13 October 2010), 30(41): 13906, state “Kinship, friendship alliances, and perceptions of others’ beliefs guide social interactions and are central to cohesive group behavior.” However, this theory is usually viewed negatively since many will act and perform contrary to their normal desires and behaviors. Yet, if biblically balanced, this can be an effective tool.
The biblical church will be one that not only receives the message of the Bible, but then imparts it to its members via its members, running in stark contrast to the Protestant model that exalts the pastor’s sermon. As previously noted, sermons do not change communities, are rarely remembered after the church service, and really add little impact to the spiritual growth of a church, regardless of what people (mostly pastors) wish to think. The early church had participatory interaction amongst its members every time they met, not lecture-based training. Much like a biological family, when one matured, one was released to take on more responsibility and make more decisions. He did not need to go to his father for permission to do every little task, because he had been trained to become a leader himself. Likewise, mothers trained their daughters to become leaders as well within their own contexts. A real family environment is normally not made up of coming into the living room for one or two hours a week while the seldom seen father enters in and preaches a sermon, and then everyone separates back to each person’s bedroom and individual lives not to be seen again until next week. The American church “family” practices this every week, and yet fails to understand why there is so little unity, joy, cohesion, love for one another, adherence to the Word, etc. Pastors often wonder and fret over whether congregants are actually listening to and then living out their sermons.

387 Ibid., 89. Quoting Norrington, the authors point out that even as far back as the second century A.D., Clement of Alexandria noted that sermons did little to change people.
389 Donald A. Bligh, *What's the Use of Lectures?*, (San Francisco, California: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 2000), 4. This book is about the ineffectiveness of lectures within all environments, not just church. However, Bligh lists church sermons as one of the ineffective means of information transmission because they are in fact lectures.
Pastors beg for congregants to act like a family, serve each other, and do the work of ministry.\footnote{391}{Melvin J Steinbron, \textit{Can the Pastor do it Alone? A Model for Preparing Lay People for Lay Pastoring}, (Ventura, California: Regal Books, 1987), 22.} Many pastors feel obligated to take on the responsibilities personally lest the image of the church falters and the work remains unaccomplished.\footnote{392}{Ibid., 22.}

For the church to function properly, and to govern itself properly, it needs to be founded on the principle that all are leaders. The United States Marine Corps embodies the concept that leadership should be instilled from the bottom up. A Private with more time in grade than another Private is put in charge of that other Private. A Private First Class has leadership over a Private. A Lance Corporal has leadership over both Privates and Private First Classes, etc. The Marines teach leadership training from within its ranks, from its upper leaders, and through special training such as Non-Commissioned Officers School. The Marine Corps model is similar to what the church should look like in that everyone should be developed into the maturity necessary to lead, even if they are never compelled (by the Holy Spirit) to seek eldership. There will always be appointed leaders (in the church these would be the elders), but everyone has the same Great Commission and the same responsibility to fulfill it. Except for the aviation portions of America’s military, most battles are fought predominantly by the enlisted (lower) ranks, not by the officer ranks. Many Churches in America want their Generals and Colonels (i.e. the pastors and assistant pastors) to do the fighting (preaching the Gospel, discipling, visiting the sick, etc.), while they get to sit back and watch as if the church leadership is a television show—all observing, none participating.\footnote{393}{C. Kirk Hadaway, Francis M. DuBose, and Stuart A. Wright, \textit{Home Cell Groups and House Churches}, (Nashville, Tennessee: Broadman Press, 1987), 203.} Conversely, Christians in other churches wish they could serve more but the leadership restricts their ability to. Neither structure is biblical or effective.
The biblical church has every member engaged in pressing towards the mark, and every member is fully empowered to do the work and be a leader.

Empowered leadership motivates the church to be actively involved. When one owns a business, he has an invested stake in it and will give it much more effort, sweat, and time than a disinterested employee merely seeking a weekly paycheck. While on the one hand the church needs to stop functioning as a business (i.e. the corporate mentality), there is value in some of the principles found in the business world with regards to Total Quality Management, especially with regards to empowerment. Applying these ideas, when church members view themselves as the church, as heirs to the riches God has set aside for His adopted children, they then take ownership for the work and will live and die for their Heavenly Father and His kingdom purposes. This internal, Spirit-led motivation causes them to care for the body of Christ. Cole states: “the greatest advantage of organic church is that regular Christians are empowered to do the work of the kingdom and are not waiting for the professionals to do it for them. My hope and dream is to unleash and army of ordinary Christians empowered with Christ on a sleeping world.”

Approximately two decades ago, Sears had a campaign that was seeking to engage employees more. Each employee’s name badge said, “I Am Sears”. The employee was not to be viewed as a mere salesperson, janitor, or stock attendant, but as an important and integral part of Sears. However, this identity was externally implemented as it was not a natural part of any employee’s natural inner being. A church that is primarily a family will have dual identities, first with Christ, and then of that assembly’s local group (which of course represents Christ). It will view itself as a family, and will have the responsibilities of a family member. It won’t pass off

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needs to a so-called “Visitation Pastor” or “Counseling Pastor”, but will actually do the work of ministry to serve one another. A primary purpose of spiritual gifts is for the edifying of other Christians (see Ephesians 4:12; and I. Corinthians 14:1-12). When the church is empowered to use its gifts and to serve without constraint, then it will fulfill the edification requirement of its spiritual gifts.

Conversely, The American church sends its complaints up the chain of command rather than fixing the issues that are found. The American church brings its lost friends to the pastor (or church service to hear the pastor) to get saved rather than presenting the Gospel directly. The American church would rather the pastor visit the sick than to do so as a congregation. Ignoring the clear commands and directives of Scripture to be the church, much of the American church is dysfunctional at best and disobedient at worst. Historically, this goes back again to the aforementioned clergy/laity distinctions of the Catholic Church which were embraced by the early Protestants. Leaders feel important and powerful because they have important spiritual jobs, and meanwhile congregants feel unworthy and unusable for anything of such importance. After about 500 years of this mindset, the American church is having a hard time letting go of this perverted paradigm; a mindset so ingrained that it still holds the church captive and inhibits its true, God-given potential. Internal motivation does not exist as the church still has a division of labor mentality. Part of this problem is that leadership distrusts the power of the Holy Spirit to fully lead the congregations. Also, Congregations have been brainwashed by the clergy-dominated leadership style for so long that they often do not realize that the Holy Spirit in them (hence, the ultimate source of their internal motivation) will guide and direct them as long as they are fully seeking the Lord.\footnote{Terry Wardle, \textit{Helping Others on the Journey}, 17.} Apparently, this is an unconscious (maybe Satanically-influenced) decision to ignore I. Thessalonians 5:19’s instruction for Christians to not quench the
Holy Spirit. Philip, in Acts 8:26 and 29, was directly led by the Holy Spirit (i.e. they were in communion with Him) to minister to an Ethiopian. Philip responded by obeying, and the Ethiopian trusted in Christ that day. Philip did not have to ask church leadership for permission to preach to Gospel or teach out of the Scriptures, nor did he have to get permission to baptize the new convert. He just did the work of a child of God who has such an empowered position in the royal priesthood.

Acts 8 also shows how Saul had attacked the church in Jerusalem so harshly that the church began spreading to Judea and Samaria. In verse 4, the church, not the preachers and evangelists, but the church body was preaching everywhere they went. The church was internally motivated to evangelize, was released to serve, and did so without documented coercion. Churches in America have pastors extrinsically attempting to motivate their congregants, both compelling them to serve and then controlling how they do so, and finding few results. The practiced model is backwards and counterproductive. When the church is internally motivated, the church will be the church and will serve. Biblical evangelism is not Billy Graham, D.L. Moody, Charles Finney, or Greg Laurie preaching the Gospel in large packed-out auditoriums. Yet because the church is not doing its job, these men have often become a necessity in accomplishing some of the Great Commission. However, true biblical evangelism is when the church spreads the Gospel, and that is being found in places like China, North Korea, South America, and India, but overall not in America.

To be empowered, one must know what he can offer. He must be trained to do his job, and must be skilled. Throwing out terms such as “empowerment” does not make one empowered. Releasing a person into ministry does make one empowered. Hence, before one can be released, one must be prepared and must know that he is free to allow the Holy Spirit to guide
him. Besides salvation accompanied by baptism, the Christian who wishes to be a servant has two primary Scriptural requirements: 1) the Holy Spirit with His accompanying gifts, and 2) training, also referred to as discipleship. The former is most critical, because any newly saved person is capable and should serve as soon as possible. The latter (as necessitated by the Great Commission) is necessary for proper mature development, especially as the new convert learns about the Christian life and walk, about the Word, and about prayer. The array of spiritual gifts, when used in unison, will provide the full gamut of the Holy Spirit within the church.  

These spiritual gifts provide the unity, the fulfillment of needs, the testimony, the necessary boundaries, and edification that the body of Christ needs to be functioning properly. When one looks at many church search committees, one will find their requirements for the desired pastor is that he is to have a plethora of spiritual gifts. Surrogate Christianity creeps back in and the pastor becomes the primary gift user, servant, and ultimately the church’s hireling. The time has come for the American church to fully release its members to serve, and it starts by getting rid of the formalized role of pastor.

The church should consider eliminating formal pastors (the CEO top-down leader versions). As long as the pastor is a business leader/motivational speaker, the church will have a hard time changing to the biblical design. Referring to the need to free up the pastor to release the congregation, Jim Rutz promotes this concept by stating: “Want to do your faithful pastor a little favor? Fire him. Then hire him back—as your minister. Or chief equipper (Eph. 4:12). Or

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396 Dennis McCallum, *Members of One Another*, 193. However, Cole, referencing Hirsch, notes that if only one Christian was on the earth, that person would have everything needed (i.e. the Holy Spirit) to start the church from scratch (Neil Cole, *Church 3.0*, 67.).

397 Larry Kreider notes that when churches pay for the pastor to do their work, they get what they pay for: “good sermons and great programs.” However, those pastors have a hard time staying and ultimately move on while the church continues on unfulfilled and never maturing into “fathers.” Larry Kreider, *The Cry for Spiritual Fathers & Mothers*, (Lititz, Pennsylvania: House to House Publishers, 2000) 20-21.
enabler specialist. Or consultant in spiritual husbandry. Or liaison between heaven and earth. Or 
anything that emphasizes his spiritual ministry!”

Once the pastor is no longer a position within the church (in the sense of the modern 
exalted CEO version), then the church can start viewing itself as the ministers of the body. 
Psychologically, the church will no longer rely on the pastoral crutch to accomplish ministry, but 
will rely on itself. By the church training its own, the membership will learn doctrine, church 
history, godly living, unity, and how to disciple others. Through practical implementation of this 
training spiritual gifts will be used to edify the body and reach the lost. Oversight will be 
provided by the elders, but the congregants will just go and serve as the Holy Spirit leads them. 
Since baptism and the Lord’s Supper will no longer be liturgical ceremonies which only the 
formal leadership administers, the whole congregation can evangelize and then baptize converts, 
and celebrate the Lord’s Supper every time it meets if it so chooses. The whole congregation can 
minister to each other’s needs without needing permission. The whole congregation will develop 
into maturity.

The primary barrier to this suggestion is the fear that people will not actually do what 
they are supposed to, that the church will be apathetic and disengaged. Essentially, this is a lack 
of trust in the Holy Spirit to actually be in charge and do His job. Pastors tend to run themselves 
ragged trying to pick up the pieces and keep the business image in tact because the image is 
everything. Modernism’s worship of having a good self-image has been a part of church culture 
now for many decades. Yet, a church that fails to do what it should would be better off than 
having its leadership surreptitiously clean up after it so that the church’s image does not fail. 
There will never be ownership or empowerment until the church members become responsible

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398 Jim Rutz, The Open Church, 42. Pages 38-42 discuss the pastor’s real job as “Equipper, enabler, 
example...” and that he is not to be labeled or functioning as the C.E.O. of the church.
for the results of their actions. The Holy Spirit does not need help in reaching the lost, except that He requires the verbal and lifestyle promotion of the Gospel by His children. Modernism in the church has taught it that it should never let the world see it sweat, that fake smiles need to be plastered on so as to be attractive to the lost, and that real problems need to be downplayed since Jesus takes all of the problems away. The Joel Olsteens of the world are offering a bill of goods and at some point are going to come up short. Interestingly, demonstrating a “everything is in order” façade is the same method often used by the Mormons to present themselves as attractive to the world, complete with perfect looking families, and an image filled with smiles and unity. Strip off the façades and artificiality, and the world will not see a group of “too good to be true Christians”, but instead will see real people with real struggles in a real world of pain and suffering. The world can then see a real church working together in the name of Christ to be overcomers. Occasionally Christians will fail, but how the church comes together and uses its gifts to edify, lift up, and help those failing will speak volumes to the world, more so than a lifetime of Sunday sermons. When pastors trust their properly trained members to do their jobs, those pastors can work themselves out of a job and allow the church to be blessed beyond comprehension. What was once micromanaged “for the glory of the Lord” will be freed up and the Holy Spirit will pour out His power within the church to function as a family once again. It

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399 Horton, *Christless Christianity*, 96-97. Horton’s exposé deals with the false message Olsteen preaches and how it is anti-biblical (particularly with regards to the Gospel) and does not offer anything behind it except for what this writer would call good luck in the name of Jesus.

400 Being raised near the home of Mormonism’s genesis, this writer has known Mormons and found the image they attempted to convince the world with was just as fake and strained as the one his Baptist church often presented.


402 Alvin L. Reid, *Radically Unchurched*, 63. Reid suggests that the church as a unified community standing on God’s standards will impact the world.
takes faith in the Holy Spirit indwelled church members, and without faith we cannot please God (Hebrews 11:6).  

Applicable Secular Empowerment Principles

Business, via the philosophies of Total Quality Management, has been challenged to implement empowerment to its employees, especially as empowerment is a stark contrast to the centuries old top-down management paradigm. As TQM has lost its impact in America due to a demand for instantaneous results (opposite the patience with which Japan pursued it during post-WWII decades which later made it successful in the electronics and auto industries), coupled with the individualistic nature of the Western Hemisphere (again, opposite the group mentality of Japan), so also has empowerment lost its impact. Still, the potential for self-regulated growth and change is waiting to be tapped.

From a secular standpoint, Blanchard, Carlos, and Randolph state: “Few changes in business have been so well received yet so problematic as the movement to create empowered, employee-driven work environments. Empowerment offers the potential for tapping into a wellspring of underutilized human capacity…” Furthermore, they list many features of empowered people that benefit an organization: 1) They have a greater sense of purpose in their jobs and lives, 2) they bring their best ideas and initiatives to the workplace with a sense of

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403 The idea here is that when we trust in God (Hebrews 11:6), that this will also mean we are trusting that His Spirit will work within other believers, and that we will not feel compelled to step in when we deem that God is not moving fast enough or as completely as we imagine He should. Too often, because of a lack of faith, we wrongfully convince ourselves that we must step in or micromanage because “What if the congregation doesn’t do its job?”

excitement, ownership, and pride, 3) they act with responsibility and put the best interests of the organization first.\textsuperscript{405}

Why should churches embrace Empowered Leadership? A cost/benefit analysis would show that it is more efficient and provides a greater ROI (return on investment)—all attributes of wise stewards. In keeping with Rainer’s and Geiger’s teachings in \textit{Simple Church}, one will find that “empowerment requires less structure.”\textsuperscript{406} Other factors would include less stress for pastoral leadership as members take on more responsibility. However, the strongest benefits are best answered by Blanchard, Carlos and Randolph: “Empowerment means you have the freedom to act; it also means you are accountable for results.”\textsuperscript{407} They also point out that within a business environment there are three keys to empowerment: A) Share information with everyone (people without information cannot act responsibly. People with information are compelled to act responsibly), B) Create autonomy through barriers (without a set of guidelines, people will revert back to their unempowered [\textit{sic}] habits), and C) Replace the hierarchy with self-directed teams (self-directed teams will increase job satisfaction, will change attitudes from “have to” to “want to”, will garner a great commitment, will create better communication between employees and management, will contribute to a more efficient decision-making process, will add improved quality, and will reduce operating costs thus creating a more profitable organization).\textsuperscript{408}

Remembering that the church is not supposed to be a business, but recognizing that it has been run like one for decades, the ideal is to abandon its business design, all the while implementing

\textsuperscript{405} Ibid., v-vii.

\textsuperscript{406} Ibid., 39.

\textsuperscript{407} Ibid., 90.

\textsuperscript{408} Ibid., 29, 34, 40, 41, 59, and 104.
the biblical model of empowerment which offers many benefits to the church as a whole, akin to many of the benefits that empowerment provides secular businesses.

Hayes notes that releasing Christians to do ministry without restrictive pastoral oversight allows them to be used by God and to fulfill their purpose as Christians: “At its heart, shared ministry is not a programme [sic] for ministry renewal or congregational rescue. It is a central principle of what it means to be church. All the converted are drawn more deeply, in the context of Christian community, into the ministry and mission of Jesus Christ.”

Imagine applying these empowerment principles within a church environment and seeing positive results as congregants are given back the tools and power (which the Bible has already given them) to take the Great Commission to the world. Applying Blanchard, Carlos, and Randolph’s implementation suggestions to the church, the church culture would need to change (or be created from scratch in the case of a church plant) to reflect these ideas: A) Empowerment starts at the top (i.e. the pastor(s)/elders need to be on board to make this successful), B) Those who interact with people are at the top, thus all members are at the top (this is not a pyramid model of leadership), C) Train (for the church this would be to disciple) them to be empowered (“empowerment comes from teaching others things they can do to become less dependent on you”), D) Resist the urge to step in and do the work (people need to be allowed to do the work), E) Do not condemn mistakes, but use them as teaching tools, F) Discover what the congregation has to offer, listen to their (often differing) views and opinions, and do not force your views on them, G) Remember that success will only come from the whole church’s participation, not the

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409 C. J. Hayes, *Releasing the Ministry of All God’s People: A Holistic Spirit-led Model*, (North Yorkshire, UK: Gilead Books Publishing, 2011), 2. He further notes: “Shared ministry believes that whatever the size of the Christian community, God will give the gifts necessary for His people to be the Church where they are. Ministry is therefore not reserved for the few but everyone is encouraged to seek out what their ministry is - in the Christian community but also in the workplace, the wider community and at home.”
charisma, gifts, or talents of the pastor, and H) Ensure everyone understands that his participation is vital to achieving the Great Commission and health of the body.\textsuperscript{410}

Again, there is a humanistic aspect to the teachings of empowerment that many secular authors endorse, especially in the areas of self-power and psychological motivation. While rejecting these particular traits, one can see that the goal of ecclesiastical empowerment is not behavior modification, but an internal spiritual change as each Christian is freed up to do what he is gifted and driven to do for Jesus. The elders would be freed up to focus on studying the Word (one of Paul’s primary directives in his pastoral epistles to Timothy (I. Timothy 4:13; II. Timothy 2:15)), seeking the Lord, and using the gift(s) each has been given. Meanwhile, as the congregation matures, various members will be led by the Spirit to serve their world in various ways through the multitude of spiritual gifts God has provided them, and will have an outlet for their gifts. No longer will they have to sit through often-boring church services\textsuperscript{411} doing little to nothing of value, or stuck serving the structure using talents instead of spiritual gifts\textsuperscript{412} (ushering, parking attendants, setting up classrooms, decorating, etc.), but will be integral parts of accomplishing the Great Commission, building the unity of the church body, and creating world change. The Bible never requires anyone to be a “soul winner”, but instead, requires all to take the Good News to others (the power lies within the Gospel according to Romans 1:16).

Postmoderns are even more eager to serve, and less eager to throw money at a structure or do meaningless tasks. They are the future of the church, and now is the time to start tapping into

\textsuperscript{410} Ken Blanchard, John P. Carlos, and Alan Randolph, \textit{Empowerment Takes More than a Minute}, 15, 25, 64, 66, 79, 102, and 49.

\textsuperscript{411} Gene Edwards, \textit{How to Meet in Homes}, 6.

\textsuperscript{412} C. J. Hayes, \textit{Releasing the Ministry of All God’s People}, 8.
their drives to serve humanity by empowering them to serve humanity with the love of Christ and the Gospel of peace.

Empowerment Conclusion

Maturity is a process, and having mentors is essential.\textsuperscript{413} For many decades the American church has been existing in a paradigm of non-mentoring, and thus non-maturation.\textsuperscript{414} Pulpit discipleship has failed to change the maturity or motivational levels of the church.\textsuperscript{415} An intentional effort to implement proper discipleship will create spiritual adults who are balanced, are continually maturing, and thus leading. The two key areas of fear for institutional church pastors originate from a fear that they will no longer be important or relevant (should discipleship be turned over to the masses) and thus be downsized from their comfortable jobs, or that the masses will begin to teach and spread wrong doctrines (an arrogant belief predicated on a lack of faith in the Holy Spirit, once again). Empowering the church to disciple its own people will free up the pastor to use his gifts. Maybe the pastor as a paid position will be eliminated and it will no longer be viewed as a vocation, but rather as a means of service.\textsuperscript{416} Nevertheless, in an


\textsuperscript{414} Ibid., 131. The authors list many statistics about the lack of replicated leadership in the American family and in churches.

\textsuperscript{415} Joel Comiskey, \textit{The Relational Disciple}, 12. Anecdotally, this writer’s former pastor, Joe Burress, promoted a belief that when people sat under his preaching, that they were discipled.

\textsuperscript{416} Similarly, most American government leadership positions were designed around serving their constituents, but in time they were able to provide themselves a comfortable living with stellar benefits and a great
empowered environment leadership will exist at all levels of the church; a dramatic change from how church has functioned for the last 1,700 years. Similarly, mentorship (i.e. an integral aspect of discipleship) will be taught at all levels and by those within those levels. Discipleship is not a class lesson (although there may be a time for such lessons), nor is it a Sunday sermon. Discipleship is an interactive involvement in the lives of each person, ensuring that no one is lost in the cracks, and that no one is able to be a mere spectator. The church should be viewed as group in action. It is constantly active in some form or other, be it praying, serving, presenting the Gospel, loving, or studying the Word. The world has long promoted the need for mentorship within businesses, and even social programs like Big Brothers Big Sisters of America, Boys & Girls Clubs of America, and even the Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts. The family plan of the church is that physical parents mentor their physical children, and likewise spiritual parents mentor spiritual children. The result will be maturity and a perpetual cycle of discipling through personal investment.

In confirmation of this point, Roberts and Marshall state that the church community “can be powerful because God is at work within us to mold us into maturity in Christ. We need each other to reach this maturity. We belong to each other. We are the body of Christ. Only in community can ‘we take our lead from Christ, who is the source of everything we do…’ (Ephesians 4:15-16).”

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417 Wes Roberts and Glenn Marshall, Reclaiming God's Original Intent for the Church, 97.
Chapter 5
Practical Application of the Three Principles

Primacy of Jesus

Focusing on the Primacy of Jesus will benefit both individual Christians as well as the church as a whole. Churches, whether currently in existence or being planted, need to ensure that everything they do is centered on Jesus. Centering on Jesus will express itself in three primary ways: 1) Orthodoxy (correct belief) based on the careful study of the Bible, 2) Orthopraxy (correct practice) through the diligent application of what has been studied, and 3) Orthoschesi (correct relationship) accomplished through the interactive time spent in the Bible and orison.

In the first level of application, it is suggested that every aspect of the church’s existence be compared to the requirements of the Bible for the church, especially against the Great Commission, Great Commandment, and Royal Law (a compilation of Orthodoxy and Orthopraxy). Next, the church should compare itself to the biblical requirements of stewardship and liturgical reductionism. At this level of application, the church should be able to identify if Christ is the primary focus of each area of the church’s existence. The church can ask itself if potluck dinners, Advent, Lent, Vacation Bible School, Visitation, church services, committee meetings, etc. are actually being done for Jesus, and with His guidance, or if they are traditions and practices devoid of a Primacy of Jesus focus. The church can question whether it is just going through the motions with its activities and practices. Such things as the building and grounds, busses, decorations, staff positions, pipe organs, and even the parsonage should be questioned to ascertain if they are actually contributing to the focus on Jesus, or if they are
actually barriers. Evaluating these things will be difficult as sacred cows exist in almost any church, from things the people do for the church to things the church owns. However, if the church is serious about putting Jesus first, then it needs to make a tough, critical evaluation. This may include enlisting outside (unbiased) assistance. Furthermore, a SWOT analysis would be advantageous. SWOT is a method used in businesses to evaluate a firm’s Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats. Is the Sunday morning service a Strength in focusing on Jesus? Might the religious overtones of an order of worship detract from a focus on Jesus, and thus be a Weakness? Eliminating the Sunday School and gathering each week into small groups centered around prayer may be an Opportunity. The dynamic and charismatic personality of the pastor may create more who follow him than Jesus and may be a Threat.

The second level of application is to evaluate the actual people and their relationship with Jesus (the Orthoschesi). The church can have everything from paintings to sermons dedicated to Jesus, but if the church as a whole is not seeking a deeper relationship with Jesus, then it is all superficial. The leadership of a church must model a deepening John 15 (abiding in Christ) lifestyle, and encourage others in their journeys to do the same. The second level is harder to measure than the first, but transformed lives will speak constantly of Jesus because He is continually on their minds, and they will serve others as Christ served when he was on earth. Furthermore, the tight Family/Community bond should be evident as this is the earthly representation of a church’s love for God.

Family/Community

Realizing that the church’s greatest testimony is in how it relates to fellow Christians, the church must evaluate its culture to ascertain if it truly has a family atmosphere. Much of the
church’s practices are in direct opposition to creating family and community, and should be evaluated as well. The traditional church service may preach on Jesus, but tends to have absolutely no application to a Family/Community culture. Yet, the weekly church service is the crux of most churches’ existence. Again, all aspects of the church should be assessed to ascertain whether the church is truly living out the biblical ideals of cohesion, love, and dedication as were demonstrated in the early church.

Once a church has ensured that its design is formatted around building a Christ-centered community, it must then ensure that it is functioning in a manner consistent with this identification. The church as a community should be discipling younger believers, spreading the Gospel, applying its spiritual gifts, and defending the unity of the body. When churches become inward-focused, they never (or rarely at best) try to evangelize. When churches promote individualism, they support discord and a disengagement of the spiritual gifts designed for the edification of the body. When churches fail to disciple, then they end up with what Paul calls “infants in Christ” (I. Corinthians 3:1). Every aspect of a church’s Family/Community dynamic is essential for the church to be a biblical assembly, and therefore this aspect should be emphasized strongly.

Empowered Leadership

As has been demonstrated biblically, there is no precedent for the dominant pastor-led church model. This model is unhealthy, counterproductive, and ultimately reduces church to a spectator sport at best. Furthermore, as the postmodern generation is demanding involvement and is not interested in religious shows, the necessity for Empowered Leadership is at forefront of
today’s culture. For the church to progress forward at this point, it must be willing to make some very hard decisions; many against long-held traditions.

The first step the church should engage in is eliminating the position of pastor (especially as an “office”; a term which does not show up in the Greek). Many churches today are already structured around leadership teams and elder boards. Others have conflicting practices such as pastors and elders (sometimes having the pastors be the preachers, and the elders steering the church), or pastors and deacons who function like elders. However, the goal here is not to eliminate leadership, but rather, to evaluate those within the church who would best serve as elders.418 The church should then replace its top-down management style with plurality of leaders, and then limit what that leadership can and cannot do. Too much power will bring the church back into bondage, and too little oversight will discount sin and improper doctrines.

Second, the church needs to take most of the functions formerly designated to a pastor and give them over to the congregation (e.g. baptism, Lord’s Supper, ministering to the sick, evangelizing, etc.). The elders will be equipping the church to serve, and the church will be doing just that: serving. The church should not feel compelled to acquire permission to do most of its functions since the leadership is merely overseeing and the congregation has been sent forth to be the hands and feet of Christ. Much of what the church will accomplish will be within its community as it gathers together often.

Church Transition

Churches that will be able to internalize and engage these three principles the best, will be those that are the least oriented around fixed buildings. House churches are the most mobile

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418 Ideally, I. Timothy 3 and Titus 1 are the best means of gauging prospective elders. However, the divergence of views on the interpretation of these passages often leads to difficulties for churches to find those who would be “qualified”.

and flexible, however, cell group/small group churches that de-emphasize their buildings are also designed to be the best suited for holistic church health. The traditional building-oriented, sermon-centered church model is not only becoming outmoded, it is also the least likely to be able to embrace these principles wholeheartedly. Traditional churches that wish to maintain traditional practices are going to receive traditional results. Traditional churches that wish to truly place Jesus first are going to do those things that will glorify Him the most and expand the kingdom the greatest. A church truly interested in transitioning will need to slowly and prayerfully begin the process of self-evaluation based on the Primacy of Jesus. Traditions are similar to bad habits, and they are extremely difficult to break. Thus, a slow transition to a house church or cell group/small group church should transpire. Many cell group/small group churches maintain buildings for a weekly gathering, but develop the depth of their congregations through groups meeting throughout the week (often using sermon-based studies relating back to the Sunday service). Nevertheless, maintaining a business as usual stance, or a “we’ve never tried it that way before” position is a demonstration that the Primacy of Jesus needs to be applied.

Lastly, house churches and cell group/small group churches should still evaluate themselves to ensure that they are built on these principles. Ed Stetzer notes that many house churches are: 1) Separatists (attempting to create an alternative culture to the world’s), 2) Anti-establishment (they hold disdain for traditional church and buildings), 3) Deeper Understanding (following the teachings of Watchman Nee and Witness Lee), 4) Expositional/Issue Group (generically formed around self-interpreting Bible studies), and 5) Spontaneous (varying styles,

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often because people like to gather and talk about spiritual matters).\textsuperscript{420} Clearly, even the more advantageous house church design can be other-centered rather than Jesus-centered. As such, house churches and cell group/small group churches must evaluate themselves carefully against the three principles and incorporate the foundational aspects that create holistic church health.

Chapter 6
Conclusion

The presented concept herein is that all churches need to be focused on the Primacy of Jesus, followed by a Family/Community culture, and then released to serve via Empowered Leadership. The assertion is that these three concepts are lacking or even missing in many congregations, and that the incorporation of them (based on an equipoise of Orthodoxy, Orthopraxy, and Orthoschesi) will create biblically balanced and focused congregations. The evidence in support of the three principles has been derived from Scripture, surveys administered particularly for this study, and academic research.

Evidence from the Bible

The Bible is clear that correct doctrine is essential (e.g. Titus 2:7) which speaks to the Orthodoxy of the church. The Bible identifies righteous and proper living (Orthopraxy) and obedience as paramount (e.g. Micah 6:8). Likewise, the Bible places a premium on the relationship (Orthoschesi) between the Christian and God (e.g. Psalm 119:10). These three requirements all work hand-in-hand as the believer is admonished to put Jesus first in all things (e.g. Hebrews 12:2), to live in unity and service with the church family (e.g. Galatians 6:10, as well as the “One Another” statements listed in Chapter 1), and to be empowered to do the work of the Lord (e.g. Galatians 5:13). The Priesthood of Believers (I. Peter 2:5, 9) designation means that every believer is to serve, witness, pray, study, and love, and change the world; not a select few professional pastors, but everyone.
Evidence from the Surveys

The two surveys, though limited in scope, were administered to pastors and congregants. Many of the Primacy of Jesus questions demonstrated that Jesus is in the visual field of these churches to some degree. However, other Primacy of Jesus questions demonstrated that there are some very weak areas where He was practically missing from view, thus attesting to the fact that Jesus is a part of the church’s focus, but not necessarily (and more than likely not) at the forefront.

The Family/Community questions delineated a bleak relationship between pastors and congregants as most pastors have very little, if any at all, affinity with their own congregations. Conversely, those congregants polled had much healthier relationships amongst themselves. The church is described often by familial terms in the Bible, and the overseers are to have strong relationships with their physical families (I. Timothy 3:2, 4-5) as examples of the relationships they are to have with their church families. The necessity of creating elder-oriented churches where they are not exalted to a position, but rather, are working alongside the rest of the congregation, is validated strongly by this portion of the surveys.

The Empowered Leadership questions pointed to some micromanaged congregations wherein the pastor requires the congregants to gain permission to perform biblical functions (e.g. the Lord’s Supper was celebrated by every believer in the New Testament without necessarily having pastoral leadership present, whereas the current unbiblical model has eliminated the “Supper” portion of this celebration, has sterilized it with religious formality, and allows only the pastor anddeacons to administer the liturgy). This portion of the surveys verified that top-down business management and micromanagement styles are utilized in many churches, which
indicates a misunderstanding of pastoral (actually, overseeing elder) leadership as found in the Bible, and severely inhibits church spiritual and numerical growth.

Evidence from the Academic Research

The largest portion of this work has been concentrated in Chapters 2 and 4, wherein academic research was utilized to support the biblical and survey information. Among the sources researched were books, articles, dissertations, and journals. Some secular, yet applicable concepts were demonstrated when they coincided with the Bible and offered beneficial corroboration. Ultimately, these materials found that the Primacy of Jesus needs to be restored to the church above all else. Many works dealing with Family/Community aspects show that mentoring (i.e. invested discipleship), sharing, unifying, and serving each other as the body of Christ, becomes the earthly/physical demonstration of the church’s love and relationship with Jesus. Lastly, the support for Empowered Leadership wherein each believer, being led by the Holy Spirit, is free to serve the church and the lost world in the name of Jesus, is strongly supported.

Conclusion

Therefore, before a church is planted, before any church methods are utilized, before worship styles and evangelism strategies are discussed, before discipleship techniques are implemented, each church needs to carefully evaluate itself against these three principles so as to ensure that it is building on a biblical and sound foundation. After the last 1,700 years of pagan-influenced church history, the institutional business model of church in America is not poised to thrive (much less survive) the degrading culture that is rejecting it en masse. The culture today
has been compared to the culture of the first century church,\textsuperscript{421} and the key attributes of that first century church—a church that successfully spread the Gospel throughout the Roman Empire and beyond without today’s modern communication tools—were its focus on Jesus, on His family, and on \textit{being} the unencumbered sent church. Hence, it was built on 1) Exalting Christ, 2) Embracing God’s people, and 3) Engaging the culture. Hence, it was successful. Hence, it is paramount for the church even today.

\textsuperscript{421} Alvin L. Reid, \textit{Radically Unchurched}, 22.
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Appendix A

Surveys

Pastoral Survey

1. Please indicate your gender: *
   - Male
   - Female

2. Please indicate your age bracket: *
   - 18-39
   - 40-59
   - 60+

3. Please indicate your church affiliation: *

4. Is your church located in a rural or urban community? *
   - Rural
   - Urban

5. What is the approximate size of your church (attendance)? *

6. On a scale of 1-10, how would you rate the volunteerism level of your members? *  
1= they all volunteer willingly  
10= they utterly refuse to serve

7. Would you like to see the volunteerism level of your church increase? *  
○ Yes  
○ No

8. Do you encourage your members to bring lost people to church services to hear the Gospel? *  
○ Yes  
○ No

9. Would you allow church members holding a weekly Bible study to administer the Lord’s Supper/Communion without pastoral leadership present? *  
○ Yes  
○ No

10. Between 1 and 10, as a pastor, how would you rate your pastoral workload? *  
Use the slide to choose an answer between 1 and 10. 1= easy 10 = overloaded

11. When preaching sermons or counseling, what is the best way to motivate your congregation to live righteously: *  
○ Teach them to obey because of the fear of judgment/punishment/discipline  
○ Teach them to obey merely because of one’s love for Jesus  
○ Teach them to obey through guilt (that one’s sin is disappointing/disgusting to Jesus)  
○ Teach them to obey so as to receive positive results (i.e. blessings, answered prayer)
12. What percentage of your congregation constitutes: *

The sum of your percentages should equal 100%

- your closest friends (i.e. those that you can be/are accountable to for even your most personal issues, sins, ideas, etc.)
- your close friends (i.e. those you would hang out with, ask to pray for you, and who would invite you over to their house to watch a game or watch a movie)
- your acquaintances (i.e. they would say "hi" to you even in public, but you are no closer to them than most anyone else you know)

13. What is more important: Your church members attending the Sunday service, or your church members attending a Bible study/fellowship group outside of the church? *

- Sunday service
- Outside study/group

14. Would you allow a church member to start a ministry or Bible study without your personal (or other pastoral) permission? *

- Yes
- No

15. Who is best prepared to serve a member's personal/spiritual needs? *

- Fellow church members
- The Pastor (or a counseling pastor)
- A professional Christian counselor

16. Do you believe that the church's loyalty to its pastor demonstrates its loyalty to Jesus? *

- Yes
- No

17. Does your church utilize designed programs to accomplish missional goals, or instead does it leave those goals in the hands of the members to fulfill as they feel led? *

- Programs
- Left to members

18. Is discipleship in your church accomplished: *

- Through discipleship classes
- Through small groups
- From the pulpit
- Through traditional Sunday School
19. Considering all that your church is presenting (preaching, programs, classes, etc.), do you feel overall that your members are demonstrating a progressive II. Corinthians 5:17 lifestyle (i.e. are you seeing the spiritual results that you expect)? *
   II. Corinthians 5:17: “Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away, behold, all things have become new.” (NKJV)
   ○ Yes
   ○ No

20. Would you like to see the inter-relational cohesiveness of your membership to improve? *
   ○ Yes: They are not as close and family-like as they should be.
   ○ No: They are already as close and family-like as would be expected.
   ○ No: It is understood that they have close circles of friends outside of church and cannot be expected to invest any more time into their church family.

21. Overall, are your church members more interested in Jesus, or in other things (family, sports, video games, shopping, etc.): *
   ○ Jesus
   ○ Other things

22. How many of your church’s members seem to be living holy lives that are Christ-like? *
   ○ 0-10%
   ○ 11-20%
   ○ 21-30%
   ○ 31-40%
   ○ 41-50%
   ○ 51-60%
   ○ 61-70%
   ○ 71-80%
   ○ 81-90%
   ○ 91-100%

23. Based on question #22, are you finding it hard (or challenging) to get that number to increase/improve? *
   ○ Yes
   ○ No

24. When it comes to the ministries of your church, do you consider yourself more of a hands-on or hands-off leader? *
   ○ Hands-On
   ○ Hands-Off
25. Can a church truly exist without a church building? *
   - Yes: The church doesn’t need buildings.
   - Yes: But the building helps the church fulfill its mission.
   - No: A building is mandatory for a church to exist and fulfill its mission.

Congregational Survey

1. Please indicate your gender: *
   - Male
   - Female

2. Please indicate your age bracket: *
   - 18-39
   - 40-59
   - 60+

3. Please indicate your church affiliation: *
   

4. Is your church located in a rural or urban community? *
   - Rural
   - Urban

5. What is the approximate size of your church (attendance)? *
   

6. Do you consider your church to be: *
   ○ Your Family/closest friends
   ○ Merely Friends (you may or may not hang out with a couple of people, but for the most part your circle of friends is generally outside of the church)
   ○ Your Acquaintances (you go to church, say “Hi”, but you have a close circle of friends outside of the church)

7. Would your church allow you to start a ministry or Bible study without the pastor’s permission? *
   ○ Yes
   ○ No

8. Does your church attempt to motivate you to live righteously and to serve using (choose the answer which most closely matches your church): *
   ○ Guilt
   ○ Fear
   ○ Encouragement (because it pleases Jesus)

9. You have a deep spiritual or personal problem. Would you prefer to take it to: *
   ○ Your pastor for counsel and direction
   ○ Your closest friend(s) for counsel and direction

10. Which does your pastor do most often: *
    ○ Encourage you to bring the lost to church services
    ○ Encourage you to personally present the Gospel to the lost
11. Would you feel more likely to read the Word, pray, witness, serve, and attempt to be a good example of a Christian if you were to hear most often: *

- How much it makes Jesus happy when you live for Him?
- How disappointed Jesus is when you do not live for Him?
- That you will be judged someday for how you lived or didn’t live for Him?

12. What is the first thing that comes to mind when you think of your church’s communion service/Lord’s Supper tradition (i.e. how they practice it and what they emphasize and teach): *

- I’ve got to get my sins confessed because I don’t want to take it “unworthily”.
- Another stale and bland piece of cracker and a shot glass of grape juice.
- Jesus suffered a brutal and tortuous death on the cross for my sin.
- It has very little meaning/fit is just a repetitious practice.

13. What would your church value more: *

- Attending Sunday services
- Serving the poor in the community during Sunday services (thus missing church services)

14. (Which answer most identifies you?) You feel a close bond and connectedness to your church family; that they are amongst your closest friends: *

- Yes
- No

15. If you were on your deathbed, what would be most important to you? *

- Your pastor visited you
- Your church family (excluding your pastor) visited you
June 24, 2013

James R. Woods
IRB Exemption 1612.062413: A Pre-Methodological Theology for Biblically Proper Ecclesiological Health

Dear James,

The Liberty University Institutional Review Board has reviewed your application in accordance with the Office for Human Research Protections (OHRP) and Food and Drug Administration (FDA) regulations and finds your study to be exempt from further IRB review. This means you may begin your research with the data safeguarding methods mentioned in your approved application, and that no further IRB oversight is required.

Your study falls under exemption category 46.101 (b)(2), which identifies specific situations in which human participants research is exempt from the policy set forth in 45 CFR 46:

(2) Research involving the use of educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), surveys procedures, interview procedures or observation of public behavior unless:
(i) information obtained is recorded in such a manner that human subjects can be identified, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects; and (ii) any disclosure of the human subjects’ responses outside the research could reasonably place the subjects at risk of criminal or civil liability or be damaging to the subjects’ financial standing, employability, or reputation.

Please note that this exemption only applies to your current research application, and that any changes to your protocol must be reported to the Liberty IRB for verification of continued exemption status. You may report these changes by submitting a change in protocol form or a new application to the IRB and referencing the above IRB Exemption number.

If you have any questions about this exemption, or need assistance in determining whether possible changes to your protocol would change your exemption status, please email us at irb@liberty.edu.

Sincerely,

Fernando Garzon, Psy.D.
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